**1. How can we begin to *Prioritize Empathy* as an Advocate? Provide examples.**

Build a culture of empathy and validate its importance. A culture of empathy is created by We consistently wondering what it might have been like to have the experiences that a CASA child has had, and continues to have as a ward of the county or state.

##### 2. As a court appointed special advocate, what would it look like to *watch for symptoms before issues arise*? Provide examples.

When we approach others, particularly children with empathy, we can perceive symptoms of deeper issues before things really “get too big” For example, in today’s challenging world filled with confusion and worry especially regarding social issues (poverty, COVID-19, police shootings, religion, race, racism). Many people, including children are struggling. Empathetic volunteers can see signs of sadness, worry, disengagement and frustration in children. Don’t be afraid to check-in with your CASA child. If they say, “I’m fine,” show that you empathize by gently and carefully probing. You don’t have to have the solution. When a child knows that they have been heard it can make a world of difference!

##### 3. What are *better questions that Advocates can ask*? Provide examples.

When you ask thoughtful questions, you are better able to dig down to the root of your CASA child’s challenges and understand their experience. By example, instead of saying “How are you?” you could ask “I noticed that you’ve been quiet today. Can you let me what you’re thinking about? Or Can you tell me what’s your mind today?” This shows your CASA child that (a) you notice them and their feelings, (b) that you care enough to ask, (c) that you want to help.

##### 4. As an Advocate, what does it look like to *listen deeply and seek to understand*? Provide examples.

If you can communicate to your CASA child that you understand and appreciate their unique challenges, and that you want to help them reach their goals, their engagement, with you will skyrocket. When possible have Zoom calls vs. phone calls so that you can see your CASA child’s face. This will allow you can see body language and facial expressions. When you are having a conversation, listen deeply to what is being said, and also listen to what is unsaid including body language.

### **6. How might you *practice self-empathy* as an advocate employee?**

Not only should we be more empathetic with others, but we also should show compassion to ourselves. Studies show that you increase your chances of success as well as improve your mental health when you are more gentle and self-compassionate after making a mistake, missing a deadline, or otherwise messing up. Instead of beating yourself up, think about how you would respond to a colleague or even a child who made a mistake. You’d suggest the following: (a) look for the lesson in the mistake, so they don’t repeat it; (b) make amends to anyone who suffered because of their error. You’d tell them they are still a valuable, intelligent, and capable person. The more empathy and self-compassion you have for yourself, the more you can have for others.