TRAUMAWISE CHANGE AGENT FIELD GUIDE

The Advocate

You walk alongside.

You're the person who stays. When someone you care about is in a hard season, you don't hand them advice and move on. You keep showing up, over weeks and months, in a way that helps them find their footing.

At TraumaWise, we call that being an Advocate. You don't need a title or a certificate to be one. If this is how you show up, you're already doing this work. This guide is here to help you see it, name it, and care for yourself while you do it.

Healthy change happens together.

traumawise.com

November 2026

What an Advocate is

An Advocate is a steady, practical companion who walks alongside one person or family as they try to live out what they know about safety, connection, and care.

Many people already know a lot about what helps. The hard part is doing it on an ordinary Tuesday, when everyone is tired. Advocates help close that gap between knowing and doing. In everyday life, that can look like:

- Listening without rushing to fix
- Helping someone figure out where to start, and what can wait
- Offering encouragement when progress feels slow
- Going with someone to a meeting, or helping them find words for a hard conversation
- Connecting them with people and resources who can help

Advocates aren't therapists or clinicians, and they don't need to be. Their gift is relational: a steady, non-judging presence that helps what someone knows become what they do.

Why it matters

Most people don't struggle because they don't care or don't know enough. They struggle because living out what they know is hard, especially under stress. Many people:

- Understand the ideas, but find them hard to practice consistently
- Feel overwhelmed by everything happening at once
- Don't know where to start, or what matters most right now
- Need encouragement, and someone to check in with
- Need help navigating schools, workplaces, or other systems

An Advocate makes sure no one has to figure this out alone. Steady support through the early, vulnerable stretch of change helps people build confidence and reset long-standing patterns. And it's how communities grow more resilient, one relationship at a time.

What it looks like where you are

Advocacy looks different depending on where you spend your days. Here are a few of the places it shows up:

Where you are	What walking alongside can look like
At home and with family	Being the person another parent or caregiver calls after a hard day, and helping them think through one next step
In a school	Staying with one student or family across a school year, and helping them speak up in meetings. Or supporting a fellow educator through a demanding year
In a congregation or faith community	Walking with a family through a hard season, and connecting them with people who can help carry it. Or supporting a Sunday School teacher or youth group leader as they care for the kids in their group
At work	Being the colleague someone trusts with what's hard, and helping them find the support they need
In your neighborhood or community	Going alongside someone as they navigate services, appointments, or systems that feel confusing

You may recognize yourself in more than one row. That's common for Advocates.

What you already bring

Advocates tend to share a handful of qualities. You don't need all of them. Most people are strong in a few and growing in the rest.

- **Relational compassion.** A steady, warm presence when someone is stressed.
- **Noticing what's underneath.** You can tell when someone is overwhelmed, and you adjust your tone, pace, and posture.
- **Guiding without controlling.** You offer support without judgment or taking over.
- **Seeing strengths.** You notice what someone can do, not only what's hard for them.
- **Humility and respect.** You honor that each person is the expert on their own story.
- **Creative problem-solving.** You help spot what's in the way and work out a next step together.
- **Community orientation.** You know that healing happens in relationships, and in the systems around them.

If you read this list and thought "that's me, on a good day," that counts. These grow with practice and support.

The TraumaWise lens

TraumaWise is built on three pillars, drawing on the work of Howard Bath. Each one shapes how an Advocate shows up:

Pillar	What it means for an Advocate
Felt-Safety	You meet people where they are, without pressure or shame
Connection	You build trust-filled, supportive partnerships over time
Co-Regulation	You offer a calm, steady presence that others can borrow when they need it

Advocates also carry the TraumaWise A.R.C.H.E.S. values: Authenticity, Respect, Compassion, Humility, Expansive Leadership, and System Integrity.

How you differ from the other three roles

TraumaWise names four change agent roles. Each one matters, and change goes further when all four are present.

Role	They tend to…	As an Advocate, you tend to…
Facilitator	Guide groups and hold reflective spaces	Support individuals and coach real-life practice
Trainer	Teach content to broader audiences	Personalize support and help it take root day to day
Activator	Strengthen the capacity of whole systems	Strengthen the capacity of the people you walk with

If your quiz result said you also carry another role, you may move between these. Many Advocates also facilitate a group, teach what they've learned, or start to notice the patterns that need to change around them.

The cost of carrying

Walking alongside someone is meaningful work, and it costs something. Naming the cost is part of caring for yourself, not a sign that you're doing it wrong. Advocates often find themselves:

- Carrying someone's story home with them
- Feeling responsible for outcomes they can't control
- Being the steady one, with no one steadying them
- Growing weary when change comes slowly

None of this means you're not cut out for this. Often it means the people and systems around you are asking one person to hold what a community should hold together. Your capacity is part of the work, too.

A few ways to stay resourced

- **Pace yourself.** Notice what you have to give this week, and let that be enough.
- **Let yourself be walked with.** Advocates need people of their own, too.
- **Scaffold yourself.** The Scaffold for Sustainability workbook *(coming soon)* will offer a way to build steady support around your own life while you support others.

One thing to try this week

This week, you might notice one moment when your steady presence helped someone find their footing. Then notice one moment when someone steadied you.

If you'd like to go a little deeper, here are a few questions to sit with:

1. Who am I walking alongside right now?

2. What do they seem to need most from me: presence, practical help, or encouragement?

3. Who walks alongside me?

Where to go next

There's no rush. Please take whatever step fits your capacity right now.

FREE, WHENEVER YOU'RE READY

- **The Advocate Path Library.** Podcast episodes, articles, and guides for people who walk alongside others. traumawise.com/advocate-path-library
- **You Don’t Need a Title to Be a Safe Space.** A free guide for people already holding space for others, with or without a title or training. traumawise.com/you-dont-need-a-title-guide

WHEN YOU'D LIKE TO GO DEEPER

- **Increase Your Advocacy.** An on-demand course that builds your advocacy skills. traumawise.com/advocacy
- **TraumaWise Advocate certification.** For those who feel called to grow into the role more formally. traumawise.com/traumawise-advocate-program
- **TraumaWise Equip.** A community of people doing this work, with a monthly live Q&A and a six-step path you can walk at your own pace. traumawise.com/item/traumawise-equip-membership

Thank you for being someone who stays.

With Unconditional Positive Regard,
Renae M. Dupuis