



LANGUAGE REFLECTS OUR  
VALUES

LANGUAGE REFLECTS OUR  
THOUGHTS

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## Respectful Language

Historically, society has viewed disabled people as less valuable than other citizens—they were seen as burdens on our society, objects of charity, eternal children or even as a social menace. This presentation looks at the way disabled people are represented in the media and by charities. It looks at how the ways we describe and discuss our daughters and sons and those we love, by their label or by their gifts and individual talents can make a difference to how society views and treats them.

“The difference between  
the right word and the almost right word  
is the difference between lightning  
and the lightning bug”.

*Mark Twain*

If we want the world to think differently about us we'll have to be careful what words we teach it to use about us.

## Disrespectful Language

Mostly its not necessary to use labels, since people have names. However if you really need to use a label, don't use any of these:

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Afflicted        | very negative and a definite downer. If you need to use a label, then "person who has....." is much better.   |
| Cerebral Palsied | Sounds like an inanimate object instead of a person. Why not person or people who have cerebral palsy?  |
| Charity          | Charities are often set up to help people who do not have a disability feel better. Most people want rights not charity. We need to find better ways of breaking down the barriers of centuries and share each others lives, rather than sitting in a bath of baked beans or dressing up in silly clothes to raise money that often goes to perpetuate segregation instead of enabling inclusion. |
| C.P              | Just about OK to describe the condition but NOT to describe a person. This puts all people in a neat little package and deposits them in a file drawer. Please use "who has" or "who have" cerebral palsy when referring to people.   |

Crippled	This paints a picture that no-one wants to look at: Tiny Tim, the object of pity.
Deaf and Dumb	The person is deaf without speech. 'Dumb' gets confused with 'stupid'. Deaf people are often proficient at sign language and good at communicating, they pick up on body language far more quickly than most hearing people.
Disabled Toilet Disabled Parking	The toilet and the parking space are accessible: they are designed or / placed conveniently for people who have mobility difficulties, or visual impairment. The toilet or parking place are not disabled.
Disease	Disability is not an illness, people who have disabilities are often as healthy as everyone else.
Drain and Burden	just don't ever use these two words.
Handicapped	If someone can't walk see or hear, then the handicaps are the steps, heavy doors, high buttons in the lift, intercoms on front doors, cars parked on the pavement, clothing displays too close together in stores etc. <i>Society handicaps people</i> with attitudes and inaccessible transport etc.
Mental Handicap	Lots of labels have been given to people who learn more slowly or in a different way to the majority of the population. 'Learning difficulty' or 'learning disability' is the term preferred by the people given these labels. People who have learning difficulties have formed pressure groups, to raise awareness, and change legislation and attitudes. The best known of these is People First now established in many areas of the country. As well as holding regular local meetings they organise national and international conferences, and offer training.
Poor	Disability has nothing to do with a person's wealth. A person's character determines the richness of her or his life. Often disabled people are kept poor by not having the same opportunities to work.
Suffers From	Disabled people don't always consider themselves as suffering from the disability; if someone who has always been deaf or unable to walk, this is part of who they are, along with the colour of a person's eyes.
Unfortunate	The only unfortunate thing is the use of this word, it is very offensive.
User	This word has no positive meaning and has been used to describe people who use drugs or other people. It is far too easy to get into the habit of using shorthand or initials 'users and carers' ..... AAARGH!!

Victim                      A person who is disabled has not been sabotaged or robbed, the word 'victim' conjures up an image of weakness.

Wheelchair Bound      This gives the impression that the person has been either tied or glued to her/his wheelchair. The person is using a wheelchair, just as we use glasses.

What is wrong            Nothing thank you!!!  
with your child

Language reflects our thoughts and values:

These are just some of the terms mostly used to describe people who have extra support needs... What is a disability? Where do we draw the line? We all need to be interdependent and rely on others for help and understanding, let's stop separating some people out from others. Let's see the person first and not describe anyone as a 'condition'.

Mostly this has got nothing to do with 'political correctness', Its more about good manners and common sense.

"The beginning of wisdom is to call things by their right names"  
(Old Chinese proverb).

"Who are the handicapped, the disabled, the blind, the paraplegic, the old.....

Do they suffer, are they tragic, are they heroes struggling to become normal, are they victims fighting to regain their lives; are they all the same.....?

Well, they are mums and dads and daughters and sons, workers and employers, scientists and artists, friends and neighbours, film stars, leaders and followers, dreamers and doers, teachers and students.....they are people, they are people....."

"As we  
are now,  
so  
soon shall  
ye be"

*(inscription in a Dorset graveyard.)*

# Respectful Language

## EXAMPLES to USE and to SHARE

(Don't use labels at all unless you have to. Remember: label jars not people)

### Labels NOT to use.....

the handicapped or the disabled

the mentally handicapped

My son is Autistic

She's a Downs

Birth defect

He's an epileptic

Wheelchair bound or  
confined to a wheelchair

Mute or doesn't communicate

Normal or healthy

Disabled Parking

Disabled Toilet

### Respectful Language...

disabled people

people who have a learning disability

My son has Autism

She has Downs Syndrome

congenital disability

He has epilepsy

she/he uses a wheelchair or  
she/he is a wheelchair user

she/he doesn't use verbal communication

typical

accessible parking

accessible toilet

If you have more examples please add them to the list.

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