

Achieve with us.

*Promoting positive perceptions of people with
intellectual and developmental disabilities...*

Think "People First"

Language is a reflection of how people see each other. That's why the words we use can hurt. It's also why responsible communicators are now choosing language which reflects the dignity of people with disabilities - words that put the person first, rather than the disability. Read on for short course on using language that empowers.

1. Think people first. Say "a woman who has a disability" rather than "a disabled woman."
2. Avoid words like "unfortunate," "afflicted," and "victim." Also, try to avoid casting a person with a disability as a superhuman model of courage. People with disabilities are just people, not tragic figures or demigods.
3. A developmental disability is not a disease. Do not mention "symptoms," "patients," or "treatment," unless the person you're describing has an illness as well as a disability.
4. Use common sense. Avoid terms with obvious negative or judgmental connotations, such as "crippled," "deaf and dumb," "lame," and "defective." If you aren't sure how to refer to a person's condition, ask. And, if the disability is not relevant to your conversation, why mention it at all?
5. Never refer to a person as "confined to a wheelchair." Wheelchairs enable people to escape confinement. A person with a mobility impairment "uses" a wheelchair.
6. Try to describe people without disabilities as "typical" rather than "normal."

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