Language: Why Does It Matter?

A Closer Look at How We Communicate with People with Disabilities
Our Language – It’s Importance

WORDS

- Can be offensive, devalue individuals, & perpetuate negative stereotypes
- Are powerful – sticks & stones hurt but so do names
- Shape our attitudes & influence our actions
The “H” Word

- The term “Handicap” was originated by people outside the disability community
- Cap-In-Hand beggars
- Offensive because it emphasizes that people with disabilities are less worthy members of the human race
- Continues to reinforce negative stereotypes
People with Disabilities

• Nearly 58 million strong
• Largest minority group in the US
• Their disability does NOT define them
• Successful not in spite of their disabilities but in spite of an inaccessible environment and discriminatory society
• Live in their communities, drive vehicles, have jobs and families, attend school, and participate in recreational and sporting activities
Person First Language

- Moves society in a new direction encouraging inclusion and equality
- Individuals with disabilities are people first with individual abilities, needs & interests
- DON’T say “disabled person”
- DO say “person with a disability”
- DON’T group individuals together based on their disability, such as, “the blind people” or “the disabled”
The following slides illustrate words or phrases that are sometimes used to describe disability.

Take a look at the following photo clusters and decide if they all “fit” with the word or phrase associated with the pictures.

What are your impressions?
Courageous or Brave
Why would she be considered *brave* or *courageous*?

Is she a veteran? What do we know about her?

Did we *assume* she was *brave* or *courageous* just because she has a disability and uses a wheelchair?
Overcome
If you included this girl with the other examples of “overcoming” - what is it that you think she needs to overcome?

Disability is a natural part of life.
Physically Challenged
Is this little boy “physically challenged” or does he have a disability?

What’s the difference?

Why do you think some individuals use words phrases like “physically challenged” and “differently-abled”?
Special

- Movie of the Week -

Big Brands Sale
70% Off
One Day Sale Only
Easter Sunday
March 23
10AM to 10PM
Robinsons
Brands outlets vale
For DTV - PTA Point of No. 004 Series of 2008
Why do some people consider a person with a disability “special”?

If the goal is full community inclusion and integration, does a word like “special” help or hurt in achieving this goal?

Why are “needs” “services” or “education” programming considered special when they are for people with disabilities?
When someone is in bed sick or has a disability and is in bed often, some people say they are...

“Bed bound”
Why would someone say a person is “confined (or bound)” to his/her wheelchair?

Does this individual look “confined”?

Or - does it appear as if his wheelchair provides him with freedom, independence, and mobility?
Victim

The Water is Rising Pleas

LIFELINE MINISTERS
Is there a “victim” in this picture?

The groom appears to have a disability, but does he appear to be a “victim” of anything in the photo?

What about the bride?

Would you consider the bride to be a “victim”? 
Suffering
Have you ever heard someone say - *so and so* suffers from muscular dystrophy?

Does this young man look as if he is “suffering?” Does using this term elicit pity?

Do you think suffering is a permanent condition or situation?
Inspirational
Do you know or recognize this man? Would you consider him inspirational?

Ed Roberts once said – “...We are not super-cripples, we are role models.”

What does that quote mean to you? How do you feel about it?
Word Play
Is this an Electric Chair?
Wait – Isn’t this an Electric Chair?
Electric Chair?
Power Chair!
Language: Why Does It Matter?

Because equal rights doesn’t necessarily guarantee people with disabilities equal treatment. Discussing the stigma associated with certain language plays an important role in changing the way we think and act and in eliminating stereotypes.
Language: Why Does It Matter?

If we are “unaware” of the negative connotation associated with certain language we can unintentionally hurt or offend people.

If you are not sure – Just ask.
THANK YOU!

Questions or Comments?