

People First!

The positive power of language

People First language is easy to learn - people come first before their disability. If we use words that put the disability before the person, we tend to see only the disability, not the many characteristics that make up the individual. This slight adjustment in our language can speak volumes to our children and rework perspectives.

Here are some examples of positive phrases and more negative phrases. Note that the positive phrases put the person first and recognize that having a disability is only a part of who that person is. *People First* language also avoids describing a disability as a tragedy or something that a person “suffers” from. Here are some examples that you can share with children about the power of words and how these fairly minor shifts in language really make a big difference.

Say	Instead Of
A person who uses a wheelchair	Wheelchair person, wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair
A child with an intellectual/developmental disability	Retarded kid, retard
A person who is blind; people with vision impairments	The blind
People who are deaf; a person with a hearing impairment	Suffers a hearing loss, the deaf
A woman with multiple sclerosis	Afflicted or stricken with multiple sclerosis
A boy with cerebral palsy	Cerebral palsy victim
A person who is unable to speak , someone with a speech impairment	Dumb, mute
A person with a disability	A disabled man, the handicapped
A child with autism	Autistic child
A person with Down syndrome	Down’s kid, mongoloid