

5. Consider carefully the words used to describe or characterize disabled individuals. Recognize and avoid phrases that may demean these individuals (e.g., blind as a bat, deaf and dumb).

Some recent negative headlines from the press:

No Longer a Human Wreck
Handicapped No Longer Act Like It
Bilateral Amputee Is A Lesson In Courage
Device Helps CP Victim Widen His Horizons
Washington Sees Dramatic Gains As Retarded Move To Community
Pinball Machine Helps Brain-damage Cases

The above headlines, extracted from the daily press from several countries, are negative examples of words often chosen to describe people with disabilities. The words used demean people with disabilities in the following manner:

- The words “victim” and “human wreck” present a picture of a less than human and pitiful person, devoid of dignity.
- To refer to someone as an adjective (handicapped, retarded) rather than a noun (person who is disabled or person who has a disability, person with retardation or who is retarded, etc.) is to negate his/her personhood.
- The use of “cases” and “bilateral amputee” reduce a person to a medical condition.

Below are some examples of terms which are preferable to those used:

AFFLICTED WITH — say “The person has...”

CRIPPLE/CRIPPLED/THE CRIPPLED — say “The person with a disability” or “individual with a disability.”

INFLICTED — say “caused by”

AN INVALID — say “the person who has a disability resulting from or caused by...”

RESTRICTED TO/CONFINED TO — say e.g. “uses a wheelchair” or “walks with crutches.”

VICTIM OF — say “person who has...”, “person who experienced...”, or “person with...”

WHEELCHAIR BOUND — say “uses a wheelchair.”

THE RETARDED — say “person who is retarded” or “person who has mental retardation.”