



## How "retardation" went from a clinical description to a word of derision

When they were originally introduced, the terms "mental retardation" or "mentally retarded" were medical terms with a specifically clinical connotation; however, the pejorative forms, "retard" and "retarded" have been used widely in today's society to degrade and insult people with intellectual disabilities. Additionally, when "retard" and "retarded" are used as synonyms for "dumb" or "stupid" by people without disabilities, it only reinforces painful stereotypes of people with intellectual disabilities being less valued members of humanity.

### The R-word is DEROGATORY

"Because the word has become a casual description of anything negative or flawed, 'retarded' is no longer considered an appropriate way to describe people with intellectual disabilities. And any use of the word, even when used as slang and not intended to be offensive, is hurtful - because it will always be associated with people who have disabilities." – *Sara Mitton, Board Member, Treasure Valley Down Syndrome Association*

### The R-word is INCORRECT

"When you say the "R" word it makes people feel bad and it hurts my feelings and I don't want to hear you guys say it. Instead, you can call me a leader, a hero, or a human being, but please don't call me the "R" word." – *Dony Knight, Special Olympics Oregon athlete*

### The R-word is EXCLUSIVE

"What's wrong with "retard"? I can only tell you what it means to me and people like me when we hear it. It means that the rest of you are excluding us from your group. We are something that is not like you and something that none of you would ever want to be. We are something outside the "in" group. We are someone that is not your kind. I want you to know that it hurts to be left out here, alone." – *Joseph Franklin Stephens, Special Olympics Virginia athlete and Global Messenger*