

SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD

www.r-word.org



Why Pledge

The R-word is the word 'retard(ed)'. Why does it hurt? The R-word hurts because it is exclusive. It's offensive. It's derogatory.

Our campaign asks people to pledge to stop saying the R-word as a starting point toward creating more accepting attitudes and communities for all people. Language affects attitudes and attitudes affect actions. Pledge today to use respectful, people-first language.

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.

Why "intellectual disability" is replacing "mental retardation"

The R-word, "retard," is slang for the term mental retardation. Mental retardation was what doctors, psychologists, and other professionals used to describe people with significant intellectual impairment. Today the r-word has become a common word used by society as an insult for someone or something stupid. For example, you might hear someone say, "That is so retarded" or "Don't be such a retard." When used in this way, the r-word can apply to anyone or anything, and is not specific to someone with a disability. But, even when the r-word is not said to harm someone with a disability, it is hurtful. Because of this, Special Olympics, Best Buddies and the greater disability community prefers to focus on people and their gifts and accomplishments, and to dispel negative attitudes and stereotypes. As language has evolved, Special Olympics and Best Buddies have updated their official terminology to use standard, people-first language that is more acceptable to constituents.

Advocates explain why the R-word is so hurtful when used in jokes or as part of everyday speech.

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*

The R-word IGNORES INDIVIDUALITY

"Words matter. People don't need to scoff at others to make a point. Everyone has a gift and the world would be better off if we recognized it." – *Tim Shriver, CEO of Special Olympics*

The R-word equates intellectual disability with being DUMB OR STUPID

When saying the R-word, "What we mean is that he is as stupid as someone who is mentally handicapped, and we mean that in the most derogatory sense. The implication is that the only characteristic of mentally handicapped individuals is their stupidity." – *Crystal, Stanford, CA*

The R-word spreads HURT

"It is wrong to pain people with your language. Especially, when you have already been made aware of your oral transgression's impact. Make no mistake about it: WORDS DO HURT! And when you pepper your speak with "retard" and "retarded," you are spreading hurt." – *John C. McGinley, actor and star of the hit TV show "Scrubs"*

The R-word is OFFENSIVE

"The word retard is considered hate speech because it offends people with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as the people that care for and support them. It alienates and excludes them. It also emphasizes the negative stereotypes surrounding people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; the common belief that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities should be segregated, hidden away from society, which, in my opinion, is really old fashioned." – *Karleigh Jones, Special Olympics New Zealand athlete*

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 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 fosters LONELINESS

"It hurts and scares me when I am the only person with intellectual disabilities on the bus and young people start making "retard" jokes or references. Please put yourself on that bus and fill the bus with people who are different from you. Imagine that they start making jokes using a term that describes you. It hurts and it is scary." – *Joseph Franklin Stephens, Special Olympics Virginia athlete and Global Messenger*

The R-word is HATE SPEECH

"I don't think you understand how much you hurt others when you hate. And maybe you don't realize that you hate. But that's what it is; your pre-emptive dismissal of them [people with intellectual disabilities], your dehumanization of them, your mockery of them, it's nothing but another form of hate. It's more hateful than racism, more hateful than sexism, more hateful than anything." – *Soeren Palumbo, student, advocate, brother to a sister with an intellectual disability.*