

Chapter 1 - Part 3 of 5 – Working With Boys With Disabilities - Establishing a Mindset

Although many people have good intentions and want to work with boys with disabilities, they often don't know some of the important elements to successful ministry. Probably the most important mindset that we as group leaders need to develop is this:

Focus on the person, not the disability

- The word handicap is not a synonym. It implies limits where no limits may exist. It stresses a negative connotation instead of focusing upon the positive attitudes and abilities. It is still appropriate to refer to handicap parking, but in time this terminology will probably change, so be aware of these issues.
- A person has a disability; a person is not afflicted with a disability. See the list in the box on the following page. Notice how the terminology always reflects upon the person first and the disability second. Most people with disabilities do not believe they have been afflicted with a disability, but rather they see it as an opportunity to enhance or minister to the lives of others.
- Focus upon the person's ability but don't overly praise or patronize. Treating them like a small child or pet (such as petting them on the head or speaking to them with "baby" talk) is demeaning and insulting. It is important to challenge them to succeed and when necessary to make the appropriate accommodations to make that happen. Yes, it is appropriate to praise their efforts, but don't do it more than you would for other boys. Besides, they will pick up your feelings of pity quickly and will be less likely to respond to your efforts to work with them.
- People with disabilities are PEOPLE and thus a part of our society. It wasn't too many years ago when it was considered proper to keep "those people with problems" hidden away from the rest of society. It is our job to find ways to include all boys in Royal Ranger events.

Excerpted from Language Is More than a Trivial Concern!

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Acceptable Terminology	Unacceptable Terminology
He had polio	He was afflicted, stricken with, suffers from, a victim of polio.
She has cerebral palsy	She is cerebral palsied, spastic
A person who uses a wheelchair	Confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound
She has a disability	She is crippled, handicapped
People with disabilities	Disabled person
A person who is deaf	Dumb, deaf mute, dummy
Seizure	Fit
He has a mental illness	Nut, crazy, idiot, imbecile, moron
A person who has a speech disability	Mute
Comparison between people with disabilities and those without a disability etc.	Normal person, whole person, healthy person,
A person who has mental retardation	Retard, idiot, etc.
Other words that should be avoided:	Abnormal, invalid, misshapen, burden, lame, spaz, disfigured, maimed, unfortunate.