



What to say and not say to families of children with disability

Do Not Say ...	Try Instead ...
Retarded, Intellectually retarded, Mentally retarded	Intellectually challenged, Physically challenged, has special needs
Mongoli	Down syndrome
'Normal child' vs disabled	Typical children or non-disabled children
Matters concerning people with disability is a humanitarian cause	It is a matter of equal rights
We should give people with disabilities a chance	We should give people with disabilities equal opportunities
Disability is a test from God	Disability is a type of diversity

Parents of children with disabilities prefer you ask questions, rather than stare. But be kind and understanding that they may not always be ready to answer you.

Do Not Ask / Say...	Why not	Try Instead ...
"What's wrong with him/her?"	It focuses on the negative not the positive in the child	"What can I do to help?"
"Is s/he sick?"	Disability falls under diversity; all kids can be sick or healthy regardless of their ability	"What is his disability called?"
"I am so sorry"	It makes parents feel pitied and there is nothing worse than that	"What support do you get from family or the school?"
"I don't know how you can do it; I wouldn't have been able to"	Parents do what they do for their children out of love - every parent does	"I admire how you handle things."
"Is he talking/walking/toilet trained yet?"	It is painful for parents to see how far behind their children are	- Control your curiosity and say nothing and understand from watching
"He doesn't look like he has a disability."	There are disabilities that don't affect physical appearance	"I don't know much about <disability type> - how can I find out more?"
"Its good you have another 'normal child'."	All kids are normal and all kids have different abilities - saying this makes parents feel the child with disability is less than his/her siblings	- do not say this
"Did you know while you were pregnant?"	Parents of children with disabilities have enough to deal with already without having to feel judged or worse yet, blamed for their child's having a disability	If you must know - ask : "I don't know much about <disability type> - how can I find out more?"