

Key Messages and Talking Points

It is time we **Spread the Word to End the Word** and build awareness for society to stop and think about its use of the R-word. That R-word, "retard" or "retarded," is something hurtful and painful. Most people don't think of this word as hate speech, but that's exactly what it feels like to millions of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and friends. This word is just as cruel and offensive as any other slur. Visit www.r-word.org today.

Young people around the world are taking a stand and raising awareness of the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the words "retard" or "retarded" and are helping encourage others to think before they speak.

Up to three percent of the world's population have intellectual disabilities - that's 200 million people around the world. It's the largest disability population in the world, perhaps you know someone?

Young people are encouraging everyone to visit www.r-word.org to make their pledge not to use the R-word.

We ask that you help us change the conversation and help eliminate the demeaning use of the R-word from today's popular youth vernacular and replace it with "respect." We are asking for your help in creating a more accepting world for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and all those people that may appear different, but have unique gifts and talents to share with the world.

We're asking every person, young and old, to help eliminate the demeaning use of the R-word, a common taunt used to make fun of others. Often unwittingly, the word is used to denote behavior that is clumsy, hapless or even hopeless. But whether intentional or not, the word conjures up a painful stereotype of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It hurts, even if you don't mean it that way.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are capable and enjoy sharing life experiences such as: listening to music, playing video games, watching the latest movies, and yes, having fun, as well as working together toward athletic excellence and mutually enriching one-to-one friendships as demonstrated constantly through Special Olympics and Best Buddies International. They can attend school, work, drive cars, get married, participate in decisions that affect them, and contribute to society in many ways.

Special Olympics' Multi-National Public Opinion Study of Attitudes toward People with Intellectual Disabilities, conducted by Gallup, reveals that throughout the world, over 60 percent of people *still* believe that people with intellectual disabilities should be segregated in schools and in the workplace. This is intolerable. We need massive attitude change now to attack and reverse the stigma that is destructive to the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and a barrier to growth.

Did you know that by casually using the word "retard(ed)" to refer to an action as less than ideal you are making someone with an intellectual disability feel less than human, whether you mean to or not? Demeaning any of our fellow human beings by using inappropriate words toward any population negatively impacts all of us.