

PERSON FIRST VS. IDENTITY FIRST LANGUAGE

Q: What is the difference between the two? Why the difference?
Why does this matter?

A: “Positively Conscious”- being aware of how what you say affects
yourself and others

Knowing the issues, knowing our history

Thinking about how what we say shapes our world

LET’S EXPLORE TOGETHER



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PERSON FIRST LANGUAGE

- There is a famous story about a person with intellectual disabilities getting up at one of the first self-advocacy conferences over 30 years ago and saying “I am a Person First!”
- What do you think he meant by this?
- Do you feel that sometimes people see your disability and not the other things about you?
- Do you hear people calling people “wheelchairs” or being referred to as their disability for example- “she is intellectually disabled”?
- How do you think it might affect someone to be referred to as a “wheelchair”?



PERSON FIRST LANGUAGE

Person First language comes from people who felt they were not being seen as people.

They prefer people to say things like:

“person *with* a disability”

“person *with* learning disabilities”

“person *who uses* a wheelchair”

They also prefer not to be defined by their disability, seeing disability as only one part of who they are.



Label Jars, Not People

Another story is of a man from Rochester, New York. His name was Bosley. He was a strong self-advocate and always encouraged other people to speak up for themselves.

At a conference, one of the self-advocates in the meeting was using the word “consumer” to talk about the other people who worked in the sheltered workshop.

Bosley said “we have to stop referring to each other as consumers!”

Why do you think Bosley said this?



SANYS U

- I am not a CLIENT
- I am not a CONSUMER
- I am not a PATIENT
- I AM A PERSON!
- I AM A CITIZEN!
- I HAVE VALUE AND WORTH!

“Normal is a setting on a
washing machine”

- Marisol Getchius

Is it normal **not** to have a disability?

For whom?

Who sets the standard? Can we set our own standards?

Another way to think of this is that everyone is different,
and there is no such thing as normal.

IDENTITY FIRST LANGUAGE

Identity First language comes from disability rights activists who said “I’m proud to be disabled! My disability is a big part of who I am!”

They see disability as a culture, and people with disabilities as one of the largest minorities in the country.

In general, they don’t like terms that shy away from disability, like Differently-Abled, or Uniquely Abled

They prefer people to say things like:

Disabled person

Autistic person

“I’m autistic”

“I’m disabled”

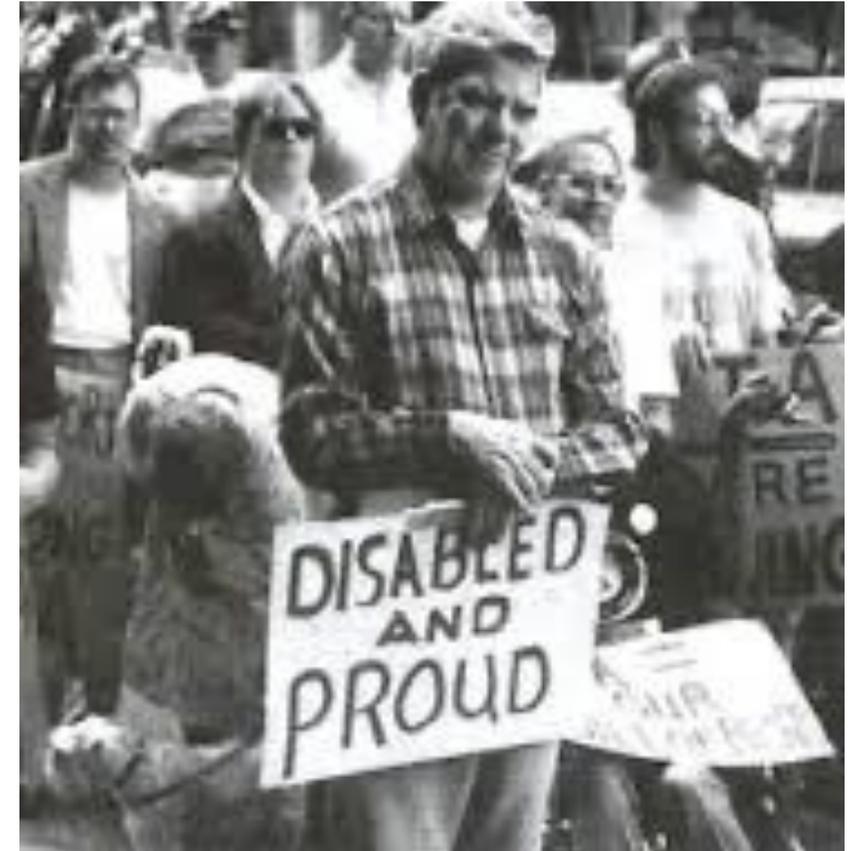


IDENTITY FIRST LANGUAGE

Do you see your disability as a big part of who you are?

Do you feel proud to be a person with a disability?

Do you see disability as a culture? What does that mean to you?



SPEAKING POSITIVELY ABOUT DISABILITY

Many people feel that the way people talk about disability helps to shape the way people see disability.

- Confined to a wheelchair? Or freed by a wheelchair?
- Afflicted by a disability?
- Suffers from a disability?

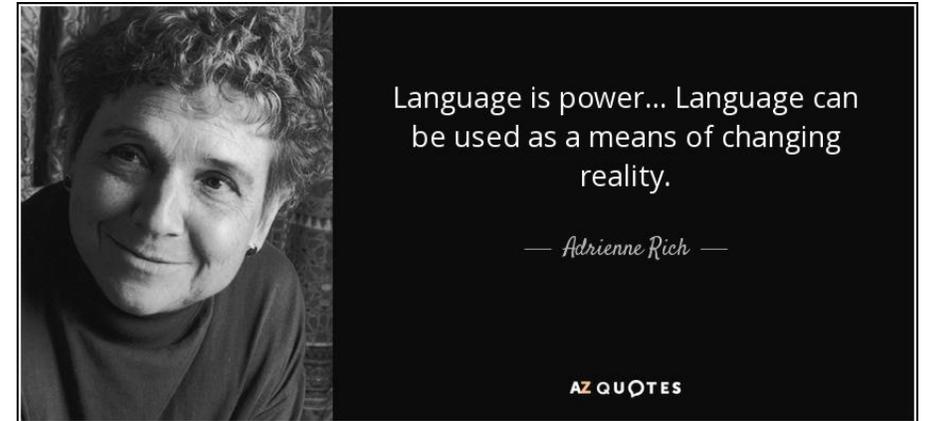
Low Functioning/High Functioning

Many people with developmental disabilities are frustrated by being placed along a spectrum, or put into categories. Why not talk about your specific abilities and support needs instead?

For example: “I am good at understanding speech, but sometimes need support communicating to others”

We are all people- we are not higher or lower than one another.

- Special Needs – Are our needs special or are they just needs?



What do you feel?

Do you feel you suffer?

Are you special? More special than others?

Less than others?

Nothing About Us, Without Us

Who gets to decide what language you would like to be used about you? You do!

How do you know what words to use when talking to someone else with a disability? Ask them!

Is it okay to tell people what words you do or don't want them to use?

What are some ways to do that?

What do **YOU** think?

