



A B O U T F A C E

Words That Work

Created by AboutFace

As students and peers, we have the opportunity to influence change through our attitudes and behaviours. By modeling positive, inclusive and supportive behaviour, we send a strong message to others that we embrace differences and diversity. One important aspect of modeling positive behaviour is language. By using appropriate language, students can encourage, empower and support diversity in the school community. Changing attitudes starts with one person and their willingness to make a difference.

Here are some simple but effective alternative words to help you model positive behaviour:

- **"Difference" versus "Disfigurement"**

For a person with a facial difference, the word "difference" is more sensitive. "Disfigurement", "deformity," "defect", and "anomaly" should be avoided as they suggest negative connotations.

- **"Perfect" and "Normal"**

These words are poor choices to use in that their opposites are "imperfect" and "abnormal". In other words, try not to refer to children or peers without a facial difference as perfect or normal. Try to use "affected" and "unaffected" instead, or unusual appearance.

- **"Victim"**

In recognition of our belief that we can be strengthened by our experiences rather than destroyed or made powerless by them, we avoid using this term. We feel it evokes pity and reinforces the concept that we suffer from unfortunate circumstances.

- **People-First Language**

Try to reinforce the concept that it is the person that is most important and the condition is secondary. Having a facial difference is only one aspect of the whole person, not the most important description of him or her. Always remember to use the person's name to refer to them and avoid creating nicknames that can be hurtful or cause discomfort to the affected person.

AboutFace is a national charitable organization dedicated to helping individuals with facial differences and their families. We support individuals whose differences are present at birth or acquired as a result of disease or trauma. If you or someone you know has a facial difference and would like more information, contact AboutFace at 1-800- 665-FACE or www.aboutface.ca.

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