

Talking About Disabilities with Children: A Guide By Age



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When it comes to talking about disabilities with children, it is important to be patient and allow for comments, opinions, and questions in a safe and judgement-free zone. Aim to guide your child and provide them with the appropriate language to discuss disabilities. Here are some topics by age that can help further navigate this conversation.

Preschool (ages 3-4)

Incorporate books and other resources about inclusion and disabilities into at-home reading.

****See next page for recommended resources!***

Kindergarten (ages 5-6)

Encourage your child to see classmates with visible disabilities as potential friends, rather than focusing on the things that may make them different from one another. Emphasize the importance of kindness and inclusion.

Late Elementary (ages 8-10)

Keep things value-neutral in discussions, as disabilities are not something to be feared or pitied. Words like "inspiring" may be offensive to people with disabilities, who are ordinary people just like anyone else.

High-School (ages 14-18)

Discuss the difficult circumstances and discrimination that people with disabilities have faced in the past. Being aware of ableism in society is a first step to inspiring change.

"Why is that person in a wheelchair?"

"It is challenging for her to walk, so she uses that to get around instead!"

Preschool/Pre-K (ages 4-5)

Promote curiosity and give direct answers to any questions that your child may ask. Also, let your child know that pointing/staring at people with visible disabilities is not polite.

Early Elementary (ages 7-8)

Address boundaries and let your child know that disabilities can be visible or invisible. Also, discuss the resources that people with disabilities use in a positive way, like wheelchairs, hearing aids, or service animals.

Middle School (ages 11-13)

Teach your child the appropriate vocabulary to use when talking about disabilities. It is important to communicate that words such as the "R-word" are off-limits and should not be used.

Person-First Language
"A disabled person"



VS.

"A person with disabilities"



**SPREAD THE WORD
TO END THE WORD**

www.r-word.org



Additional Resources:

Seattle Children's Hospital
The Huffington Post
Today.



www.strongschoolsli.org

Recommended Resources:

Books, Shows, and Movies that Feature Disabilities



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Preschool - Pre-K (ages 3-5)



The ABCs of Inclusion
By Beth Leipholtz



Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood:
"Friends are Different and the Same"

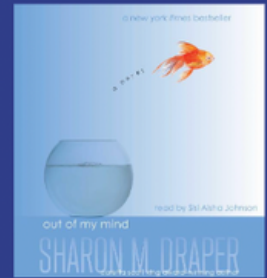
Other Titles:

- "Every Child Is Different" by Luna James
- "What Happened to You?" by James Catchpole
- "Can Bears Ski?" by Raymond Antrobus

Elementary School (ages 7-10)



Wonder
By R.J. Palacio
(book and 2017 film)



Out of My Mind
By Sharon Draper

Kindergarten (ages 5-6)



Finding Nemo
(2003)



Just Ask!
By Sonia Sotomayor

Middle School (ages 11-13)



Soul Surfer
(2011)



Fish in a Tree
By Lynda Mullaly Hunt

High School (ages 14-18)



Being Seen
By Elsa Sjunneson

You, Me, and Our Heartstrings
By Melissa See



Additional Resources:

- Family & Children Books About Disability
- Middle School Books About Disability
- Young Adult Books About Disability



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