
Improving Our Communication w/o Ableist Language



This document provides examples of words which create harm to folx with disabilities. These words are typically used pejoratively as metaphors (casual ableist language). Casual ableist language is microaggressive and can include using disability as an insult or as an expression. The primary purpose of this document is to serve as a reference for the microaggressive language used daily - casual ableism.

Here are some examples of words that are used pejoratively in casual ableist language:

Barren

Refers to people who are infertile and carries sexist connotations as well as ableist ones.

Blind to ____ / turn a blind eye to ____ / blinded by ignorance/bigotry/etc.

Refers to Blind people or people with visual impairments.

Bound to a wheelchair (wheelchair bound)

Refers to people with physical or mobility disabilities.

Cripple/Crippled (by ____)

Refers to people with physical or mobility disabilities.

Deaf to ____ / turn a deaf ear to ____ / etc.

Refers to Deaf people or people with hearing impairments.

Differently abled

Can refer to any person with a disability.

Dumb

Refers to Deaf people or people with hearing impairments, people with speech impairments, or people with linguistic or communication disorders or disabilities.

Feeble-Minded

Refers to people with mental, psychiatric, intellectual, or developmental disabilities.

Idiot(ic)

Refers to people with intellectual disabilities.

Imbecile

Refers to people with intellectual disabilities.

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Insane or Insanity

Refers to people with mental or psychiatric disabilities.

Lame

Refers to people with physical or mobility disabilities.

Loony/Loony Bin

Refers to people with mental or psychiatric disabilities.

Lunatic

Refers to people with mental or psychiatric disabilities.

Madhouse/Mad/Madman

Refers to an institution housing people with mental or psychiatric disabilities.

Maniac

Refers to people with mental or psychiatric disabilities.

Mental/Mental Case

Refers to people with mental or psychiatric disabilities.

Moron(ic)

Refers to people with intellectual disabilities.

Nuts

Refers to people with mental or psychiatric disabilities.

Psycho

Refers to people with mental or psychiatric disabilities.

Psychopath(ic)

Refers to people with mental or psychiatric disabilities.

Psycho(tic)

Refers to people with mental or psychiatric disabilities.

Retard(ed)/[anything]-tard

Refers to people with intellectual disabilities.

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[you belong on the] Short-bus/ that's short-bus material/etc.

Refers to people with intellectual, learning, or other mental disabilities.

Simpleton

Refers to people with intellectual disabilities.

Spaz(zed)

Refers to people with cerebral palsy or similar neurological disabilities.

Special Needs

Usually refers to people with learning, intellectual, or developmental disabilities, but can mean any person with a disability.

Stupid

Refers to people with intellectual disabilities (i.e. "in a stupor").

Suffers from _____

Can refer to any person with a disability.

Wacko/Whacko

Refers to people with mental or psychiatric disabilities.

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Instead of using casual ableist language to provide a description, maybe you try one of these words:

Asinine	Nasty
Bad	Nefarious
Bleak	Nonsense
Boring	Nonsensical
Bullish	Obtuse
Callous	Outrageous
Careless	Overwrought
Confusing	Paradoxical
Contemptible	Petulant
Coward	Putrid
Devoid of _____	Rage-inducing
Disgusting	Reckless
Enraged	Ridiculous
Evil	Rude
Extremist	Scornful
Furious	Shameful
Gross	Solipsistic
Horrible	Spurious
Impolite	Terrible
Incomprehensible	Unbelievable
Inconsiderate	Unconscionable
Inconsistent	Unheard of
Infuriating	Uninspired
Insensible	Unoriginal
Irrational	Unthinkable
Livid	Unthinking
Mean	Useless
	Vile