

Writing for People with Intellectual Disabilities

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**Applying Universal Design Principles to Serving
Survivors with Disabilities & Deaf Survivors**

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Writing for People with Intellectual Disabilities

- **Presenter's framework**
- **Definitions**
- **Concepts to keep in mind**
- **Understanding different intellectual disabilities**
- **Examining own attitudes regarding disabilities and the issues**
- **Understanding tasks**
- **Strategies that work**

Principles of Universal Design for Learning

Provide Multiple Means of Representation

- Perception
- Language and symbols
- Comprehension

Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression

- Physical Action
- Expressive skills and fluency
- Executive function

Provide Multiple Means of Engagement

- Recruit interest
- Sustain effort and persistence
- Sustain regulation

National Center on Universal Design for Learning
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Higher Education Opportunity Act 2000

Reducing barriers with appropriate supports and challenges built into instruction.

The task force represented general, special education and civil rights organizations that identified efforts to include definitions and provisions for implementation. The task force emphasized that more than just physical access was at stake....That fair and equal opportunities for learning are owed to those with learning disabilities, cognitive and intellectual challenges.....

Definition of Developmental Disabilities

(Wikipedia)

Developmental disabilitydescribes life-long, [disabilities](#) attributable to mental and/or physical or combination of mental and physical [impairments](#), manifested prior to age 18. The term is used most commonly to disabilities affecting daily functioning in three or more of the following areas:

- capacity for independent living
- economic self-sufficiency
- **learning**
- mobility
- **receptive and expressive language**
- **self-care (includes safety and consent)**
- self-direction

Frequently, people with [mental retardation](#) (*intellectual disabilities*), [cerebral palsy](#), [autism spectrum disorder](#), various [genetic and chromosomal disorders](#) such as [Down syndrome](#) and [Fragile X syndrome](#), and [Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder](#) are described as having developmental disabilities.

Difficulties sometimes appearing in the ability to access new information among individuals with developmental disabilities

Inability to grasp abstract concepts (intellectual disabilities)

- **Poor ability to pick up on social cues (learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, ASD- important in both positive and negative relationships)**
- **Deficits in social understanding (important interactions in both positive and negative relationships)**
- **Poor verbal language skills (intellectual disabilities, ASD)**
- **Inability to generalize**
- **Poor theory of mind * (ASD, intellectual disabilities)**

***Theory of mind- inability to understand that other people perceive situations or feel differently than you (especially important relative to ability to perceive a potentially abusive situation)**

Some strategies to help individuals with developmental disabilities access new information

- **Need to assess learning styles and literacy level (ESL)**
- **Assess previous sexuality education**
- **Exercises in self esteem**
- **Exercises in self determination**
- **Staying safe skill building**
- **Use concrete rather than abstract language**
- **Use visual rather than verbal symbols**
- **Practice, repetition and review**
- **Interactive (non touching) role play**
- **Social stories**
- **Color code important words**
- **Use correct vocabulary**
- **Simplify vocabulary**
- **Use anatomical drawings if necessary**
- **Use videos if available**
- **Use signing and visuals when teaching deaf community**
- **Peer instruction**
- **Colored stickers**
- **Cue cards**

Writing a Violence Curriculum for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

Help individual with developmental disabilities identify and explain different feelings using pictures and/or stories.

They can write a story in which they describe something that happened to them and how they felt and how others felt in the situation.

You might list the feelings and have them check them off.

You might also have one of the participants with better literacy skills read the name of the feeling to someone with less literacy skill or color code the different feelings.

These techniques can be used with other exercises as well.

Define safety and review safety rules when alone, when at home alone and with strangers and when on the street when lost or followed. How does each of these situations make one feel?

Describe the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Have the individuals discuss some of the good relationships they have had and some that they feel were not so good. How would each type of relationship make one feel?

Define different kinds of abuse. Give examples. Use visuals.

Describe what might be an abusive relationship. Describe how an abusive relationship would make one feel.

Define individual rights. Define consent in the context of physical and sexual abuse.

Describe and differentiate between good touch versus bad touch.

Help individuals identify personal boundaries.

Rehearse social skills and relationship building through social stories and role playing.

Define healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Explain different strategies for avoiding dangerous situations through role playing, rehearsing.

Describe and practice skills for taking personal responsibility including setting limits on one's own and other's behavior.

Write examples in which individuals identify what is private and what is public.

Such as brushing hair, touching private parts, holding hands, using mouthwash, hugging, kissing family members

Describe and practice strategies for preventing abuse through role playing and rehearsing. Have individuals practice different ways of saying "NO".

Exercises in building self esteem and empowerment including rights and fighting back, decision making, personal self advocacy, and refusal skills (practice saying "NO!" avoidance of dangerous situations).

Have individuals describe when it is okay to say No in non-abusive situations such as someone asking for money, physical affection by a relative when you don't want it, an alcoholic drink, physical confrontation etc...

Dating skills through role playing and social stories and rehearsing

Decision making should include:

Where to...

With whom...

When to...

What to do before and after...

When to end...

Review the consequences of different decisions

Develop a role play situation in which individuals might practice the decision making process as it might apply to a dating situation.

Practice dating situations- casual dating, avoiding situations that might place one at risk for sexual abuse.

Have individuals discuss how to recognize dating violence and how to react to sexual assault-give concrete examples in the curriculum. I.e. touching private parts when having given consent (describe what this means), feeling uncomfortable, doesn't like the other person.

Dating violence-give concrete examples—other person doesn't like you talking to other people or looking at them, yells at you all the time, acts weird.

Use illustrative examples of simulated and hypothetical situations to distinguish between healthy and abusive interpersonal, safe and unsafe situations.

Use cue cards, modeling and prompting exercises

Describe the different kinds of sexual abuse that can occur in the context of dating.

Describe interpersonal respect – how the individual wishes to be treated, how to treat others. For individuals with Theory of Mind difficulties, this needs to be rehearsed and practiced many times over.

Use visuals depicting different feelings and identifying them can be very helpful. Individuals with ASD frequently do not look at faces to get their information about how people are feeling.

Similarly individuals with difficulties picking up on social cues need to practice this. Social stories can be very helpful.

Carol Gray has developed the concept of social stories.

Abuse and the law-what to do if one has been abused.

Review the importance of telling someone what has happened to them.

Review resources and laws that can help them and the procedures for reporting abuse.

Where to go, what kind of report to give, follow up procedures, use of witnesses, support persons

Note: Some of these suggestions have been borrowed from materials developed by Peter F. Gerhardt, Ed.D. The Organization for Autism Research Pgerhardt@Researchautism.org

Use visuals (see attached examples)



Drawing by Jace Rascal Smith



Three drawings by Sara Lauren Smith



