

# Communicating with the mentally challenged education essay



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The purpose is to make people aware that although you try to be politically correct when communicating with the mentally challenged, mind through server, there is a definite communication channel to use. My purpose is, since I do foster care and have been given a child that is severely challenged, was to learn as much as possible as how the learning habits of the child and the best or different ways to communicate to the child knowing the child will always be challenged. For the purpose of this paper I will refer to the child as he (although it could well be a she) and since Sonic the hedgehog seems to be a favorite between both sexes, the name of the child, in order to protect the child's identity will be referred to as Sonic.

#### Thesis statement

All children must mature and the responsibility to develop all children falls upon each of us to raise the child up and yet when it comes to the mentally challenged child there must be different channels of communication between the adult and that child. These conduits allows the adult to take into account the intelligence of the child, and reach the child on their level, even if it means going down to their level. The adult talk must reflect the child's level of understanding.

“ If more people do not take a more active interest in the life of the mentally retarded then we will not have any place to go except in an institutional living and that is not fair because we are God's creatures.” Anonymous

#### Introduction

Communicating with the mentally challenged is not only a challenge to the mentally challenged, but the adult as well. Each situation must be understood before continuing in educating the child to become a productive part of society, if that is possible. Looking at the definition of “mentally challenged” and to what degree the child is challenged, from borderline cases to highly severe, and a true “treatment” plan can be formulated to mold the child to usefulness even if that usefulness is nothing more than getting oneself to the bathroom. The mentally challenge will grow and mature the question is how much? For mentally challenged kids and adults, some things can never be learned. (Emma, 2007)

### Defining Mentally Challenged

Mentally challenged primary depends on the I. Q. of the child along with one or more of the many psychological tests available to measure the intelligence or mental functioning of the child. Therefore, when the mental age is divided by the chronological age and multiplied by a hundred, what you get is the Intelligence Quotient or the I. Q. (De la Jara, 2007) An I. Q. above 140 is the sign of a genius. An average to very intelligent child would score of 100 - 120 and a dull child would score 80 - 90. Those children classified below 85 are classified even further. An IQ of 84-70 is considered borderline mentally challenged, while those 55-69 are mild cases and consider educable. 40-54 are Moderate cases but trainable, 25-39 are severely deficient and any IQ below 24 is classified as highly severe.

Mental age refers to an age at a normal level of performance on an intelligence test, and it became a popular way of referring to “mental level”

as measured by the Binet - Simon scale of 1908. The Binet - Simon scale identified the academic skills typical of specific age groups. In 1912, William Stern used chronological age as a denominator to be divided into mental age, resulting in an intelligence quotient. In 1916, Lewis Terman multiplied this intelligence quotient by 100 (to eliminate the decimal places) and called the result an IQ score. Terman's formula of mental age divided by chronological age multiplied by 100 became popularized as the formula for calculating a person's IQ. Adult intelligence does not change from year to year so the concept of mental age is less meaningful when discussing adults. Contemporary IQ tests use cumulative indexes to determine scores rather than the calculation of IQ scores based upon Terman's formula. A contemporary equivalent of mental age is the Standard Age Score of the Stanford-Binet IQ test, which was formulated in 1987.

### Overview of mentally challenged

Although there is no hard evidence, one of the strongest factors of the mental deficiency is hereditary. Besides this there are a number of environmental factors that contribute to mental arrest, malnutrition or infection during pregnancy or even an excessive intake of drugs and RH incompatibility whatever the cause, if the handicap is very severe, the entire development of the child gets affected - physical, social and emotional along with mental. Some of these children cannot perform the simplest of tasks that we all seem to take for granted. Simple things like walking straight, eating or toilet training. A great amount of patience and tolerance is required to supervise and handle such a child.

Mental retardation occurs in 2.5-3% of the general population. About 6-7.5 million mentally retarded individuals live in the United States alone. Mental retardation begins in childhood or adolescence before the age of 18. In most cases, it persists throughout adulthood. Mentally retarded children reach developmental milestones such as walking and talking much later than the general population. Approximately 85% of the mentally retarded population is in the mildly retarded category and they can often acquire academic skills up to the 6th grade level, become self-sufficient, and in some cases live independently, with community and social support.

Low IQ scores and limitations in adaptive skills are the hallmarks of mental retardation. Aggression, self-injury, and mood disorders are sometimes associated with the disability. The severity of the symptoms and the age at which they first appear depend on the cause. Children who are mentally retarded reach developmental milestones significantly later than expected, if at all. If retardation is caused by chromosomal or other genetic disorders, it is often apparent from infancy. If retardation is caused by childhood illnesses or injuries, learning and adaptive skills that were once easy may suddenly become difficult or impossible to master.

The most noticeable emotional characteristics children with mental retardation often recognize that they have difficulties with tasks that others find easy. This realization can lead to frustration, anger and depression. Some children with mental retardation may suffer from anxiety. These children may act out due to these emotions. They may have trouble expressing their feelings and may show their feelings in ways such as refusing to eat or sleeping too much. Sonic, the foster child living with me, <https://assignbuster.com/communicating-with-the-mentally-challenged-education-essay/>

will be calm and act like a five year old one moment, and then if you ask something of sonic, major mood change to the point of aggression.

### How to understand the mentally challenged

Anyone who has toiled with the mentally challenged people knows, many will tell you exactly what is on their mind. When something does not go Sonics way, he will tell you and if you persist, he will tell you she will kill you, and hates you. Understanding that this is typical in a mentally challenged you let it roll off you and just stay close enough to make sure that sonic does not hurt herself. The mentally challenged know their likes and dislikes, what is going on in their lives, and even some idea of what they want their future to be.

When the mentally challenged are treated as subhuman, as children, or as a menace to society, it follows that “ we” become the ones to decide what is best for them, and what kind of life they should lead, we instead should remind ourselves that they are “ God’s creatures.” They need to be treated as serious human beings with important things to communicate. (McLean, Brady, Mclean, & Behrens, 1999) Understanding their language is likely to be much better than the ability to express it. Speech maybe very poorly articulated and difficult to understand

One of the critical aspects in forming a communication is one that emphasizes skill actualization, where teachers give the mentally challenged many opportunities to use and expand on their already developed skills. Skill actualization goals are represented in the individual education plan (IEP)

such as “ the child will use” whatever skill is already developed and continue  
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to expand to the point where the child will reach the next goal. In Sonics case, the IEP has included counting skills up to 20, understanding the valued of money, and doing simple life skills.

### Steps in Creating Communication

The first step to communicating with a mentally challenged person is to understand the way they communicate. Mirror there patterns keeping in mind get on their level but do not be on their level. Match the way they see the world, not as a child but as a learning style. Most are visual learns where they learn in pictures, using word like see and look. Visual learners prefer to use diagrams, pictures, study notes, handouts and movies to see the information they are learning.

Sometimes the mentally challenged are audio learns where they may not even look at you but put more stock into the spoken word and the voice inflection. This is a fine line where the teacher must be very calm and sure of each word other wise you could miscommunication and all the building process is for naught. The mentally challenged needs to be heard and we must allow them to hear us.

The final learning style is kinesthetic learners also called tactile learners need to feel it to learn best. The more the learning experience involves moving, touching, tasting and feeling, the more it will be absorbed by this type of learner. Projects and experiments also work well with this group. Young children learn thins way by reaching out to something and feeling it, touching it, and breaking it. (OK I had to put that in)

The real art is to combine learning styles to fit the child. Sonic uses Visual about 80% and verbal about 15% and kinesthetic the remaining 5%. If you show her something, she will remember and get the message quickly, by adding the verbal component he will recall the instruction the next day, demonstrating, giving verbal instruction then transferring ownership of a task, builds his self-confidence. There are small tasks she can do the give him pride in doing well, such as showing which day on the med chart we are on and then picking the proper cup to take.

The second step is to incorporate the communication skills in both the education setting as well as the extra curricula activities. Opportunities exist almost constancy or as it is called " teachable moments." The hardest part as a teacher is to keep on top of the moments one can take advantage of and then take advantage of them. At home with sonic, it becomes a one on one the moment Sonic comes home from school until bedtime and in turn allows many more recognizable and controlled setting.

The third step is to facilitate conversation and keep them engaged as much as possible. The issue here must be keeping it simple. In studies, (McLean, Brady, Mclean, & Behrens, 1999) simple yes or no question got the most response from the mentally challenged. Asking completed questions creates confusion and frustration, and can actually cause the person to regress rather than moving forward. Using the KISS (keep it simple) method more ground can be make rather creating an antagonistic climate.

How to communicate with the Mentally Challenged



1. Maintain a calm, low volume. Speaking louder does not make you more understandable.
2. When determining “ age-appropriateness” of your words, remember that you must know the “ mental age” of your listener, not his or her “ calendar age.” Remember, they are just mentally challenged, not a person with a limited vocabulary, such as a five-year-old.
3. Do not cover or hide your mouth because listeners will want to watch you as you pronounce your words. This helps them figure out what you are saying in many cases.
4. Do not mimic how the mentally challenged speaker pronounces words in a misguided presumption that he or she will “ understand” if you speak like he or she does. This does not make you easier to understand. It will confuse your listener and may give the wrong impression about your sensitivity to his or her handicap.
5. Avoid running words together. For example, do not say, “ Do-ya wanna eat-a pizza?” One of the biggest challenges for listeners knows where one word ends and the next one begins. Give them a small pause between words if they seem to be struggling.
6. When possible, opt for simple words instead of ones that are complex. The more basic a word is, the better the chance is that it will be understood. “ Big” is a better choice than “ enormous,” for example. “ Make” is a better choice than “ manufacture.”

7. Avoid speech complexity, which is beyond your listener's comprehension level. Use simple subject-verb-object statements with the significantly challenged. More mildly challenged people may be able to handle more forms that are complex.
8. Look them in the eye. It lets them know that you care about what you are saying. Although they may rarely make eye contact with you, behave as if you really are interested in what they are talking about.
9. Treat people with disabilities with respect. Do not treat them as inferior. Remember that the person you are talking to has feelings and is not stupid. Rather, he/she is challenged with something you will never understand - the ability to understand, communicate, or decipher.
10. Patience is the key.
11. Be aware that you must listen and observe the person you are speaking to. In most cases, communicating with a person with a disability is very much like learning how to understand an accent. Be ready to adjust your communication style in a respectful way when necessary.
12. Treat them as close as possible as you would a "normal" person, except use age-appropriate words. Otherwise, they may sense something is up.
13. Smile to show them you are enjoying their company.
14. Be aware of the tone of your voice. Is it patronizing? Are you speaking with the tone you would use for a child? Adjust accordingly. ("Challenges faced by," 2010)

## Conclusion

The mentally challenged can become part of the community by understanding how they speak and process information. The earlier the problem is detected the better it is for the child. Sometimes the public tries to hide the fact until it becomes apparent to all, and by then it is too late to get timely help. There are plenty of child guidance centers and special schools around to provide the perfect environment to aid in the development of the child. If these facilities are not utilized, a mentally deficient child will definitely develop severe social and emotional problems as well.

We all should try to accept the fact that their child is mentally challenged and help him or her grow to the full potential that he or she is capable of. Some people try for a miraculous cure and expend a lot of time and energy in search of a divine elixir. Even though such an attitude is understandable, it does not show any results. That time will be better spent in admitting the child to a special school or sheltered institution where he can get professional help.

Communicating with people who have mental deficiency is a skill that you can hone over time with continuous practice. There are some tips, which will allow you to communicate in a better way with them. Words are just the tip of the communication iceberg. When conversing with a person, we send myriad signals by the way we stand the expression on our face and the tone of our voice. These form levels of communication that bypass words. When talking to anyone, remember to relax and consciously use body language in a positive manner. Even if the verbal communication is misunderstood, the

body language can convey concern and interest. The person will receive the message that we are interested in them and care about their feelings.

Watch what you say to the child, be very careful of the environment they are in, and make sure people treat the child as one of us, not a special child.

Each Tuesday we play softball for the church and each time Sonic gets up a homerun is produced. It is not the home run that matters to us, although Sonic would tell you other wise, but the encouragement of being one of the gang that allows her to participate in an activity someone with a mentally challenged condition would never experience.