

Diversity & Special Needs Activities

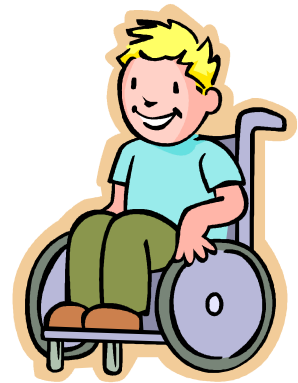


Teaching youth about diversity is important. One element of diversity is working with special needs individuals. Below are listed activities which will help youth understand the many types of disabilities they may encounter throughout their lives.

Limiting Mobility

Explain that some people can't see or can't hear or have difficulty doing so, and that others can't move around very easily on their own. Give youth the opportunity to experience what it would be like to live with a disability by allowing them to use a wheelchair, a walker, or crutches.

Always teach youth the appropriate terminology and the purpose of enabling equipment. For example: the "metal thing" on Billy's leg is called a "brace." It helps him walk.



Instant Aging

Provide the following materials to allow youth to explore ability differences.

1. Place masking tape around the fingers of the dominant hand to restrict their ability to move. This represents arthritis, cerebral palsy and muscle spasticity.
2. Place five or six popcorn kernels in both shoes. This activity allows youth to experience the pain associated with pressure of objects on their feet.
3. Insert ear plugs to show loss of hearing.
4. Provide amber colored cellophane or sunglasses to show a change in vision.
5. Place a latex-free glove on the non-dominant hand to represent loss of feeling and thinning of skin.

After youth have put on their ability-limiting attire, ask them to complete the following activities:



- * Buttoning shirt buttons and folding the shirt correctly
- * Counting buttons (or other small objects) in amber colored pill bottles
- * Reading the comics
- * Placing a phone call
- * Making change
- * Playing cards
- * Completing a word search



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After the activity you can process and reinforce with the following thoughts:

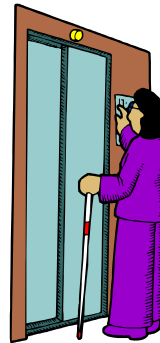
How did these activities make you feel?

It is okay to have questions about those that are different than you.

Can you think of any of your friends that have special needs?

Special Needs Community Tour

Take your youth group for a neighborhood walk. Point out some of the things the community does to include special needs individuals like: handicapped parking spaces, Braille markings on elevators and restroom doors, sidewalk curb-cuts and wheelchair ramps.



Source: Resources for these activities: 4-H PetPALS, Lucinda Miller, Extension Specialist, 4-H Youth Development and H. Marie Suthers-McCabe, DVM; and Starting Small by the Teaching Tolerance Project produced by the Teaching Tolerance Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Copyright 1997.

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