

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH COGNITIVE/INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGES

Pita Hopkins

Parent

Adapted Physical Education Teacher

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The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes in various shades, including light lime green, medium green, and dark forest green, creating a modern, layered effect.

Podcast by Maria Hodermarska “An Unexpected Alliance”

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Some Examples of Diagnoses That Can Result in Intellectual or Cognitive Challenges

- ▶ Down Syndrome
- ▶ Fetal Alcohol Syndrome - Addicted at birth
- ▶ Visually Impaired
- ▶ Hearing Impaired
- ▶ Speech/Language Impairment (receptive, expressive)
- ▶ Multiple Disabilities
- ▶ Developmental Disability
- ▶ Intellectual or Cognitive Disability
- ▶ Autism
- ▶ Autism Spectrum Disorder
- ▶ Emotionally Disturbed
- ▶ Behavior Disorder
- ▶ Orthopedic Impairment (spina bifida, cerebral palsy)
- ▶ Specific Learning Disability
- ▶ Traumatic Brain Injury
- ▶ Other Health Impaired (ADD, ADHD, hydrocephalus, Prader Willie Syndrome, Angelman Syndrome, Tourette's Syndrome)

Project Unify

Youtube:What is Project Unify?

Movement through Special Olympics Project Unify:

Spread the Word to End the Word

MR - Mental Retardation is outdated term. Literal translation is “slow”, but we have given it a negative connotation.

Our folks take longer to learn and often plateau at certain developmental levels, but many are able to continue to acquire new skills, commensurate with their ability, throughout their lifetime.



Marcus Hopkins
1984-2014
“The ‘R’ Word”

Global Messenger Speech

So who is a Retard? Let me start by giving you a brief history of one.

Hello, My name is Marcus Hopkins. I am 29 years old

I was born with hydrocephalus that damaged my brain causing me to have daily seizures.

After 5 years of testing Dr. Comair at the Cleveland Clinic cut out part of my brain. I briefly went blind from the swelling of my brain.

As a result of the surgery I went 16 years without seizures but recently started have a few and I struggle with math and reading and my peripheral vision is not the best.

During the time I was having seizures I learned to swim, ride a bike and I participated in Special Olympics spending 1500 hours practicing and winning over 70 medals in:



**Swimming
Pentathlon
Cycling
Basketball
Softball
Volleyball
Bowling
Poly Hockey
Golf
Equestrian
Flag Football**

The training and opportunities I got from Special Olympics prepared me for many things.

I graduated from Cibola High School and lettered in swimming.

I swam with Lobo and Duke USA swimming teams for 6 years.

I was learning to drive and passed my written test to earn my learners permit. I studied almost every night for two years but in the end I was not able to pass the driving test.

I had a job working at Good Will and Pizza Hut.

I participated in a performing arts group.

I assisted the equipment staff for the University of New Mexico football team for 4 years.

I went to the world Games in North Carolina to compete in swimming, living in the Olympic Village. Over the course of 8 days I raced in the 100 IM, 100 Backstroke, 100 breast stroke and two all star relay teams with other athletes from California, Colorado and Arizona.

I won 1 gold, 3 silver, 1 bronze medal.

I went to Chihuahua, Mexico to compete in the pentathlon as part of a group that helped establish Special Olympics in the state of Chihuahua Mexico .

I have repelled down a 12 Story building.
I ski and snowboard as part of the Adaptive ski program.

I was engaged to be married but got dumped. I have moved on and have a new girl friend.

So I'll tell you who a Retard is ?

It is someone who never gives up.

It is someone who enjoys life.

It is someone who has a job.

It is someone who has graduated

It is someone who is confused by women

Sound familiar????

The bottom line is I choose not to let others speak for me...

I speak for myself and make my own decisions....

I would like to leave you with some thoughts from the leader of Special Olympics, Tim Shriver as he talks about special needs folks.

“They still feel that they don't belong. In general, they don't feel supported by their communities.

People look at them and walk the other way. They cross the street. We are not educating kids to understand them.

We are not educating kids to reach across the aisle to someone with a disability or with an illness and be a buddy, and understand differences.”

Thank you for the opportunity to share some of my life and thoughts.

Splinter Skills

Within each of these categories there is a large range of skill ability - with many individuals displaying “Splinter Skills”:

skills that are above the individual’s general abilities.

- Ability to get driver’s license, but can’t manage finances
- Able to have long term relationships (some marry), but need help with basic day to day concerns
- Can read, but can’t add $2+2$

*Some Common Characteristics,
again,
Manifesting to Varying Degrees*

- Appear “normal”. Don’t become aware that “they have something going on” until you begin an interaction with them
- Overlap with mental illness can occur
- Chronological age doesn’t match developmental age
- Very concrete; abstract concepts are out of the picture
- Flexibility is a challenge. They need their routine and can come to handle changes with a lot of work.
- Can be super friendly - everyone is their friend - puts them at risk of being exploited
- Able to express themselves verbally with some limitations (articulation or difficulty getting thought across)

Characteristics (continued)

- Difficulty expressing their feelings, needs or emotions:
From here can go one of two ways depending on OUR reaction:
 1. De-escalate
 2. Escalation
- Dig heels in when confronted. Have such little control in so many aspects of their life, sometimes this is the only control they have. At this point consequences don't matter
- Can't think fast, especially in unfamiliar situations
- Will always require some level of supervision and financial support
- A strategy that worked with an individual one time, may or may not work the next time in the exact same situation.
- Strategies that work with individuals with developmental delays in general may not work with individuals with autism!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME
AND YOUR SERVICE