

## Letters to the editor

### Let's strike the R-word and replace it with respect

Remember when you were a kid, and your parents said something like "watch your language"?

The need to instill respectful language in our children is as important as ever. In fact, it's just as important come adulthood. Sometimes, we can all use a reminder to be more aware of the things we say and how we say them.

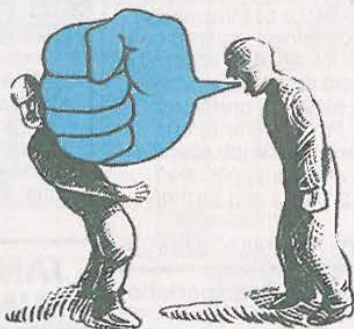
Throughout March, we celebrate Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. And it's the perfect time to focus on the "R-word."

Chances are unless you live or work with someone who has a developmental disability, you may not give this topic a second thought.

Today, you can visit a school playground, local bar or movie theater and hear the ugly word "retard" used to describe someone. Settle in on your couch to catch a few sitcoms and the same thing could happen, only this time followed by canned laughter.

Using the word "retard" or "retarded" to describe anyone — especially a person with developmental disabilities — is disrespectful, classless and full of ignorance. It perpetuates outdated, negative stereotypes.

How about a positive R-word? Respect.



Individuals with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities are valued members of our communities. They work. They love. They communicate. They laugh. They learn. They have talents and abilities — and they love to share them, just like anyone else.

By pledging to stop using hateful language, we start creating attitudes of acceptance and communities that respect all people. Language affects attitudes and attitudes affect actions.

Visit Milestone on Facebook, at [Facebook.com/MilestonePA](https://www.facebook.com/MilestonePA), to pledge your support for ending the R-word and see for yourself the great things accomplished by our clients.

Let's lead by example in our words and actions. Let's use language that would make our parents proud.

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*Since 1969, Milestone has served Western Pennsylvania with programs for people with developmental disabilities and behavioral health challenges.*