TITLE : A Different Way Of Life

INTRODUCTION
This session attempts to sensitize students and make them aware of the difficulties and challenges faced by differently abled persons in day to day life. The session utilizes Self Awareness, Empathy and other Life Skills to orient and encourage students to adopt a positive outlook to life and to be proactive in preventing the occurrence of disabilities.

1. Objectives : By the end of the session, students will be able to:
   - Understand and become aware of difficulties faced by Children with Special Needs (CWSN).
   - Be sensitized to the needs of such students in their class and school.

2. Time : 35 Minutes

3. Life Skills Being Used : Self-Awareness, Empathy, Critical Thinking to help develop a positive attitude.

4. Advance Preparations : 1. 4 clean cloths (dupattas), preferably cotton

5. Linkages : Please see Contents

6. Methodology : Role Play, Brainstorming, Discussion.

7. Process :

   Step 1:
   Please read the Fact Sheet carefully and go through this session well in advance before you carry it out with the students.
Step 2:
Greet the students and tell them that today they are going to do a role play in the class.

Step 3:
Ask for 3 Volunteers from the class to be blindfolded. Blindfold each of them and ask one of them to go to the Principal’s room. Ask another one to go back to the desk and start writing; ask the third one to go out to the playground. Send other students to accompany these three so that there are no accidents.

Note for Teachers:
While the students negotiate their way and bump into things, they can be given verbal instructions or can be involved in some kind of conversation by the second student.

Step 4:
Simultaneously ask for one more volunteer. Fold this students’ right leg and tie it with the cloth piece and ask him to go up to the Principal’s room. Again ask a second student to accompany him. (Ensure that he is not in pain!)

Step 5:
Remind the students that today is a day for role-playing and ask for one more volunteer. Make him stand in front of the class and ask him to move his lips to say something without producing any sound.
Ask the other students to lip-read and guess what he is saying.

Step 6:
When the students have returned from the Principal’s office and playground, ask them to sit in their usual place.

Note for Teachers:
There will be some noise in the class as students try to read his lips. Let them be involved in the whole process. But do keep an eye on the student who has his leg tied and is trying to move out of the class! And also the students who are blindfolded.

Step 7:
After few minutes send 3 students to call the volunteers back to class, untie the leg of the volunteer, untie the blindfolds, and ask them to go back to their seats.

Step 8:
After the students have completed the tasks allotted to them and have returned to their seats ask the students who were blindfolded the following:
- Could you see any light?
- How did you find the experience of not being able to see?
Expected Responses:
- We could not see light
- It was difficult to move but was easier to go in the directions from where the sound was coming.

**Step 9:**
Ask the student whose leg was tied, his experience of walking around with one leg. Similarly, ask the students who were trying to lip read: “was it easy to understand what he was saying?”

Expected Responses:
- It was difficult to balance.
- Support was needed.
- Not easy to make sense of the lip reading.
- Had to concentrate really hard to understand what was being said.

**Step 10:**
Brainstorm on the following:
- How would you feel if you are not able to see?
- What would it be like to have only one or no legs to walk?
- How would it feel if you could not speak, or hear?

Expected Responses:
- We will feel terrible if we can’t see our face, or see our mother.
- It would be difficult to walk without support.
- It will be hard to study and take down notes of what the teacher is teaching if we can’t hear properly.
- We just cannot imagine how we would manage without all of these.
- Reading and writing are essential for progress in life.

**Note for Teachers:**
Utilize the following for discussion: We all take our senses including the sense of vision for granted but all of us are not so fortunate. Generate a discussion about the kind of difficulties a person with ‘seeing problems’ may encounter. Introduce the term ‘visually challenged’ instead of blind. Similarly, use ‘physically challenged’ for a person with limb loss, and ‘hearing challenged for the person who has hearing problems. Explain that in the role plays, students were challenged in some way or the other. To overcome their difficulties they needed a few special means/aids which are called SPECIAL NEEDS. Elaborate on the meaning of Special Needs emphasizing the fact that we all have needs. Give the example of a student who wants to be an engineer, but is weak in Biology. Its special need will be extra teaching in Biology. Similarly, suppose another child has one leg and uses crutches or a wheel chair. To attend his class, his special need could be a ramp, lift or a classroom at the ground level where he can reach on his own. Thus all of us have needs, but for challenged persons some needs contribute very significantly in their day to day life. These may include special education needs like learning through a different script - say Braille or using abacus to do mathematics instead of using common ways of learning at school.

Explain to the students that they must understand the needs of specially abled children and help them, in the classroom in the school and wherever else they may meet them.
Step 11:
Ask the class:
- Is there any particular category of people who become disabled?
- Can anything ever happen to us?
- Can disability occur only at young age?

Expected Responses:
- Mostly poor people become disabled, uneducated persons can become disabled, if we take care, we can avoid this, and anybody can become disabled.

Note for Teachers:
Generate a discussion about the fact that anyone of us can have disabilities. No particular strata, caste, age, race is barred from disabilities. Give examples of famous people like Stephen Hawking, F.D. Roosevelt, (ex President of USA), Major Ahluwalia, who have had such disabilities. Tell them that Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci, Rockefeller (the American business tycoon) and Tom Cruise have had dyslexia, the learning disability! So disabilities can strike anyone. Brainstorm about the possible causes of disabilities. After taking inputs from the students divide these in 3 stages (1) causes of disabilities before birth (2) during birth and (3) after birth. These causes would include health of the mother, RH factor, nutrition, radiations, virus, infections, accidents, trauma etc. Vaccinations at scheduled time can be a life saver.

Ask the students to imagine themselves in place of any of the volunteers who had role played at the beginning of the session and try to experience/ feel the difficulties and challenges faced by differently abled people. With numerous factors at play to cause disabilities let them become aware that a normal healthy body is a miracle and we usually take this for granted which is not so. Share with them that based on 2001 census data we can estimate 4 to 5 % of Indian population has some disability (Source –RCI Publication).

Prevention of disabilities can help to improve the situation. Point out that many of us keep complaining about our complexion, features, lack of resources etc. Let us learn to look at the positive instead. Share the story of a boy who complained about not having enough money to buy a branded pair of shoes. He was very angry, had arguments with his parents and was feeling very miserable about himself. In a huff he left the house to go out for a walk. Suddenly he saw another boy crossing the road. The boy didn’t have any legs. This jolted the first boy and self realization dawned on him that at least he had legs and feet to walk on. So becoming aware of the difficulties faced by others, and many factors responsible for causing disabilities helps us become more self aware and develop a more positive outlook towards life. More importantly it sensitizes us to the needs to others and helps us become more caring human beings.
Step 12:
Explain to the students that the differently abled are as talented and brilliant as anyone else. Share the amazing stories in the clippings in the Fact Sheet with them. Have a quick discussion on how the students will help any person they meet.

Key Messages:
Highlight and repeat the following to the class:

- Children with challenges, or differently abled students, have to face various challenges on a day-to-day basis. Differently abled students have some special needs.
- Everyone can become disabled at sometime.
- We should appreciate others’ abilities and not criticize or mock their disabilities.
- We need to spread awareness about various factors responsible for causing disabilities so that they can be prevented.

Ideas for Learning More:
FACT SHEET

A DIFFERENT WAY OF LIFE

The term ‘Differently abled’ is used as a substitute for disabled or handicapped. This places emphasis on the fact that many people with disabilities are quite capable of accomplishing a particular task or performing a particular function, only in a different manner or taking more time or effort than people without the disability in question.

According to estimates more than 90% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school. Disability is both the cause and consequences of poverty. It is also a major cause of social exclusion. (Source UNESCO)

Concept of disability
WHO defines impairment as a normal process of change with physical, anatomical and cognitive structure coming with age or other factors but does not interfere with the performance of activities expected from an individual. If impairment interferes with the process of education or work, it becomes a disability. A handicap is a disadvantage for a given individual resulting from impairment or a disability that limits or prevents the fulfillment of a role that is normal for that individual.

Definitions of some disabilities
Mental Retardation:- This refers to significantly sub average intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of applicable adaptive skills areas of communication, selfcare, social skills etc. Mental retardation manifests itself before the age 18.
Many mentally retarded people are able to participate in activities with non-disabled people given an appropriate adaptation and support. Others may require a long term structured programme. With adequate training and education such persons can be more self reliant citizens.

Autism: - Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. It is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain. It is a developmental disability typically affecting the processing, integrating and organizing of information that significantly impacts communication, social interaction, functional skills and educational performance.

Cerebral palsy (CP):- Cerebral palsy is caused by damage to the brain. It is non-progressive. This is a condition characterized by paralysis, weakness in coordination and other motor dysfunction due to brain injuries occurring in the pre-natal, peri-natal or the infant period of development.
Learning Disability
It is a disorder, which affects the basic psychological processes of understanding or using written or spoken language which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, read or write, to do mathematical calculations. The term **does not** include children who have learning problems which are primarily the results of visual, hearing or motor handicaps of mental retardation or emotional disturbances, or of environment, cultural or economic disadvantage. This term also includes brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction and dyslexia.

Hearing Impairment
This includes deaf and hard of hearing. Deaf persons have a situation where the sense of hearing is non-functional for ordinary purpose, they do not hear/understand sound at all, even with amplified speech.

A hard of hearing person is one who, generally with the use of hearing aid, has residual hearing sufficient to enable successful processing of linguistic information through audition.

Visual Impairment
Blindness is a condition where a person may have any of the following conditions, namely
- Total absence of sight
- Visual acuity not exceeding 6/60 or 20/200 or
- Limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of 20 degrees or worse.

A person with low vision (Partially sighted) is a person with impairment of visual functioning even after treatment or standard refractive corrections but who uses or is potentially capable of using vision for planning or execution of task with appropriate assistive device.

Locomotor impairment
It is a disability of the bone, joints or muscles leading to substantial restrictions of the movement of the limbs or a usual form of cerebral palsy and autism. Orthopedics disability is a locomotor disability. It is a person’s inability to execute distinctive activities associated with moving both himself and objects, from place to place.
Causes and prevention of disabilities
Causes of disabilities include chromosomal abnormalities and other non genetic factors. Broadly they can be divided in three stages, namely prenatal (Before birth), perinatal (during the process of birth), post natal (after the birth).

Prenatal factors may include infection – rubella, syphilis, mother-fetal blood incompatibilities, RH factors, drugs and alcohol, material-fetal irradiation, chronic maternal health problems: Diabetes, hypertension. Perinatal factors include birth injury, asphyxia (hypoxemia), head trauma, hemorrhage, and infection. Some postnatal causes of disabilities include infection: Encephalitis, meningitis, accidents, poisons and environmental toxins: lead, mercury, anoxia-cardiac arrest, hormonal deficiencies, brain tumors, epilepsy, poor nutrition. Some of the common causes for blindness in India are cataract, glaucoma, albinism, and conjunctivitis.

Prevention of Disabilities emphasizes 3 main components namely (a) Immunization (b) Genetic counseling (c) Nutrition and diet

Protection against disease by inoculation leads to the bacteria, viruses or the poisons beings rendered harmless thus saving a person from various infections and diseases which lead to disabilities. These include immunization of persons against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, whooping, cough, measles and tuberculosis.

Genetic counseling may be sought for many reasons but generally because a suspected genetic disorder has occurred or may occur. There may be concern about more general risk factors such as the age of the mother, marriage between cousins. Genetic screening programmes to identify individuals with treatable genetic diseases and parents at risk of having children with severe genetic diseases are an important element of genetic counseling programmes.

Malnutrition caused by a low intake of vitamins may lead to vitamin deficiencies. Various diseases result from deficiencies of different vitamins and minerals, and of proteins

Proper diet and nutrition can play an important role as a preventive measure in dealing with causes of disabilities.
List of National Institutes working in different domains of disabilities is given below for easy reference:

**NATIONAL INSTITUTES**

- ALI YAVAR JUNG NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE HEARING HANDICAPPED
  
  K. C. MARG, BANDRA (WEST),
  
  MUMBAI - 400 050.
  
  MAHARASHTRA.

- NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED
  
  MANOVIKAS NAGAR,
  
  SECUNDERABAD - 500 009.
  
  ANDHRA PRADESH.

- NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED
  
  116, RAJPUR ROAD,
  
  DEHRADUN - 248 001.
  
  UTTAR PRADESH.

- NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE ORTHOPAEDICALLY HANDICAPPED
  
  B.T. ROAD, BON HOOGHLY,
  
  KOLKATA - 700 090.
  
  WEST BENGAL.

- NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF REHABILITATION TRAINING AND RESEARCH
  
  OLATPUR, P.O. - BAIROI,
  
  CUTTACK - 754 010.
  
  ORISSA.

- INSTITUTE FOR PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED
  
  4, VISHNU DIGAMBER MARG,
  
  NEW DELHI - 110 002.

Branch office – Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi
This special diva is a dance champ

DANCING TO LIFE'S TUNE: Nikita, who suffers from a spinal cord disorder that has rendered her 50% disabled, will be honoured by President Pratibha Patil today.

Geetika Chopra | TNN

New Delhi: Eleven-year-old Nikita Madan is the dancing sensation of her school. Suffering from spina bifida (a spinal cord ailment), Nikita hardly has any sensation in her right leg, as a result of which she walks with a limp. But she has never allowed the physical challenges from realising her dreams.

Soon she will be adding another feather to her cap, winning as she has the national award for empowerment of persons with disabilities, 2007. She will be honoured as the “outstanding creative girl” by President Pratibha Patil on behalf of the ministry of social justice and empowerment on the occasion of World Disability Day in Vigyan Bhawan on Monday.

“Her handicap does not stop her from doing any activity including dance. One has to see her dance to believe that a child with 50% disability can dance so well. She is so creative in her dance steps as well as in her emotions and expressions that she has won all the four times she participated in dance competitions, competing with normal children without any handicap,” said Dr S Bhanumathy, her mother.

A student of Class VI at DPS Rohini, Nikita has been an all rounder all through. From her parents to her principal, everyone is extremely proud of her. “She is an outstanding girl and her disability has never come in the way of anything she does. That is why we made her head girl of junior school which demands a lot of responsibility and leadership skills. I am confident she will go places. We are all very proud of her,” said Rita Sen, principal of DPS Rohini.

Nikita’s creativity has brought her many laurels in several fields like poetry writing, art & craft, dance, oration and academics. Nikita has composed more than 25 poems on various topics. Her poems have been published in national newspapers and children’s magazines.

Nikita believes nothing is impossible if you set your mind to it. “More than anything else, I work towards making my parents proud. Their excitement seems to be more than mine,” says Nikita.

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A BPO enabled by the differently enabled

It’s a company with a difference – the difference being its 81 employees who are people with different kinds of disabilities including physically challenged, hearing impaired and visually challenged persons. The company, Vindhya E- Info-media in Bangalore, has grown from a small data entry firm launched in June 2006 to a full fledged non-voice BPO with profits touching a crore. Its profit in the initial months was just Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 50,000.

Pavithra Y S, who started the company, attributes its success entirely to the “dedication, focus and hard work” of her employees who, she says, are not just as good as any employee but “better in every way”. “I am very proud of the sense of belonging that each employee has in this company of 96 people. This company is not owned by Pavithra but by every employee of Vindhya who made it what it is today,” she says. She found most of her employees through the Karnataka Government’s department for the disabled and the NGO Enable India.

Pavithra did have to invest money and effort in the initial training of her employees, which included brushing up their computer skills, increasing their typing speed and putting them through English classes as most were from a rural background. She has even learnt sign language from her hearing impaired employees.

“Earlier, I used to write down what I had to say to them. Now I can speak to them in sign language. This is important to me because no employee ought to feel alienated in the company,” says Pavithra.

Her efforts have paid off. Vindhya has almost zero attrition. After the company started providing accommodation close to the office, even a couple of people who left the company have come back. They are now moving into a 400 seater office space, adding more to their staff, who they say, will definitely be from the disability sector.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total employees</th>
<th>96</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disabled employees</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthopedically disabled</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing impaired</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visually impaired</td>
<td>04</td>
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</tbody>
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Wanted jobs
World bank report shows dip in employment rate for disabled from 43 to 38 per cent

Jaya Shrestha
New Delhi, December 2

The World Bank has found that the employment rate among the physically challenged in India has dropped from 43 to 38 per cent in a decade.

The report, coming just two weeks before the International Day of Disabled Persons on December 3, points to the greatest stumbling block for the physically challenged in India — with disability job opportunities while enough empathy is spared for the disabled or differently abled, there is little on paper to help them.

While the government has quotas for the disabled but reservations 3 per cent, the private sector is yet to see a viable contribution.

Among multinational companies, there is only 60 per cent presence of people with disabilities. In the late 1990s, employment of people with disability among large private firms was only 60 per cent.

Among the states, only two — Chandigarh and Jharkhand — have drafted disability policies. This despite an approval of a national policy in 2006.

World Bank country director Isabel Guerra said “India has an impressive set of policies committed to its citizens with disabilities. The challenge facing Indian society now is to translate those commitments into better lives for disabled people.”

The Indian economy has done nothing to the employment graph for the disabled which keeps worsening southwards.

“Part of the blame for this trend goes on employers and society with the disabled population,” said wheelchair-bound Sinha, the managing director of Jazzil.

“It is we who have to be treated differently and taken special care of. If we want jobs, we should be willing to work like normal individuals,” he said.

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