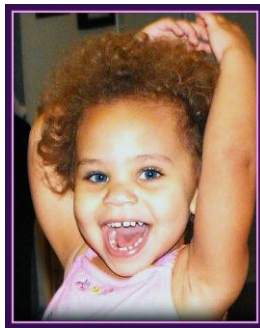




*Hope! Dream!
Achieve!*



April 2012

Raising a Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child

By Sandy Harvey, Parent

The complexity of raising children who *can* hear, in meeting their social, psychological, and educational needs is a tough enough job for parents. When our babies are identified as deaf or hard of hearing, that job is made even more complex and, at times, overwhelming. Parents often experience a sense of loss, anger, guilt and confusion. As parents, we have an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and understanding about our child. Often, we are unprepared for raising a deaf or hard-of-hearing child. Our child is often times the first person we have ever met who is deaf or hard of hearing.

VAll too often, parents are preached to, lobbied, and pushed into decisions based on the philosophies of others, rather than being allowed to arrive at their own conclusions. The best decisions that parents make for their children are the ones that are the most informed. We must not deny the inherent ability in ourselves to know our children even in the midst of confronting and learning about something we've never had to face before-hearing loss.

How does one sort through the information provided in books, articles, web sites, from professionals, family and friends, and from other sources to arrive at decisions that are right for your child and family? Here are some tips that may help.

There is no "one size fits all!"

Every child and family is different. Values, experiences, opinions, and resources vary from family to family. What works in one situation may not work in another. There are a number of ways to be successful raising a deaf or hard of hearing child. No one plan or formula will work for everyone. You must trust yourself to do what you believe is right for your child and family.

Meet other parents

All parents want what is best for their child. Meeting other parents and learning about their experiences can help you find out about opinions, options and resources. You want to parent effectively, and this can give you an opportunity to learn about "real life" strategies that work. Meeting other parents also can help you recognize that you are not the only one it is an ongoing process. Even before our children are born we have dreams and expectations for them. When we discover that they have a hearing loss, those dreams disappear and expectations may change. Fear often replaces the anticipation of all our child can accomplish, and many parents grieve over what they perceive can never be. In time, most parents come to realize that these dreams can still be accomplished, regardless of the hearing loss. One of the best ways for parents to realize this is by contact with other parents who have gone through this

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Deaf and hard of hearing adults are young deaf and hard of hearing children grown up! They use a variety of communication modes. Seeing successful deaf and hard of hearing adults can increase an understanding of what it means to be deaf or hard of hearing and may help facilitate acceptance of the child's hearing loss. Deaf and hard of hearing persons, given appropriate language learning, educational, and social opportunities, can achieve the same rates of academic, social, and personal success as hearing individuals. Meeting successful deaf and hard of hearing adults may give you a vision of success for your child that might be difficult to dream otherwise. Deaf adults and hard of hearing adults most of whom come from hearing families – can share their experiences with you and provide information and encouragement. As in all communities, there is diversity in the deaf and hard of hearing community, and parents benefit from meeting deaf and hard of hearing persons from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and opinions.



Visit a variety of educational programs

Often parents want to know what the **best** program is, or whether a particular program is better than another one. The only way to make these kinds of judgments is by seeing for yourself what the program is like and understanding your child's unique needs. Ask lots of questions. This is new to you, and there is a lot to know.

Review each suggestion you receive carefully

Do you fully understand what is being recommended, or do you need further information? Do you know what the positives and the negatives are? Does it sound like something that will work for you and your family? Ask to see/read about the research that supports the recommendations you are given. Inquire as to the other options and who you can discuss that philosophy with.

No decision needs to be forever

Support what is working for your child and modify or eliminate what is not working. The goal should be optimum communication outcomes, not adhering to a particular ideology.

Finally . . .

Love and value your child for the wonder that s/ he is. The days will not all be easy. The nights will not all be serene. You can learn the right questions to ask, determine with wisdom the answers, and make informed decisions that best accommodate your child.

There's an App for That!



Created by the parent of a child with special needs, MyTalkToo9Is is an easy, cool and affordable augmentative, alternative communication (AAC) device. MyTalkTool's Apps for iPhone, iPod Touch and iPad are easy to use, easy to manage, highly customizable and affordable. MyTalkTools enables users to express and connect in a whole new way.
For more information go to www.mytalktools.com



Create custom PECS Speech Sets at AACSpeech.com and download them to your device
The AAC Speech Buddy was created to quickly & easily create custom Speech Sets Online (aacspeech.com) which could be loaded on one or many AAC Speech Buddy Apps. The AAC Speech Buddy comes complete with several demo speech sets - and access to our Default Profile menu. Users are welcomed to create FREE LOGIN accounts online at AACSPEECH.COM - and build customized menus with 6 Text-to-Speech voices to choose from. - or use profiles created by other users with a provided profile id. Available for both iProducts and Android
For more information go to www.speechbuddy.com

Become a...
***Key
Parent***



Parent Links is looking for volunteer parent mentors that are willing to support another individual or family in their local area who share similar concerns.

Key Parent Mission

“The foundation of parent-to-parent support is to help families by practicing active listening techniques and sharing information.

Simply being there for the parent lends hope so that the next step may be taken with increased knowledge and a greater sense of community.”

If you or someone that you know would be interested in becoming a Key Parent please contact your local Parent Links Representative. Contact information for your representative is located on the last page of this document.

Children Are....

*Author: Meiji Steward
(The ABC's of Children)*



Amazing, acknowledge them, Believable, trust them. Childlike, allow them. Divine, honor them. Energetic, nourish them. Fallible, embrace them. Gifts, treasure them. Here now, be with them.

Innocent, delight with them, Joyful, appreciate them.

Kindhearted, learn from them. Lovable, cherish them. Magical, fly with them, Noble, esteem them. Open minded, respect them.

Precious, value them. Questioners, encourage them. Resourceful, support them. Spontaneous, enjoy them. Talented, believe in them. Unique, affirm them. Vulnerable, protect them. Whole, recognize them. Extra special, celebrate them. Yearning, notice them. Zany, laugh with them,



MOM to MOM

When a parent finds out that their child is deaf or hard of hearing, they often do not know what to do next. Of course the professionals direct them toward the early start programs, preschools, speech therapy, medical intervention and all of that is very important. But a professional cannot share in the parents experience as another parent can. Meeting another mom who also has a child can be very exciting. Another parent could be able to answer the questions and relay their own personal experiences.

The benefits of meeting other parents include:

- mutual support through contact with other parents of a deaf or hard of hearing child with similar condition
- sharing information which helps in caring for their child
- building confidence
- offers an opportunity to help other parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing

“Parents who frequently met with other parents of deaf and hard of hearing children reported less isolation, stronger emotional bonds with their child and greater acceptance for the child. Parents also emphasized the benefits of giving mutual practical help in coping with everyday challenges.”(Manfred Hintermair, 2000)

Offering support to parents is what Parent Links is all about. Each mentor is a parent of a deaf or hard of hearing child.

- Through email, phone and mail we are here to help answer the questions that parents may have about raising a child who is deaf or hard of hearing.
- Help parents find local connections.

Parent Mentoring in Spanish and English... Just give us a call.

Parent Mentors

Exceptional Parents Unlimited

Darla Schwehr
Vicky Olea
4440 N. First Street
Fresno, CA 93726
559-229-2000 x 208

Counties

Alameda, Contra Costa
Fresno, Kings
Madera, Mariposa
Merced, Monterey
San Benito, San Francisco
San Joaquin, San Mateo
Santa Clara, Santa Cruz
Stanislaus, Tulare

Family Focus Resource & Empowerment Center

April Chauhan
Irma Sanchez
Cora Shahid
Kristal Molina
18111 Nordhoff Street
Northridge, CA 91330
818-677-6854 Office

Counties

Imperial, Inyo
Kern, Los Angeles
Mono, Orange
Riverside, San Bernardino
San Diego, San Luis Obispo
Santa Barbara, Ventura

Rowell Family Empowerment Center

Kat Lowrance
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530-226-5129

Counties:

Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras
Colusa, Del Norte, El Dorado,
Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen,
Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Napa,
Nevada, Placer, Plumas
Sacramento, Shasta, Sierra
Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma
Sutter, Tehama, Trinity
Tuolumne, Yolo, Yuba

Our Mission

The mission of the “Parent Links Hope! Dream! Achieve!” Program is to empower parents of deaf and hard of hearing infants and toddlers by providing them with comprehensive information and awareness through mentoring, networking, and resources, and by honoring the family’s relationship with their child and their choices in language and communication opportunities

www.myparentlinks.com