



April 2013



Parent Links

Is...

A program of the California Department of Education funded by a federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau grant. The Parent Links name and materials are used with permission of the Coalition of Agencies Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.

One Parent's Perspective By Tura Franzen

I was once asked if I was aware that over 80% of hearing parents of deaf children did not sign. My first thought was, "Well, yes." After all being a hearing parent of a deaf son I began as one of them.

My son Corey was finally diagnosed at the age of 3 1/2 after a series of misdiagnosis along the way, at that time, the New Born Hearing and Screening (NBHS) was not in place. If it had been we would have received testing in the hospital and found out earlier. I had no idea what to do and relied on the doctors and audiologists suggestions on the best way to help my child.

The approach that I was told was to not use sign language with my son until he learned English. If he learned to sign, he would not learn to talk. I believed that to be the best way, after all the professionals knew more about deafness than I did.

So the education began not only for him but for me as well. I had to learn many new terms that I had never heard of before, audiograms, oral programs, and mainstream programs, etc. My son was mainstreamed, without an interpreter, had speech therapy and was given amplification with hearing aids. He did learn some sign language from teachers as well as from other deaf friends. The signs that he learned were a mixture of Signed Exact English (SEE) and were American Sign Language, (ASL). We also used "home signs" that he and I made up along the way.

My son's educational experience was often a struggle. He did not understand what was going on around him, but was expected to respond as if he did. There was always something that was missing.

When my son went to middle school he had an interpreter, and note taker and was transitioned from classroom to classroom with many different teachers. Things became more and more difficult for him and he was not happy. One day, he pointed out to me that when a deaf person goes to a hearing school, that person wears a sign that says "I am deaf". If that same person goes to a deaf school they are an individual. That made sense to me but was hesitant to put him into a totally deaf environment. At this time the term "handicap" was widely used to describe those with a disability. "Mom, if I go to a Deaf School, I will no longer handicapped," Corey said. I was so amazed at this statement and realized my son was right. There was a school for the deaf in Fremont, California, and he wanted to attend there. It was a major step for me but agreed to let him try it out for his freshmen year. He was so unhappy where he was that I figured a new environment may be better. Quickly I realized that my son was right.



In his first year at California School for the Deaf Fremont (CSDF) I began to see my son thrive on every level. His teachers used ASL and he understood his work more clearly. Socially he was able to compete in sports, be in the drama club, run for student office, etc. Of course these extra-curricular activities were available in mainstream school but were more difficult for him due to some language barriers. At the California School for the Deaf there were no barriers.

Up until then I did not know sign language but realized how important it was to learn. I guess you could say the "lights came on" for me. I began taking ASL classes and learning about deaf culture. I learned that deaf culture was a complete community that would allow my son and me to communicate more deeply. There I also found adults to whom I could ask questions and find support.

My son is now an adult and doing very well. He graduated from Gallaudet University and worked as a CAD technician for a firm in Portland Oregon and is now an Associate working on his Architectural Degree. He is happily married and has two children.

So that is our story. Would I have done things differently, the answer is yes. I would have chosen to learn sign language right away. I see now that knowing ASL as a baby gives the baby a concept of language, meaning at a very young age, the child knows "Mom, Dad, milk, want, hurt, more" so that when they get amplification and are shown the word along with the sign, they will know, "oh, I know that sign, I see, that is the word that goes with the sign. I hope that by sharing my experience other parents may consider learning sign language with their child. It can be a positive experience and not inhibit their child to learn to talk. It gives the child the opportunity to express their feelings, thoughts and ideas and to learn at the same speed as their hearing peers.



What is a Baha?

Recently there have been many questions being asked about the Cochlear Baha implant. How does it work, what type of hearing levels is it used for? Here is a basic explanation of this device.

According to Cochlear America the Cochlear Baha System is a proven, clinically tested and documented solution for treating conductive hearing loss, mixed hearing loss and single-sided deafness.

The Baha System utilizes your body's natural ability to conduct sound

Bone, like air, can conduct sound vibrations. For people with hearing loss, this provides another pathway to perceive sound. Typical hearing aids rely on air conduction and a functioning middle ear.

In cases where the middle ear function is blocked, damaged, the Baha System may be a better option as it bypasses the outer and middle ear altogether. Instead, sound is sent around the damaged or problematic area, naturally stimulating the cochlea through bone conduction.

When someone has lost most of the hearing in one ear, but has normal hearing on the other side, the Baha System works to reroute sound to the normal hearing level ear. It uses our body's natural ability to conduct sound through bone to deliver the signal to the better hearing ear.

Once the cochlea receives these sound vibrations, the organ 'hears' in the same manner as through air conduction; the sound is converted into neural signals and is transferred to the brain, allowing a Baha recipient to perceive sound. What Does the Baha Sound Processor Look Like?

The Baha Sound Processor snaps on to the abutment. The processor is small, discreet and is available in a variety of colors. The volume controls are conveniently located for easy adjustments.

For more information contact www.cochlear.com

With Parental involvement and love your child will be successful!

V. Olea Parent Mentor

Welcome to Holland Emily Perl Kingsley

I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability - to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this.....

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans.3..The Coliseum, the Michelangelo David, The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands, the stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."

"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."

But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.

So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around.... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills....and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."

And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away... because the loss of that dream is a very very significant loss.

But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ... about Holland.



www.myparentlinks.com



Parent Mentors



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.

Exceptional Parents Unlimited

Darla Schwehr
Vicky Olea (Bilingual Speaker)
4440 N. First Street
Fresno, CA 93726
559-229-2000
dschwehr@epuchildren.org
volea@epuchildren.org

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

Irma Sanchez
(Bilingual Speaker)
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
Cindy Sandoval (Bilingual Speaker)
C962 Maraglia Street
Redding, CA 96002
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