

DEALING WITH FEELINGS

"Hearing is the only thing your child can't do today, that you thought he could do yesterday."

Most people do not know much about hearing loss and what it means for their child and family. As the professional who delivered this news talked to you further, you may not have heard much of what he or she was saying. In your mind, questions may have started to churn:

"Can it be corrected?"

"What caused it?"

"Will it get better?"

"Will it get worse?"

"Can he learn to talk?"

"Can she go to regular school?"

"If we have more children, will they have a hearing loss, too?"

"Can he get married?"

"Will she be able to get a job?"

The answers to some of these questions may not be what you want to hear. You want the best for your child, but now you may not know what to do.

"There is not a day that goes by that I am not reminded that my child has a hearing loss – but there is also not a day that goes by that I am not thankful for all the joy she gives me by little things she does that so many other parents get to take for granted."

In the days and weeks following the confirmation of your child's hearing loss, you may feel as if you are on a roller coaster. Your feelings may swing from despair to hope, from sadness to anger, from feeling incompetent to feeling confident. As you carry out your daily routines – finishing a chore or arriving at a destination – you may realize that your mind was somewhere else, thinking about your child and what you should do. You may also find within yourself unexpected sources of strength to do what has to be done in spite of your feelings. Working through your feelings takes time. You are likely to continue to have feelings about your child's hearing loss, but many of these feelings will change over time.

"One of my first questions was 'Will he be able to talk?' – My husband's was 'Will he be able to participate in sports?'"

Family members may also be experiencing these same feelings of confusion and helplessness. Each person will react differently to the news that your child has a hearing loss. For some there is a feeling of loss, and for others, denial. Keep in mind that most families need time to adapt to the changes that the diagnosis of hearing loss will present and that each will react in a different way. Recognizing and sharing feelings is usually the best way to deal with them, and support is available from many sources, including family, friends, and professionals.

"Our audiologist became like one of our family. She cried and laughed with us and made sure we knew there were no limitations for our baby."

The professionals who evaluate your child's hearing will have recommendations for you. As you follow these recommendations, you will meet people who can help answer your questions and explain the decisions you must make.

