



Accepting Your Child's Hearing Loss

Before you knew for sure that your son or daughter had a hearing loss you probably felt very insecure.

The idea of your child's hearing loss may have left you feeling shocked and numb, or sad and worried about the future. It may be hard for you to accept what the doctors are saying. You may be thinking "Why us?" because you never expected something like this to happen. This is a perfectly understandable reaction.

It takes time to understand and accept the fact that your child has a hearing loss. As soon as you are able to do this, you can begin to focus on how to cope with it. And when you're ready, you can gather more information that will help you deal with the practical side of things.

How you cope depends upon the kind of person you are. Certainly the best way to handle it is by being open, and by letting other people help you. As time passes, and circumstances change, new situations will arise. And when they do, the easiest way to cope is by taking things one step at a time.

If you need advice don't hesitate to ask your child's audiologists, teachers, hearing care professionals or other parents of children with hearing loss. They know a lot about your situation.

Remember that you are not alone. Hearing loss is more common than you think. In the US approximately 30 million people have hearing loss. And about one million of them are children below age eighteen.



Why Hearing is so Important

Children use their hearing ability to develop their language skills in order to communicate. But a hearing loss can make communication difficult.

Developing language

We start to develop language from the moment we are born. At first, babies only make crying, sneezing, yawning, and coughing sounds. Even though they haven't yet learned to talk, they are constantly listening. A newborn baby can soon recognize its mother's voice.

If a child has a hearing loss the basic development of language will often be delayed. However, children with mild to severe hearing loss can develop understandable speech with the right intervention and amplification.

Research has shown that many children with a profound hearing loss can also learn to speak if they are diagnosed relatively early. They often are, because the signs of hearing loss are more obvious than within the milder categories of hearing loss.

So the earlier the hearing loss is detected and the earlier it is treated, the better the prognosis for language development. With today's technology, children can be fitted with hearing instruments within the first few weeks or months after birth.

First, they need to be fitted with the right kind of hearing instruments. Then they can start special speech and language therapy right away.

If the hearing loss is so profound that even very powerful hearing instruments don't help, your child can still learn to communicate using specific communication techniques. Whether you choose a specific communication technique or a spoken language, the message is clear: the earlier your child starts, the better.

