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Decision Making

If you are looking for information about how to raise a child with hearing loss, there is good news and bad news. The good news is there is a lot of information available. The bad news is – well – there is a lot of information available! How does one sort through the information provided in books, articles, websites, from professionals, family, 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 and only way”

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 do what you believe is right for your child and family.

Get to know other parents of children with hearing loss

All parents want what is best for their child. Meeting other parents and learning about their experiences can help you find out about 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 raising a child with hearing loss and can serve as a means of support.

Get to know successful deaf and hard of hearing adults

Deaf and hard of hearing adults are young deaf and hard of hearing children grown up.



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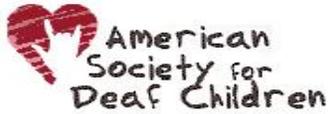
Seeing successful deaf and hard of hearing adults can increase an understanding of what it means to be deaf or hard of hearing and may help facilitate acceptance of the child's hearing loss.

Given appropriate language learning, educational, and social opportunities, deaf and hard of hearing persons can achieve the same rates of academic, social and personal fulfillment 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 envision otherwise. Deaf 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.

Picking 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. Visit a variety of educational programs. Some questions you may want to answer as you visit programs are:

- Is this program specifically designed to meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing children, or is it a generic program? Generally a specialized program will be more likely to meet your child's needs.
- Is it a home-based program, a center-based program, or a combination of the two? Both home-based and center-based programs have advantages. Visit one or more



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programs of each type and see for yourself what those advantages are.

- How well do the staff and children communicate? Since the area of communication can be significantly impacted by hearing loss, communication skills should be at the center of any program.
- How much family support is available? This could be in the form of information about assistive technology, provision of sign language classes, counseling, or any other type of support.

Ask lots of questions

This is all 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?

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 outcomes, not adhering to a particular ideology.

Finally ...

Love and value your child for the wonder that he/she is.