



After the Diagnosis

Finding out your child has a hearing loss can be described as bad news. You may feel overwhelmed, confused, anxious, and lost. You may search your memory to think of what might have caused this to happen. You may feel like you want to run away. These reactions are common. This is normal and you are not alone.

You might wonder if the plans, dreams, and hopes for your baby's future can still come true. The answer is yes. Children with hearing loss have happy childhoods and grow into adulthood with amazing lives.

You need to slow down, take smaller steps, and focus on taking care of you. Many parents turn their entire focus on how they can help their child. This is very important of course. The number one thing you can do to help your child is to take care of you. You are the one your child depends on. It is important that you be there physically, mentally, and emotionally.

What to Expect

This is a journey. You will be attending many appointments, with different medical staff. You will learn many new words. It will be a whirlwind of information and movement. It is common to feel many different emotions-including grief. Most people must go through each step of the grief process:

- **Denial/Shock:** You will feel like you are in a dream. You might doubt the experts. This protective emotion helps you to not be overwhelmed or flooded with feelings. That is a good thing, but it also means you can become stuck. This can prevent you from moving forward. Taking those first steps by coming to appointments can make a big difference in your child's

hearing and speech/language development. It is important to try to move forward as quickly as you can.

- **Anger:** You may be angry at yourself, your partner, or others. You might blame others. You might use angry words or behaviors. Anger is closely related to fear. It is frustrating not being able to control a situation.
- **Guilt:** Many people blame their child's deafness on themselves. This is another way of gaining control-if you did something wrong, then you can fix it. It is common but not good for you or your child.
- **Depression:** You may feel hopeless, defeated and alone. It is ok to feel sad by your child's diagnosis. Depression can make it hard to move forward. Support and coping skills can help decrease sadness or depression. Reaching out for support can move you faster through this stage.
- **Acceptance:** Finally, you will understand that the hearing loss is real. There are treatments and interventions that you can begin without feeling anger or shame. Moving through all these stages really does help you and your child move forward.
- **Hope:** You can begin to see a future. You will make plans. Learning your child is deaf or hard of hearing isn't the end. It is the beginning of an unexpected path. It may be difficult at times. You may feel worry about the unknown. But there are many smiles and happy times ahead.

You may discover that the way people manage their thoughts and feelings is not the same as yours. This can cause conflicts and misunderstandings. Handling these things in different ways is normal. It is important to talk with others to share how each of you feel. It is important to begin to work together. It can be helpful to talk with a therapist or social worker, even if you think you are fine. This could help you to sort through the ins and outs, ups and downs of your experience.

Coping Skills

These skills are important as you go through this journey. These include sleep, diet, and exercise. These three things help maintain your mind and body during difficult times. Try setting an alarm on your phone or calendar to include these things in your day. Schedule time to care for yourself.

Think about:

- Talking with a medical professional, therapist, or support person
- Journaling your thoughts
- Practicing mindfulness and meditation
- Watching something that makes you laugh or feel joy
- Listening to music that uplifts you
- Methods of relaxation
- Calming breathing techniques

Here are examples of two calm breathing techniques you can try:

- 4 Step Breathing: Take a deep breath in through the nose for a slow count of four. Hold it for a slow count of four. Then release it from your mouth for a slow count of four, Wait for a slow count of four before your next breath. Continue until you feel a sense of calm or peace.
- Self-Talk Breaths: Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose and then release the breath slowly through your mouth. As you breath in, say out loud or in your head something like, “I can” and then when you exhale, “stay calm.” Each inhale is the first half. Each exhale is the second half of the sentence. You can make up your own statements that fit you.

Your family can do more than get through this. You can thrive. It is ok to ask as many questions as you have. It is ok to seek support. These are the things that make you stronger and help you through.