My Child has Hearing Loss. Will They Talk? Frequently Asked Questions about Language Development of Deaf Children

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MY CHILD HAS HEARING LOSS — WILL THEY TALK?

by Emma Spronk

Frequently Asked Questions about Language Development of Deaf Children
ALL CHILDREN CAN THRIVE

- deaf children are not “broken”
- deaf individuals around the world thrive
- deaf children benefit from sign language and bilingualism
OverView

Frequently Asked Questions
1. What will help my child talk?
2. How can my child learn sign language if I don’t know it?
3. Can we see if cochlear implants (CIs) work before learning sign language?
4. What kind of language environment is ideal for my child?

Resources
WHAT WILL HELP MY CHILD TALK?

- deaf children who sign are better able to learn to speak \(^1\),\(^2\),\(^3\)
- visual language provides basis for learning spoken language\(^2\)


CAN MY CHILD LEARN SIGN LANGUAGE IF I DON’T KNOW IT?

- you don’t have to do it alone
- interaction with native signers is very beneficial
- learning together through tutors
- find reliable instructors

CAN WE WAIT TO SEE IF COCHLEAR IMPLANTS WORK?

- children need access to language immediately
- children can have very different outcomes with cochlear implants$^{1,2,3}$
- visual language is accessible to all deaf children $^2$


WHAT KIND OF LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT IS IDEAL?

1. equal exposure to both languages
2. “translanguaging”
3. back-and-forth communication
EQUAL EXPOSURE TO BOTH LANGUAGES

- exposure predicts language development
- interact with other signers frequently
- find a Deaf mentor

TRANSLANGUAGING

- allows freedom and flexibility ¹
- allows full use of all communication abilities ¹
- typical for all humans ¹,²


BACK-AND-FORTH COMMUNICATION

- use back-and-forth communication
- ask questions and leave time for response

WHAT ADVICE SHOULD I LISTEN TO?

- research-based resources
- resources that provide options and a positive framework
- professionals with expertise and who see strengths
- professionals who help set goals and track development

SUMMARY

- Learning sign language supports speech development
- Children need quantity and quality language exposure
- There are many resources available for your family
GENERAL INFORMATION RESOURCES

a. American Society for Deaf Children
b. MyDeafChild.org
c. Hands & Voices
d. Babyhearing.org
e. National Association for the Deaf
AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE RESOURCES

Apps:
- theASLapp.com

Youtube Channels:
- ASLThat
- Signed with Heart

Websites:
- ASL Connect (Gallaudet)
- LifePrint
- SignItASL
- ASL Nook
- Dawn Sign Press
- SigningSavvy
- RainoneSisters
REFERENCES


