

Parent-to-Parent Support

Meet the family:

Mom: Melissa, hearing
Dad: Mark, hearing
Children: Kaleigh, 5, hearing
Connor, 2, moderate/
severe hearing loss
Communication method: Voice
Newborn Screening: Yes
Age at Diagnosis: Birth-4 months
Wears hearing aids

Dear Parent:

I remember it was not even 24 hours after our baby boy was born that the nurse told us he hadn't passed his hearing screening. She reassured us that many children fail because of fluid from delivery.

Our pediatrician also was not concerned as there was no family history of hearing loss. After a few more failed tests (and making ourselves crazy at home trying to test his hearing), Connor had a BAER, brainstem auditory evoked response test. Watching our sweet baby boy sleeping with electrodes on his head, the audiologist matter of factly stated what decibel she was sending through his head. We knew nothing about decibels, audiograms, hearing aids, or anything else that came out of her mouth that day. All we heard was we would have to practically shout in Connor's ears for him to hear us.

The next few weeks were very hard for us. We didn't know anyone personally who had a "disability," so we couldn't imagine what Connor's future would hold. I'd never seen a child with hearing aids, let alone a baby. I researched on the Web into the wee hours of the morning to make sure I was informed enough to ask the right questions.

We went as a family to get Connor's new "earrings" as his big sister called them. The audiologist explained how the hearing aids worked, and left the room so the first voices Connor would hear would be ours. We started talking to our 5-month-old baby, and for the first time he was really hearing us. He was one HUGE smile from ear to ear, as if saying, "so that's what it sounds like when you flap your jaws."

Connor is now 2½ and is at age-appropriate levels in all areas of his development. From early on we made it very clear that we wanted Connor's development measured next to that of his hearing peers. We do not want to lower the expectations for him.

I anticipate there will be bumps in the road ahead, more tears of joy and sorrow in our future—and, I'll be honest, I wish he could hear without hearing aids. But one thing will always calm us: knowing we were the special family that was chosen for Connor. I've accepted that we may never know for sure the cause of Connor's hearing loss. I also know now that I'm not alone. I've found a great group of people to rely on: other parents who have been here before me.

You can tap into this resource, too. And, in the future, you could be one of those parents people will be calling on to help them understand their child's hearing loss. Take comfort in knowing that your child will succeed, and so will you! We are all gifted in our own special way.

Good luck to your family as you are starting your journey!

Melissa

For information about how to connect with a family like this, please contact the Family Support Connection at 1-866-DHOH-KID, or 651-265-2435 in the Twin Cities. Or, you can email fsc@lifetrackresources.org.