

## Facebook Live AMA with Elizabeth Rosenzweig

**Teresa Caraway:** Hi there. I'm Doctor Teresa Caraway, CEO of Hearing First. And welcome to our Facebook live "Ask Me Anything" event. We're broadcasting live from New York City, and we're glad you're joining us. At Hearing First, we believe every family needs to know the status of their baby's hearing first because all child development hinges on knowing that so the baby can develop communication, and spoken language skills, and develop to their full potential.

We also want to make sure that we know that babies who are born deaf or hard of hearing can and do learn to listen and talk just like their typical hearing friends every single day. I'm here today with Elizabeth Rosenzweig. Thank you so much for joining us. Elizabeth is a friend and colleague. She's a Certified Listening and Spoken Language Specialist and Auditory Verbal Therapist. We're hanging out in your neck of the woods, aren't we?

**E. Rosenzweig:** Exactly.

**Teresa Caraway:** Because on her professional journey, Elizabeth is currently teaching and completing a PhD at Columbia University. She also has a private practice in auditory verbal therapy. And she serves as a member of the board of directors of The AG Bell Academy for Listening and Spoken Language. Welcome, we're glad you're here.

**E. Rosenzweig:** Thank you for having me.

**Teresa Caraway:** Yeah. And we're gonna have fun today talking about and discussing tips for parents who want their baby to learn to listen and talk. You're invited to submit your questions by posting in the comments section below. Elizabeth and I look forward to answering your questions today.

Okay Elizabeth, we have our first one. It says that this person has an infant. And sometimes she just sleeps through the entire early intervention session. This mom is wondering, "Is it even worth it?"

**E. Rosenzweig:** Sounds about right. Right. Babies sleep all the time. And babies don't keep a calendar. They don't know. Well, Mondays from 9 to 10, I really better be on because that's our hour with our early interventionist. And that's completely fine. Kids are kids. They

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deserve to be kids. And really, that intervention session is about the family. It's about giving you the skills and techniques that you need. So then you know, "Okay, when she wakes up, every other hour this week, I can do this. While we're cooking dinner, while we're doing laundry, while we're playing." The intervention session really should be about giving you the skills that you need. You can do it whenever the baby wakes up.

- Teresa Caraway: Yeah. In fact, as listening and spoken language specialists, we kind of always say if one person has to miss the intervention session, let it be the child and not the parent. Because, if we were really about guiding and coaching families and empowering them, and building capacity in them to be their child's first and most important teacher.
- E. Rosenzweig: Yes. Parents are always going to do it better than we can.
- Teresa Caraway: Absolutely. No stress. Don't stress out if that baby is sleeping through the entire early intervention session. We don't.
- E. Rosenzweig: Lucky them. They get to nap.
- Teresa Caraway: Yeah. That kind of leads to the next question. And that is babies don't talk yet. And they usually aren't talking until the first word, 12 months of age, plus or minus a few months. Why does a baby need speech therapy?
- E. Rosenzweig: Yeah. I hear this question all the time. I think what's important to realize is there are so many of these amazing milestones that happen in this first year. Right? That baby's brain is so ready to learn and grow. Though it seems like that first word kind of happens by magic, there are so many small milestones and precursor skills that your baby is learning that whole first year. And that's what intervention can help you ... First of all, to put on those lenses and see that, see that magic that's happening in your baby's brain, and provide the coaching that will help you get there. I think sometimes people call it "speech therapy", but it's so much more than that. It's about listening skills. It's about language. It's about cognitive skills and communication. Speech is just a small part of that.
- Teresa Caraway: Right. Babies are really learners from day one, aren't they? And one of the things that happens is that we know that hearing loss is not about the ears. It's about the brain. That first year of

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intervention is so critical, like you say, to be looking at it, and emphasizing, and encouraging those typical developmental milestones, and building that baby's brain.

E. Rosenzweig: And it's so much fun.

Teresa Caraway: It is so much fun, isn't it? Another question we have is that, "how do people know, or how does a family know, if they're receiving good services for their child?"

E. Rosenzweig: Yeah. It's really scary. I always say if I went to a mechanic, I know nothing about cars. I could get totally taken for a ride, and I would have no idea. When parents find out they have a baby who is deaf or hard of hearing, you're kind of thrown into the deep end. And you have to be an expert at this. And no pressure because it's only your child's future, so don't blow it. But, how do you know? I think first you have to be really clear about, "What are my goals for my child?" And this is gonna be different for every child and every family. It's really being clear about, "What's our destination?" And then, if you want a listening and spoken language outcome, one thing to look for is a professional who is a certified listening and spoken language specialist. Because, that's someone who you know has invested three to five years above and beyond their degree to really learning the skills and techniques to help parents get their children to this outcome.

Teresa Caraway: That's one thing that parents can look for that ensures some minimal qualifications of a professional. But sometimes, there's not a listening and spoken language specialist in their neighborhood or in their community. What could a parent look for in terms of their intervention session, what they should expect to help guide and coach them?

E. Rosenzweig: Right. There might not be somebody in your state or in your country even. I think it's really important to find a professional who supports you and supports your outcome. You're drafting them onto your team to help you steer in the direction you want to go. Someone who's really clear with you about what they're doing and why, someone who works with you to set goals, someone who gives you the skills who's really your coach, not coming in just to work with the child while you watch.

Teresa Caraway: Yeah. Those are all excellent tips. One of the reasons at Hearing

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First, we have a Family Support Community, and we also have a Professional Learning Community. And I would encourage you, if you're in a situation, to invite your team to come join those communities so that there's a lot of discussion happening there, and equipping knowledge and skills, and even learning more, and sharing experiences. It's another enhancement to services that can happen.

- E. Rosenzweig: Right. You want a professional who's really invested in his or her own professional development, continuing to learn, continuing to grow, so you're getting the best, most current knowledge for your child.
- Teresa Caraway: Those are all terrific tips. Okay. Another question we have, and this is one that I think you and I get a lot as early interventionists. And that is, are there any special toys that a family needs so they can teach their child to listen and talk?
- E. Rosenzweig: Yeah. I hear this a lot around birthdays, around holidays. Grandparents love to ask this question. Well, the reality of it is "no". You can grow your baby's brain with just what you have on hand at home, whether it's pots and pans, a pile of paper, an old box, there is no app like your lap. Right?
- Teresa Caraway: Exactly.
- E. Rosenzweig: There is nothing like sitting and reading a book to your child and interacting. I tell people the magic is in the talk, not the toys. And if you've ever seen a kid with an old box, you know that's about all they need. Really, I think it's important to ... Don't spend your money on expensive and electronic toys. That's not what your baby's brain needs to grow. Your baby needs you.
- Teresa Caraway: Right. It's that interaction between a child and a parent that grows that baby's brain the most. It's really about those strategies, isn't it? And how you talk and interact with your baby, not about the toys.
- E. Rosenzweig: Not about the stuff.
- Teresa Caraway: Yeah, yeah. Another question that we have then, is that ... This viewer knows that reading books is important for their child, but he doesn't seem that he's interested in books. What can she do to encourage that?

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- E. Rosenzweig: Sure. Great. Sometimes kids ... You pull out a book, and you have these great intentions of reading a book, and the child's not interested. I think one thing that we need to do is kind of shift this conversation from reading a book to sharing a book, and realizing that looking at one page of the book is a literacy experience. Flipping through the pictures is a literacy experience. It doesn't need to be reading from page one to the end, every word on every page. Just letting kids interact with books, talking about what they see, relating it to something in your real life, all of that is literacy. Reading signs around your neighborhood is literacy. There are a lot of ways to fill this in. Shake yourself out of this idea that it has to look like this traditional, perfect, book reading experience. Perfect and real life don't go together very well.
- Teresa Caraway: Yeah, they don't, do they? And I love your tip about "There's all kinds of literacy experience besides sitting down with a book." And just even making a shopping list, write that out and have your child see that spoken words make a list as you go shopping. There's lots of little things like that to be able to do, isn't there?
- E. Rosenzweig: Yeah, everyday literacy.
- Teresa Caraway: The other thing that keeps books encouraging as you share books is to talk about the page before you turn the page so that you're creating anticipation and excitement about what's on that next page and those next pictures to look at.
- E. Rosenzweig: Yeah, absolutely.
- Teresa Caraway: Yeah. One of the things, also, that happens is that as certified listening and spoken language specialists, we encourage families to sing all the time, to make up songs, no matter what they're doing. This reader says, "What's the big deal about using music to develop listening and spoken language? Why do I need to keep singing?"
- E. Rosenzweig: Yes. And I think sometimes, too, if you are not a good singer or you don't enjoy singing, that can be really, really intimidating. To your child, your singing voice is the most beautiful thing they've ever heard because it means that you are interacting with that baby in such a loving and rich communication interaction. It's really not about being the world's best singer. It's about giving your child something interesting to listen to, some good melodies,

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some good intonation for little babies. Anne Fernald, who's a really fabulous scientist in our field, always says, "Until babies are about 18 months old, the melody is the message. It's helping babies crack the code of language by giving them those songs." You're not on stage. No one's evaluating you. It's just about giving your baby that great, rich input. It's hard sometimes to leave your self-consciousness at the door, but it's really fun what you do.

Teresa Caraway: It is. And it's okay to make up your own songs, isn't it?

E. Rosenzweig: Oh, of course.

Teresa Caraway: Yeah, yeah. Well, thank you, Elizabeth. I appreciate you so much for joining us today. And if you'd like to learn more about her work, please go to [AuditoryVerbalTherapy.net](http://AuditoryVerbalTherapy.net), and they can find out more, and learn more from you. And also, if you'd like to continue the discussion with other families, or other friends, a listening and spoken language specialist, plug into our Family Support Community. There's lots of great things happening there and information being exchanged from family to family. And I think you'll find amazing support on your journey. And the other thing is if you're a professional, come join our Professional Learning Community. And we're talking about these kinds of things and helping each other in terms of how we can better support families. And if you'd like to stay up-to-date on the latest listening and spoken language related information and resources, go to our website at [HearingFirst.org](http://HearingFirst.org), and subscribe to our newsletter. We'd love to keep connected with you. Thank you for being here. And thank you for joining us today.

E. Rosenzweig: Thanks.