LISTENING IN WITH MORGAN AND KATIE

Introduction: Welcome to Listening In. In this video series, you'll hear stories from thriving young adults who happen to have hearing loss. They'll share what it was like growing up deaf and how they learned to listen, talk and reach their dreams.

Meet sisters Morgan and Katie. Accomplished students and talented athletes these two are ambitious in all they do. And hearing loss hasn't slowed them down. Let's listen in.

Dr. Caraway: Well, catch me up on, where are we today?

Morgan: Yeah, right now. I actually graduated college just a couple days ago.

Dr. Caraway: Well, congratulations.

Morgan: Thank you.

Dr. Caraway: And what degree did you graduate with?

Morgan: I got a nursing degree.

Dr. Caraway: Good for you. All right. Katie what's been going on with you?

Katie: I just graduated high school a week ago from today, yeah so. Finally done with that.

Dr. Caraway: Congratulations, now what happens life after high school?

Katie: I'm going to be attending University of Arkansas this fall.

Dr. Caraway: Do you know yet what you want to major in or what you're interested in?

Katie: I'm going to do Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management.

Dr. Caraway: Okay.

Katie: Yeah.

Dr. Caraway: Wow. Going to, like, think innovatively.

Katie: Yes. I want to be my own boss.

Dr. Caraway: You know, that does not surprise me does that surprise. Does that surprise you two?

Marissa: No. No.

Glenn: She is her own boss.

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Dr. Caraway: That's great Katie. All right, so first thing is, is that I want, you guys, Mom and Dad, if you could roll back the clock and remember when Morgan was born.

Marissa: Mm-hmm. So, she was born in in February of ’99. They had just started newborn hearing screening six, eight weeks before she was born. So, we don't have hearing loss on either side of our family or anywhere. So, it wasn't anything that was necessarily even on our radar.

And so, they had taken her, and they did the newborn hearing screening. I remember they came back, and they said she failed the screening. But we're new at this. It's new equipment. We you know we're just getting used to all this. So, we followed up with an audiologist, and I remember it was early summer, June-ish. She would have been like four months or so and Glenn happened to be out of town.

And so they did the newborn hearing screening. And I remember her laying on the little exam bed, and he walked in. He goes, “Well she's completely deaf”. And he - I mean, that's all. And then I he went on to say something I don't remember much. And I remember I started to cry and he said, “Oh, I'm sorry, do you need a minute?” And he threw a box of Kleenex on the table and left.

Dr. Caraway: Oh.

Marissa: And there she was.

Dr. Caraway: Wow. And you were by yourself?

Marissa: I was by myself.

Dr. Caraway: So, Glenn, you get the call and you're out of town.

Glenn: Yeah. And I think at that point, for me, it was more about my wife of.

Dr. Caraway: Absolutely.

Glenn: Like, okay we're just going to have to take this one step at a time. But you have no information.

Dr. Caraway: Right.

Glenn: That's the thing. I remember our conversations were, where do you go? What do you do? Where do you even start?

Dr. Caraway: Yeah. You know and that's what you're describing, is why Hearing First, what we're trying to do is be that place for families to have find that information, find that support. So, you leave with a pack of papers, and you don't know what you don't know. You don't even know where to begin.

Marissa: And so, I remember watching a 20/20, and it was on the girl that had one of the very first cochlear implants. And I just happened to see it. And I remember thinking, I don't know what that is, but that's what I want for my girl. I'm an educator. And so I knew, the window of time was vital, birth to three, for getting that in there.

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Dr. Caraway: You wanted that brain stimulated, ready to learn because you learn, because you knew…

Marissa: Yes. I wanted her to be able to read. I wanted her to be able to do whatever she wanted, and not have to rely on me; I wanted her to be independent.

Glenn: It's one thing to get a cochlear implant. It's a whole another thing to do the hard work so that it's effective. And they have both I mean, dove in head first, all in. And I remember us having conversations too, about what if later on down the road.

Dr. Caraway: Yeah.

Marissa: They don't want them.

Glenn: They don't want them, you know that's kind of a weird conversation. But as parents, you have to make a decision that's right at that time. And then as they grow up. But I think they would all say, we're glad we've got 'em.

Katie: Oh, yeah.

Dr. Caraway: So you get your implant at age 18 months,

Morgan: 18 months.

Dr. Caraway: And you get your implant at age?

Katie: 12 months.

Dr. Caraway: 12 months. Okay. And that's the difference with FDA approvals and things like that of the age being lowered. What's the age difference between you two?

Morgan: How old are you?

Katie: I'm 19.

Marissa: That's 4 years.

Glenn: 4 years, you guys.

Dr. Caraway: So just in a four years span, how criteria had changed in terms of age of implantation. All right. So I'm curious Morgan why did you decide to be a nurse?

Morgan: So I grew up always wanting to be in the medical field. And I started looking into it and I noticed that nurses are more at the bedside. Whereas doctors, they're more for the procedure. I want that personal interaction. I want that personal connection with those people. And I want to be there in their hardest moments and also in their best moments. And I want to walk through them in those moments so that's great.

Dr. Caraway: That's great. So you mentioned your job and you're going to be working at the very hospital where you had your first implant.

Morgan: I am.

Dr. Caraway: Full circle.

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Morgan: Full circle, yes. Pretty crazy.

Dr. Caraway: That's crazy. So what types of things will you actually be doing? Tell me about using a stethoscope.

Morgan: So, I use a different stethoscope. It's like a very high-end technology stethoscope, and I just have to plug in headphones.

Dr. Caraway: Okay.

Morgan: So it looks like I'm listening to music. I've had a lot of patients ask me, Are you listening to music? I'm like no. I'm just listening to your heart.

Dr. Caraway: Okay.

Morgan: So that's been a fun. Also like a cool door opener. Like why do you have that? And I just say, it's because I'm deaf. And it's also a really cool, like, opportunity to have like those conversations because a lot of them are older patients and they have, they struggle with hearing loss.

Dr. Caraway: Absolutely.

Morgan: So being able to connect with them and encourage them in that has been really cool. I didn't think I would see that in the hospital setting, but that has been really awesome to see.

Dr. Caraway: It's like all no matter where you go or what you're doing, you're this advocate or have this opportunity to be an advocate and to share your story.

Morgan: Yeah.

Dr. Caraway: Yeah. That's great. So it sounds like you've given them lots of experiences early on to groom them, to be able to go and do these things and on their own. Which is what you wanted.

Marissa: Exactly. It was just part of our lives. We just live life there was no consideration of they have hearing loss. We just live the life that we had set out to live.

Dr. Caraway: Was there a period of time when you ever thought life will never be normal?

Marissa: Oh absolutely. When you're when they're young and you're in all the speech therapy and all the appointments and it's a lot. It's every week. It's overwhelming. It's all consuming. That's all that there is. And so you don't envision a time when you they're. We don't think about it. There is none of that anymore.

Dr. Caraway: Do you remember a time when you finally thought, Oh, life is normal?

Glenn: I know for me, with Morgan, when I could see her playing sports out on a field, when I could see her, get in her car, go drive to practice, navigate practice, come back and it was like… I'm like, she really doesn't need our help.

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Dr. Caraway: Right.

Marissa: Also, when like, when Katie got her first job on her own was able to communicate, and do the things, and you know… you're just kind of.

Dr. Caraway: Yeah.

Glenn: I mean and they were probably, that probably happened sooner than we actually saw it.

Dr. Caraway: Right.

Glenn: But, and they and they both kind of just latched on and took charge of some of those things, which is what you want for your child.

Dr. Caraway: So, I'm curious, you know in terms of as I as Mom and Dad what advice would you give to other parents, who are maybe starting this journey or at a point time where they're like just feeling like they're wandering through the wilderness a bit?

Glenn: Well, I think the whole point of this video, is number one, there are amazing people who have traveled that journey who are willing to help. There are amazing resources, much better than what we were, had, on the table, right? And raise that child, enjoy them.

Dr. Caraway: Yeah.

Glenn: And all of those other pieces will, they'll fall into place. They will.

Dr. Caraway: Yeah. How about you, Marissa? What would you say?

Marissa: You know, I remember being overwhelmed, and I wish I would have been able to see someone like Morgan.

Dr. Caraway: Right.

Marissa: You know if they, if someone would have been able to walk in and say: here's my child, you know, who is profoundly deaf and why don't you sit and talk to her? I mean, I would have had such relief, hope. And I think that's the thing I didn't know if there was hope.

Dr. Caraway: Yeah.

Marissa: And there is.

Dr. Caraway: Yeah.

Marissa: And so, I think, you know, in those hard days, you just keep pushing and on the good days you grab on to those and you keep marching forward because it is hard and it is tedious. But the end result, I mean, I could not have pinned a better journey for either one.

Dr. Caraway: No.

Marissa: So I mean, I think it it's all worth it. It is. Every penny, every minute, every sacrifice has been worth it. And I do it all over again.

Dr. Caraway: Yeah. How about you guys? Any advice you'd give parents?

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Morgan: Ooh. I've been waiting for this.

Dr. Caraway: Yeah, I know, that's what I thought.

Katie: I think our parents did an amazing job. Kind of like what we said before. You know, being deaf isn't who we are. And I think that's why when we were younger we didn't really tell people because we didn't want people to think that

Dr. Caraway: To define you.

Morgan: That all we were, was deaf people and they never let that define us. And I think that's so important as a parent because, you know, there are role models and that's what you look to look up to. Yeah.

Dr. Caraway: That's awesome. What would you say? What would you say that you did that you're glad you did or the types of things you did to build this self-confidence and ability to advocate and to navigate difficult situations?

Marissa: Probably the biggest challenge was, like for Morgan, was timid and she was maybe unsure. And so just to help build confidence and part of putting her in cheer was helping her use her voice louder because she would tend to, you know, speak quieter just to being confident in herself and who she is. And so, you know, just surrounding them with people that supported them and cared about them. And we always had such a great community of people that that… And everything was just they're Katie and Morgan. It's not these are the girls with hearing loss these are first Katie and Morgan. And so.

Dr. Caraway: So if what advice would you give to a young person of advocating for themselves.

Morgan: Um. In college?

Dr. Caraway: Or in life?

Morgan: I think the biggest thing is you're you before anything else.

Dr. Caraway: Yeah.

Morgan: And so talk to people, communicate those needs, communicate what you need and how you need that help. And there's no shame or embarrassment in it. You have your strengths and your weaknesses. And it just all kind of ties together. And being bold and who you are. And along the way you're going to find people who don't support you. And that's okay. Those people or maybe are there in your life for a challenge but they will help you grow in that area. And so I think that's probably my biggest thing. But find the people that you know support you and stick with them.

Dr. Caraway: Yeah, get your own support system going.

Morgan: Oh yeah.

Dr. Caraway: What, would you what would you agree with that Katie?

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Katie: Yeah, I was going to say, like when I was younger, I didn't realize that. Like, I thought people would think I was weird. Like, Yeah.

Morgan: And I thought that too.

Dr. Caraway: You did, yeah.

Katie: When you get older, you begin to realize, like, when you tell people they're like, oh my goodness, like they're so understanding. And it's such a relief to know that you're going to have people there to support you.

Morgan: People are a lot more open than you expect them to be. And it just like builds this connection with people like, hey, we're both human. And they're like, Oh, this just makes you more human. It makes you more. I trust you. It just creates this like ground level. And so, like I've had a lot of people ask me, like, would you ask like if you could somehow ask yourself, like to take away your deafness, would you? And, you know, maybe when I was younger, maybe I would have said yes, but I would say no because it has like developed me into the person that I am today.

Dr. Caraway: It is who you are right.

Morgan: And it has although it has its challenges, it has pushed me into places that I never would have been if it weren't for it. And it's build friendships, it's open doors, it's build conversations and it's just creates that level with people. And a lot of people don't have that connection.

Dr. Caraway: You're exactly right, Morgan.

Morgan: And so, I love that piece about it.

Dr. Caraway: Yeah for sure. Wow. Well said. Well said. Makes me cry, I have to tell you. I'm really proud of you.

Morgan: Thank you.

Dr. Caraway: And you, too, Katie. I mean, the future is bright and all that just is ahead of you. It's really exciting, what's exciting is, you're both so motivated to connect with other people, but to also give back and to make other people's lives you know, better and to make a difference in them. That's terrific. So, I have no doubt that that's what exactly what you're going to do.

Morgan: Thank you.

Dr. Caraway: Yeah.

Conclusion: For more inspiring stories and to learn about what's possible for children with hearing loss visit HearingFirst.org.

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