

Top 3 Things to Do After Your Baby's Hearing Loss Diagnosis

Your child has just been identified with hearing loss. You may know exactly where you are and what you need to do or you may be still trying to figure out what your next steps should be. In this video, we're going to talk about what are the top three things you can do to move forward.

Hi, I'm Dr. Teresa Caraway from Hearing First and we're here to support parents and families like you who have a child with hearing loss so they can learn to listen, talk, read, and thrive.

As we get started talking about the three steps, I think you need to know and I want you to know that you are not alone. And in fact, 92% of babies who are born deaf or hard of hearing are born to two hearing parents, so it comes to them out of the blue, and it's very unexpected. There may be a lot of strong and different emotions that you and your family are processing right now. I want you to know that there is hope, that all those hopes and dreams that you had for your little one before your baby was ever identified with hearing loss are all probable today. And there's a proven path of what we can do and what steps you can take to make sure that your desired outcomes for your child are achieved.

The very first thing that you need to think about is what do you want for your child? What do you envision when your child is three years old, six years old, 13, 16, 19, 20, and 25?

Start with the end in mind because that will tell you what steps you need to take to achieve that outcome. And if you want your child to play with their neighborhood kids, to play with their siblings, to enjoy and participate in family dinners and stories, and have full opportunities to have a great academic success and later life flexibility, then Listening and Spoken Language is a consideration that you should look at.

But what is Listening and Spoken Language, or LSL? Well, it's that opportunity for you to learn a few specialized strategies and techniques or ways that you can emphasize and help your baby learn spoken language through listening through their ears.

Through the use of a well-managed hearing technology and early intervention, you can be coached and guided and supported to continue to be your child's first and most important teacher. If you stop and think about it, and if you have typical hearing and maybe you and your siblings or cousins, how did everyone learn to talk? Well, they learn to talk through their ears.

Our brains are pre-wired to learn spoken language through listening through our ears. We listen to our parents. We listen to our siblings, our cousins, our neighborhood kids, our teachers, our classmates, and that's how we learned to talk and think, which translates into reading and writing and doing well in school.

And when a child has hearing loss, what that means is that we have to be very purposeful in making sure that they too can take advantage of their little brains being pre-wired to learn spoken language through listening.

And we do that by using hearing technology. Hearing aids, cochlear implants, bone-anchored devices, all of those are technology that provides access. It breaks open the door to that little brain so that it stimulates that brain for listening and learning.

So, speaking of hearing devices, that's really the second step, getting the appropriate hearing devices for your child. How do you do that?

Well, you visit and you work with your pediatric audiologist. Your pediatric audiologist is a highly specialized audiologist who will work with you who will evaluate your child's hearing loss and provide the recommendations for the appropriate technology so that your child can have access to all the sounds and speech that surrounds them, the language that surrounds them. They have access through their ears to grow their little brains.

And that's why it's important that you act quickly because what's at stake is brain development. And you want to make sure that your baby has the brain activation devices or the hearing technology that it needs as soon as possible because every day counts for your baby to learn. And the sooner that your child receives their hearing technology, the faster and sooner they get on their road to learning, that they're activating their little brain. The early bird gets the worm. Early is always better.

The third thing you can do to continue to move forward is to get involved and enrolled in early intervention as soon as possible, meaning that you'll be starting to attend weekly intervention sessions with a specialist who will guide and coach you in what you can do to emphasize listening so your child can develop spoken language.

Early interventionist is going to be your partner in how you can stimulate your baby's learning and growth and what you can do every day throughout your day and throughout your home to make sure that every minute is maximized for Listening and Spoken Language.

You'll learn some strategies, some things to do, and they will all be fun, because guess what? Early intervention is really disguised as a child's play, because that's how kids learn. They learn through play. So, your early interventionist will guide and coach you into what are the appropriate play activities and fun things you can do with your child that will also be special listening and learning moments.

Much like if you've ever played a sport and you've played basketball and your coach guided and supported you to bring out the best in you as a player, that's what an early interventionist does. They're your coach to bring out the best in you, to guide you, support you in becoming your child's best and most important teacher.

So, you don't have to do it alone. You have a coach that will walk along beside you that will help problem solve, that will help support you, cheer you on, inspire and encourage you. It will be important to partner with an early interventionist who understands and knows about teaching a child who is deaf to listen and talk. You'll want someone who's done this before, who's been experienced, so that together you can be the best partners that you can be. And you'll have that guidance and that support that you'll need.

And remember, your early interventionist may be your coach but you are the captain of your team and you need to be the person that decides what is going to be best for you and your family and how you want to communicate with your child.

You may be wondering, well, how are you going to find a person who is specialized or who understands Listening and Spoken Language and teaching a child who is deaf to listen and talk? Well, there's several ways. You might begin by asking your physician. You might ask your pediatric audiologist. You might even come into the Hearing First private Facebook group and ask other parents who might be in your area and ask them for recommendations of who they have worked with, of who they have found partnering with has led them to their desired outcome. But above all, you want to make sure that you're comfortable, that you're feeling supported, that you are working towards the desired outcome that you want.

And remember, whatever hopes and dreams you had for your little one before you ever found out they had a hearing loss, that is still possible and probable today when you take the proven path towards Listening and Spoken Language and keep your eye on the end result of what you want for your child.

This is why Hearing First exists, to support you throughout your journey. As you have twists and turns, as your child grows and changes, we'll with you every step of the way and you'll be able to provide information and resources, education, and community so that you can continue to be supported and reach your dreams for your child.

Are you ready to map out your journey? Well, click the link below and let's get started on your next steps.

No matter where you are or what you may be feeling, Hearing First is with you every step of the way to support you. Subscribe to our YouTube channel, click on our website, and come join us. We'll see you next time.