

## Parent to Parent

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### How Do We Decide?

#### **Where Do I Start?**

Making decisions for our children is difficult enough when they do not have a hearing loss. When a disability is thrown into the mix, making decisions becomes much more complicated.

At the time of diagnosis, most parents know little about hearing loss and the implications for their child. In fact, most of us are acutely aware of how little information we have to base our decisions upon. Sorting out what decisions need to be made immediately and which ones can wait is often difficult. Parents are put in the position of having to rely on others, primarily professionals, to help them make these decisions.

While professionals are most often knowledgeable and helpful, parents can benefit greatly from practical information from other parents. It is important for parents to know what their rights are, and to be presented with all of the options available before making a decision.

Parents also need to understand the importance of being flexible and realize that no decision is set in stone. Just as all children are different, no one mode of communication or educational placement is right for every child. Understanding this helps parents realize that changes may need to be made along the way, and that although they will not always know for certain that they have made the right decision at the time, there are other options that can be explored if need be.

Before we even have time to adjust to the idea that our child has a hearing loss, we find that there are many decisions to be made. We are often asked to make important decisions while still feeling very overwhelmed, and often have no idea what might be best for our child. It is important to remember that we make decisions based on the information we have at the time, and that most decisions do not need to be made immediately.

The key to making good decision for your child is knowing all of the options that are available, educating ourselves about those options, and not being pressured into making a decision until we have enough information to feel comfortable to do so.

#### **When Others Disagree With My Decisions**

At times, parents are confronted with opposition when having to make a difficult decision for their child. There are always those who will disagree with the mode of communication we select, the educational placement we choose, or whether or not our child should wear hearing aids or get a cochlear implant. Often those who disagree with us can be very intimidating. In addition, there are those who will even question our right to make these decisions for our children.

One very important thing to remember is as parents, it is our right and responsibility to make decisions for our children until they are old enough to make them on their own, regardless of whether or not they have a hearing loss. We make decisions every day for our children. And, even though we may not always know for certain that a decision we are making for our deaf or hard of hearing child is the right one at the time, it is our job to do what we think is best for our child, based on the information available to us. Knowing how other parents have dealt with opposition can be very helpful.

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### **What If I Make a Decision That Turns Out To Be the Wrong One?**

We have all experienced making a decision for our child that we thought was the right one at the time, but later discovered that it might not have been the best choice after all. Unfortunately, that is a part of life for all of us. None of us is going to make the right decision every time. Fortunately, most decisions are not a matter of life or death, and we have the opportunity to re-evaluate the situation and look at other options.

Being flexible and open to other options is a critical part of raising a child with a hearing loss. When something isn't working for our children, we need to be able to admit it, search out advice from others and change directions in order to find a better solution. We also need to be able to forgive ourselves and accept that we made the best decision we could with the information that was available to us. We then need to move on and not look back.