

My Name is TJ

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Supporting Success for Children with Hearing Loss
<http://successforkidswithhearingloss.com>
Resources for Professionals & Parents

INTRODUCTION

For TJ, wherever you are....

At the time of this project TJ was in the fifth grade and was one of those kids who frequented the principal's office for a variety of offenses. He had a hearing loss and needed to wear hearing aids. He hated them—not because they didn't help him, but because he was physically different from his peers, and they represented a "handicap." He figured if he didn't look different, he wouldn't be different. Most of his infractions were caused by his difficulty interpreting social situations. He didn't hear everything and spent most of his day trying to "fill in" and "fit in." I learned upon returning from winter break that he was going to be expelled for the remainder of the year. The principal agreed to give him one last chance when I offered to work with him individually. Second semester, TJ and I sat down every Tuesday and talked (his IEP was worded as "aural rehabilitation"). His favorite session was when I pulled out the portable audiometer and let him test MY hearing and he found my hearing loss. We bonded. He opened up. We used the Listening Inventory For Education checklist as a springboard for our conversations. I wrote what he said and asked him to draw it. He hated to draw. I had to assure him that if he drew something, anything, I would have an illustrator "fix it." Later in the semester, the principal and his classroom teacher both commented on how his demeanor had changed. He wanted to come to school, and was occasionally seen smiling. TJ shared our project with the principal and his teachers that spring, and he made it through the fifth grade.

TJ may not remember our spring together, but I do.

TJ taught me the importance of encouraging self-advocacy—and how hard it is to do.

TJ taught me it is crucial to be accepted by your peers and adults.

TJ taught me that listening and understanding can make a difference.

Molly Lyon
TJ's audiologist

My Name is TJ

Hi. My name is TJ. I'm not deaf. But I don't hear so good either. Trouble is I don't know what I can't hear 'cause I can't hear it. Sometimes I know when someone says something that doesn't make sense, but other times I guess other kids don't understand either, so I stay quiet.



Sometimes I nod my head when people ask me, "Did you hear me?" -'cause I can hear them ask me that. They ask me that a lot. Other times people get mad at me and say things like, "I told you this morning" or "I already told you." Then I get in trouble for not doing what I'm told.



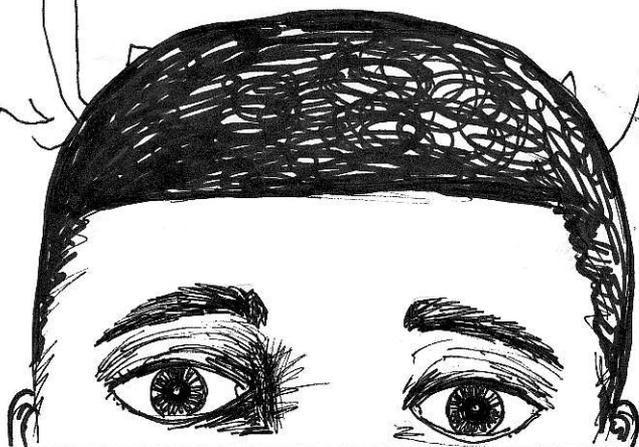
Sometimes the teacher says I'm lazy.
But I'm not. It's just that the work gets so hard
'cause what they say doesn't make any sense.
So sometimes I just draw or look out
the window.



Some days I hear great! It's really weird 'cause I can be talking to my friend Alex and I hear him just fine. But, you know, he's really good at looking at me when he talks and he always stands close. That really helps.



Sometimes I notice that other people are talking out in the hall and it makes it hard for me to understand Alex (even though he looks at me and stands close). Sometimes my teacher plays music and the other kids really like it, but I don't. Sometimes she forgets to turn off the projector and it makes a lot of noise, too. I just can't hear very well when there are other noises in the room.



My sister Brittany is also real good at looking at me when she talks, but she talks too fast!

My mom tells her to slow down because no one can understand what she is saying.

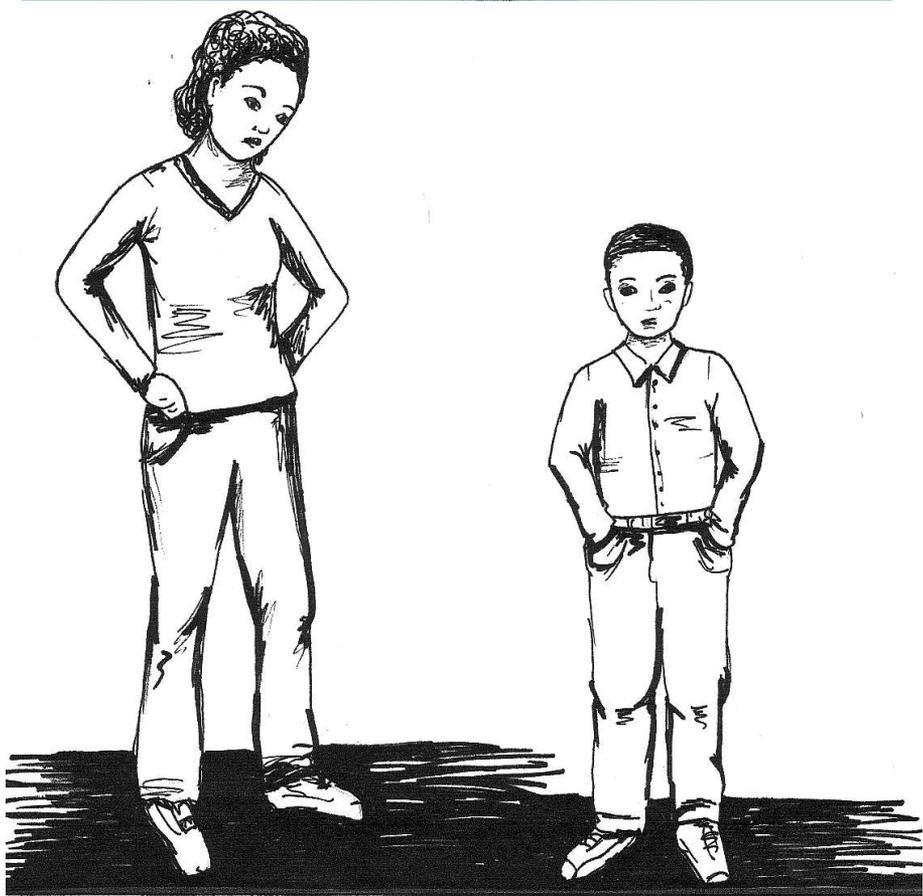
She slows down for a little while,
then she goes fast again.



Sometimes people will laugh at what I say. I don't mean to be funny, but I pretend I did it on purpose. Once I thought my mother said, "TJ, go get a pillow!" and I came back with a cover because that's what I thought she said.

There was a whole house full of people who thought that was pretty funny. I really do know the difference between a pillow and a cover,

I just didn't hear her right because
she was too far away.

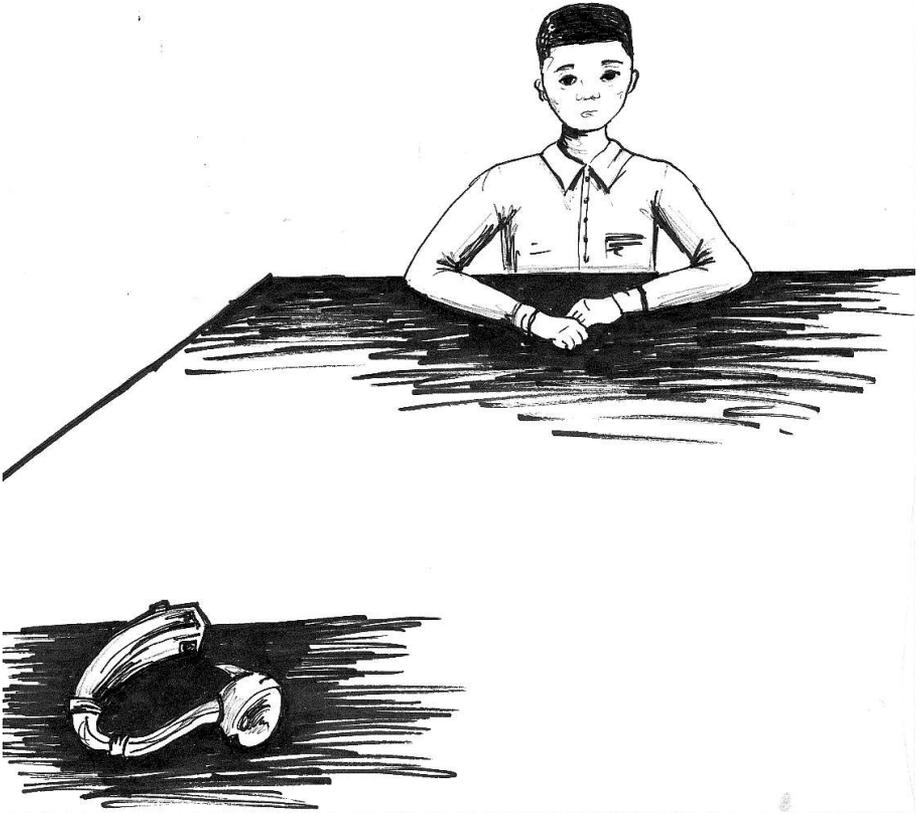


Sometimes I get in trouble for not wearing my hearing aids. They say I hear better with them on and ask me, "Don't you want to hear better?" You bet I do! But my hearing aids don't work so good when there is a lot of noise. It really is hard to hear what people are saying so I don't wear them all the time.

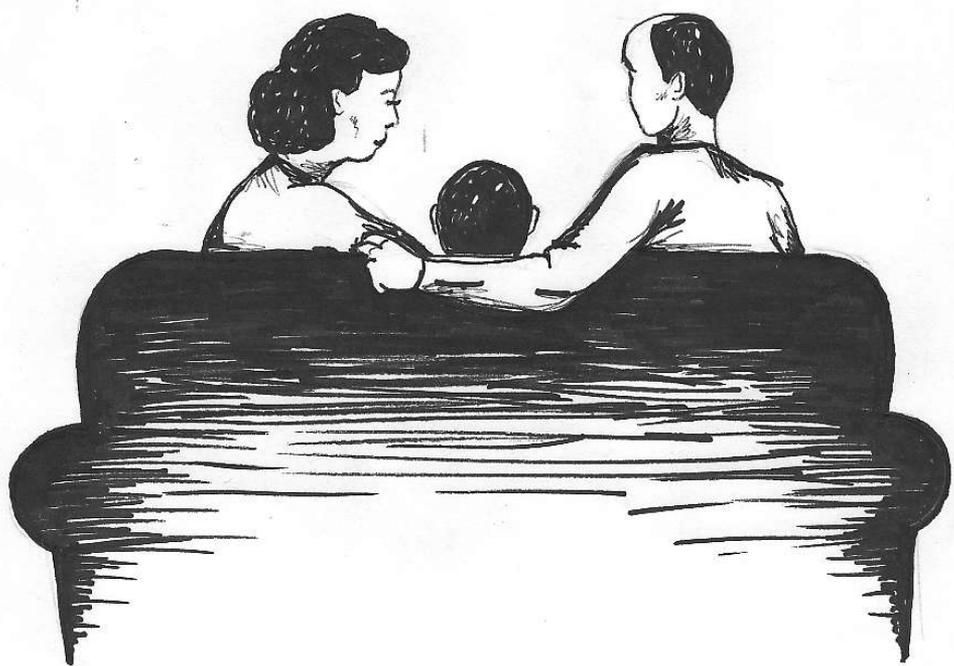
Then I get in trouble.



I like my new red and white swirl colored earmolds that fit in my ears, but they make my ears itch. Sometimes all I can think about is when can I take my hearing aids off and scratch my ears. When I do, I get in trouble again.

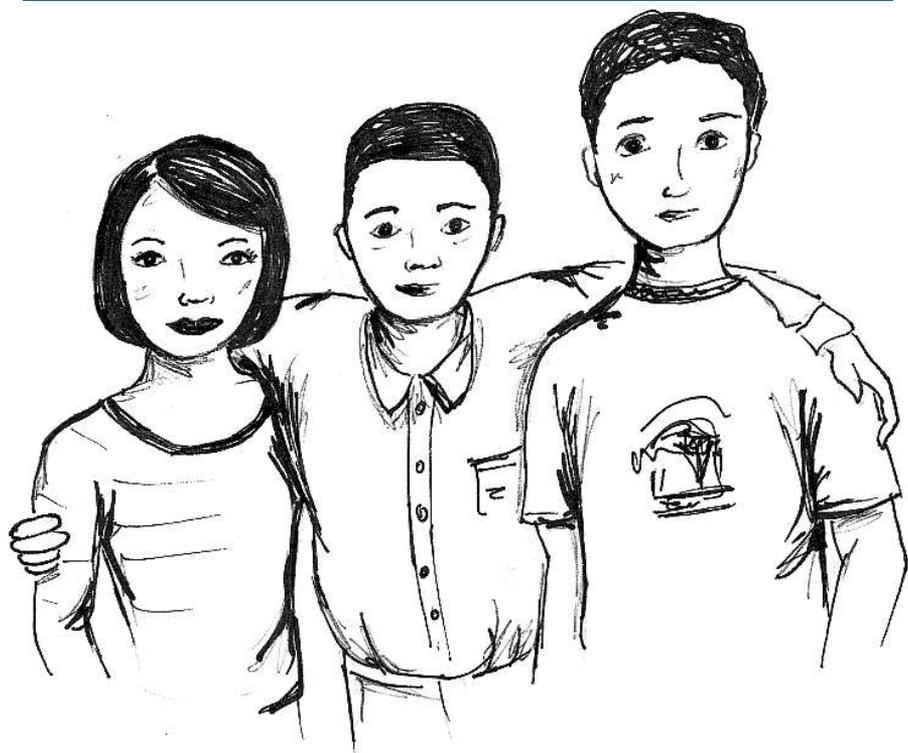


Sometimes I just get mad.
But my mom and dad try to cheer me up
and say they love me just the way I am.



It's taken me a long time to figure out how I can be happy. My mom says I need to speak up for myself. I think that means that I need to tell people to stop talking too fast (like Brittany) or to look at me (like Alex always does), or I can ask to close the door to make it quieter.

After I tell people, I feel better.



I still don't hear so good all the time,
but at least it's better.

