

Attitude is Caught, Not Taught

The behavior of parents sends powerful messages to their children. Your child learns about himself from you, his first and most important teachers.

If you encourage him to hide his hearing aids he will believe that you are embarrassed or ashamed of him. He needs to hear in the store, at church, at community events, etc. Being able to select bright colors for hearing aid cases and earmolds involve him and make him feel good about these neat 'ear computers'.

If he is not wearing his hearing aids at home you are showing that it is okay with you if he does not participate fully in family conversations. This sets up feelings of being ignored or an expectation that it is someone else's responsibility to make sure he understands or get him the information he needs. This creates greater dependence and helplessness at an older age. Without hearing all of the language at home he can't keep up with vocabulary and language learning of other children his age. Weekends are important listening times! Taking a short break is okay (i.e., 30 minutes to read silently), but auditory brain stimulation should continue throughout the afternoon, evening or mornings before school. Minutes not hearing his best at home contribute to growing gaps in learning at school.

If you minimize the impact of hearing loss (*I think his hearing is really okay...*) on his ability to listen and learn, he is learning that you do not like that part of him - the part that needs hearing aids to perform his best in school. And that you reject him for who he is, a child with a hearing loss. And sometimes that he is a bad person for having a hearing loss and to be a good person he needs to pretend that he can hear, even when he is struggling. And finally, he may be learning from you that it is better to be viewed as naughty or not able to learn well than it is for people to think he has a hearing loss.

If you ignore the need to address the hearing loss you are putting your child at risk for being a victim. He does not know what he does not hear which sometimes results in him stating information that makes no sense in the context of what was said or heard by others around him. This makes him seem more different than he would if he could hear/communicate better and can contribute to bullying or greater feelings of not fitting in. Rather than believing the problem is because he has a hearing loss and misheard, your child may grow to believe that there is some reason why he deserves to be treated badly by others, like being stupid or weird. Families are in the best position to help their children be resilient to harassment or feelings of not fitting in by linking instances of miscommunication to mishearing, while reinforcing that the hearing loss makes it more challenging for him, but the issue is only that - not that he is a bad person, incapable, strange, etc.

Your child wants to please you. Too many children **purposely damage** or lose their hearing aids because they believe their parents would rather not have them use the devices or will not really love them if they wear hearing devices. Some children knowingly **choose to become 'the slow student in class'** rather than performing their best with their hearing aids because this is what they believe their parents would prefer them to be.

Without family support and acceptance of the child for all of his characteristics and strengths, few children succeed to reach their potential.

If your child has usable hearing, the level of educational and/or social success he will achieve is directly related to the number of hours he wears his hearing aids each day. If he doesn't have usable hearing and is a visual learner all of the above applies for children who live in families who learn only a minimal number of signs.

What future do you want for your child?

This information was developed by Karen L. Anderson, PhD and posted 11/1/12.
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