

Afraid to label your child as Deaf? 3 Ways to Embrace Your Child's Deaf Identity

Alaine: [00:00:00] Welcome to Raising Deaf Kids. I'm your host, Elaine Jacobs. Are you having a hard time accepting your child's diagnosis as being deaf? Does even the word deaf have trouble coming out of your mouth? I know that the hearing loss journey looks different for every family and some families can really struggle with coming to terms with the fact that your child is deaf or has any type of hearing loss.

Alaine: And I remember when I found out that my first child had hearing loss, I, I literally could not call him deaf, like use the word deaf for the first six years of his life. And after processing through the diagnosis and having a second child with the same hearing loss diagnosis, I am now, when he's finally eight years old and my other one is six years now, finally able to proudly say that both of my children are deaf.

Alaine: So how did I go from being afraid to say the word deaf to [00:01:00] embracing my kid's identity as being deaf? Listen to this podcast episode today and I'll tell you what helped me to finally embrace my kids as they truly are.

Alaine: Hey, welcome to Raising Deaf Kids. Are you tired of spending your precious time after the kids go to bed googling and scrolling Instagram for answers like, how do I learn sign language? Do you feel overwhelmed by all of the decisions that you have to constantly make for your child? Hey, I'm Elaine. I'm a mom of three littles, two of whom are deaf.

Alaine: I remember what it felt like to learn that my child was deaf for the first time. It felt like the rug got torn out from under my feet, and I was falling without a net in sight. How did I get through those crazy early years of learning new ways of life without completely going insane? By creating solid foundations for my child of communication [00:02:00] strategies, academic skills, and routines at home.

Alaine: And I can't wait to share it all with you. Together, we're going to build a strong foundation that will support your child and help them thrive. So put down that to do list, close out that ASL app for now, and let's get started.

Alaine: Did you know that I have a free community of parents just like you? Busy parents who want to parent their child with more confidence while still getting all of the things done in the house each day. In our community, we share strategies to help our kids learn language faster, a no sweat approach to the IEP, and we lean on each other for support and encouragement in this up and down journey of hearing loss with your kids.

Alaine: If you haven't found your community yet, then welcome home. Come join us at [facebook.com slash group slash raising deaf kids](https://www.facebook.com/group/raisingdeafkids).

Alaine: Here's a little story time for you this [00:03:00] morning. So most of you know, if you've been around this podcast and if you don't, you're new here. Hey, my name is Elaine Jacobs. I have three kids and two of them were born deaf and they both have cochlear implants. One of them talks, my eight year old talks and my six year old signs.

Alaine: And hi, I'm Elaine Jacobs. I'm a mom of two kids who are deaf and for the first six years, I could not say that my kids were deaf. And I think the reason for that was that it took me that long to really fully process through the hearing loss diagnosis. So, you know, when we found out that our first child was born deaf, born with profound sensorineural hearing loss which my second one also has the same diagnosis, you know, we were new parents.

Alaine: We had never had any, any hearing loss in our family at all. We were completely new to it. Came out of left field, you know, we were [00:04:00] not expecting that and it was just a whirlwind from the time we got that diagnosis when he was two months old to, you know, deciding about cochlear implants, learning kind of what that was, you know, surgery, speech therapy and everything just kicked off.

Alaine: And then once we finally felt like we got a little settled with it, like, when he was two, we had our second child, you had the same diagnosis and then the whole whirlwind went again. And so. You know, for a good five years, we were just trying to stay afloat with just kind of understanding what hearing loss meant, trying to learn what that meant for our kid now, understanding when we had our second one, that we were going to have to learn sign language, which felt like, and still at times feels like a really big.

Alaine: Project to do and we're still working on it, if I'm being honest with you, because now I have a third child you know, and [00:05:00] for the longest time, really up until about a couple of years ago, I would say that my kids had had

hearing loss. Or were deaf and hard of hearing, which now, I think that doesn't make any sense.

Alaine: Either you're deaf or you're hard of hearing, right? Usually but I just could not say the word deaf. When describing my kids, even though they were, and I think part of that was that using the word deaf feels very final. And I think it's because of the context around using that word and, you know, what typically when you're hearing, you think of as being deaf, which means not hearing using sign language.

Alaine: Maybe it means not being fully part of. You know, regular culture and regular community. And that's not what I wanted for my kids. So I had a really hard time using that word, but I was able to come to terms with that. How was I able to do that? Basically, I [00:06:00] was able to do that by just learning more about hearing loss, you know, getting involved with you know, other parents who had kids with hearing loss and honestly talking to several deaf adults.

Alaine: Through interpreters you know, and I was able to see what their life is like and how they felt about being deaf themselves and really see that they were thriving adults with, you know, regular jobs and had great lives. And, you know, they had no problem with being deaf or calling themselves stuff. And so really.

Alaine: Interacting with the deaf and hard of hearing adults was a really integral part for me, but. I just want to tell you that I'm telling that story because I want you to know if you're having a hard time accepting your child's hearing loss right now if you're having a hard time calling them deaf that's okay and that is normal and I went through that too and now I'm on the other side of that and I have no problem calling my kids deaf because that is what [00:07:00] they are but I understand and I remember not wanting to use that term for a long time.

Alaine: So. What I wanted to talk to you about today is how to start embracing your child's potential identity as being deaf and how to start embracing the hearing loss and, you know, start moving forward on your hearing loss journey. And so I have about three things that I think really helped me start embracing my kids as being deaf and I think will hopefully Help you and give you some encouragement as well.

Alaine: So number one, which I was just talking about, which was probably like one of my most profound experiences as a parent and understanding hearing loss of my kids was I started interacting in person with deaf adults And when I started doing [00:08:00] that, I realized There's something wrong with being deaf, right?

Alaine: And I also followed a lot of Deaf adult accounts on Instagram like mama, he hears is fantastic. Emily Segura is fantastic. Those are the two that I can think of right now. I know I'm following more, but those are the two that I always recommend to parents because they are so positive. They both have cochlear implants.

Alaine: They have so many great. Encouraging things to say to parents of kids with hearing loss and they have You know, really good perspective growing up with hearing loss themselves, and then also having cochlear implants, which they got at different times and, you know, having that perspective as well.

Alaine: So, they just have a lot of good perspective to bring to parents and also started interacting with several, like, local deaf adults through different events that I were, like, hearing loss support group would have. And [00:09:00] through interacting in person with the deaf adults, I, you know, realize that there's nothing really to fear and, you know, really, I think that's what it comes down to is you're afraid you're afraid of labeling your kid as deaf.

Alaine: You're afraid of the implications that that. Brings when you admit that they are deaf or admit that they have hearing loss and I think, you know, interacting with and seeing other deaf adults really kind of breaks down those like preconceived notions that you have and you start realizing that. You know, it's absolutely fine that these adults that, you know, the adults are living perfectly fine lives.

Alaine: They have jobs, they navigate even using ASL, which was important for me to see because my six year old uses ASL. So, you know, one of my fears was he's navigating the world as like a deaf person and how is he going to like communicate with people who don't know ASL because there are plenty out there who don't, but he's still got to like navigate around the world when he grows up.

Alaine: And, but I watch other deaf adults do that and. Like [00:10:00] they know how to do it, they figured it out. And so just kind of following their lead and interacting with other people who are deaf was really helpful to me in seeing what was the potential for my children and what I could look forward to for my kids.

Alaine: And so the second thing that I think helped me kind of accept my kids here in loss a little bit more is I realized that it's just a fact about them. They are just deaf, like. that is, they do not hear out of their ears. So that is by definition, the definition of being deaf. Okay. But it's not who they are.

Alaine: Right. And you know, I really realize, I think, What it really boiled down to was I not only realized that this was just a fact about them and that there are so many other things about my kids that I would tell you before I told you that they had hearing loss, because those are [00:11:00] all the things that matter about them.

Alaine: And hearing loss is really, even though I talk about it on the podcast, and this is my world and I love hanging out with you guys. Realistically, on a day to day basis, hearing loss is just a small part of, you know, what we do and work with in our family. The other times, they're just regular kids who like regular stuff, right?

Alaine: And the hearing loss just kind of like comes along for the ride with us. But I also realize who, you know, their identity comes from and that their identity comes from Christ, right? Their identity doesn't come from a label. You know, of who we think they are. And, you know, my realization was that my kids were born deaf.

Alaine: They were born with this hearing loss. So this is how God wanted them to be. And God doesn't make mistakes, right? There are no coincidences. God [00:12:00] creates us. And, you know, for whatever reason, I do not know right now. He wanted to create them with hearing loss and he wanted to create them deaf. And that was intentional.

Alaine: And, you know, I believe that that's going to play out in their lives later on. But that is where their identity lies and because God made them deaf, God doesn't see any problem with them, right? He made them that way. So there's no problem with being deaf because God only creates things that are good.

Alaine: Okay. So he created my kids with hearing loss, so that still must be good. That's not bad because he created them the way that he wanted to create them, and that's okay. And so I realized that that's really where their identity lies, right? It doesn't lie in, you know, any labels that I put on them or any labels that society puts on them.

Alaine: It lies in their identity in Christ, and Christ says they're okay. I made them that way. [00:13:00] So there's, there's nothing for me to worry about as a parent. And there is no problem with being deaf. And the third thing that I think really helped me embrace my kids hearing loss was that I started educating others more about it.

Alaine: Just like I do on this podcast now with you guys, I started You know, talking with other parents, sharing our story, sharing my perspective of the story. And I think really that talking about hearing loss, using the word deaf really takes away the power from the words, like there's so much connotation.

Alaine: And I think one of the deceptions is like, as long as we keep stuff quiet and don't say it out loud, it kind of keeps worrying us or keeps the anxiety going. But once you start talking about it, once you. Say it out loud, it starts taking away the power from the words and helps you feel more confident in how your child are, and it helps you feel more accepting [00:14:00] of, you know, how your children were created to be, you know, I know that hearing loss was most likely a shock for you.

Alaine: And I know that everyone follows their own unique journey with hearing loss with your kids. Okay. And I just want to be an example to you, my journey with my kids. It's not going to look the exact same way as your journey with your kids, okay? And that's okay. But I just want to be an example, hopefully an encouragement to you of a parent who's just a little bit further along, who also had the same struggles as you, but who's moved through them.

Alaine: And this is how I did it. So I hope that this episode was encouraging you today. If you're having trouble accepting hearing loss from your child, I hope that these three things that I kind of worked through will help you work through that as well. And I want to invite you to our Facebook group, right?

Alaine: It is filled with parents just like you who have kids with hearing loss and there's [00:15:00] parents at different stages of hearing loss with their kids. And the fantastic part is We're all there to help each other. We're all there to help encourage and support each other. It's a come join our group at facebook.

Alaine: com slash group slash raising deaf kids. Come ask your questions. Come ask for support, encouragement, all of us together. All the parents in there want to support you and want to give you encouragement and truly want to help you through whatever part of the journey that you are on. I hope this episode today calms your soul down a little bit.

Alaine: I know as parents, we want the absolute best for our kids. Unfortunately, kids, especially kids with hearing loss, do not come with a handbook. So I want you to know by simply being here and listening, you're doing a great job as a parent. Because you are learning, and you're trying to find better ways to help your kid.

Alaine: I'm so proud of your efforts, I'm so glad that you're here. I hope you have a wonderful, fun weekend, and I will see you back on Tuesday. Bye!

Alaine: Hey, I hope this episode [00:16:00] today blessed you big time. If so, would you take 30 seconds and leave a quick review for the show on Apple Podcasts? It lights me up to know that this podcast is helping you and leaving a review helps other parents to find this podcast too. If you have a friend who needs to hear this podcast episode today, be a pal and text it or share it with them.

Alaine: Now go check off the rest of your to do list and I'll meet you here every Tuesday and Thursday for podcast episodes to support your whole family in language learning and parenting your deaf and hard of hearing child with confidence. Adios!