

Attachment from the Parents Perspective

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Overview

As most professionals in the field of deaf education know, children who are deaf or hard of hearing face a number of trials as a result of their deafness. In addition to delays in speech and social skills, children who are deaf or hard of hearing have also been found to have great delays in language and communication. While teachers of the deaf and speech language pathologists are well trained and capable of helping to bridge the gap and teach these children how to develop language and communication, there is one aspect in the child's life that we have no control over which is the attachment and relationship between the child and their parent or caregiver.

Research has found that children who haven't developed a strong attachment to their parent or caregiver are negatively impacted in regard to mental health, academics, and communication development. How similar or different are these outcomes in children who are deaf or hard of hearing? How can we as professionals discern if a communication delay is a result of the child being deaf or hard of hearing or if the delay is a result of a lack of attachment?

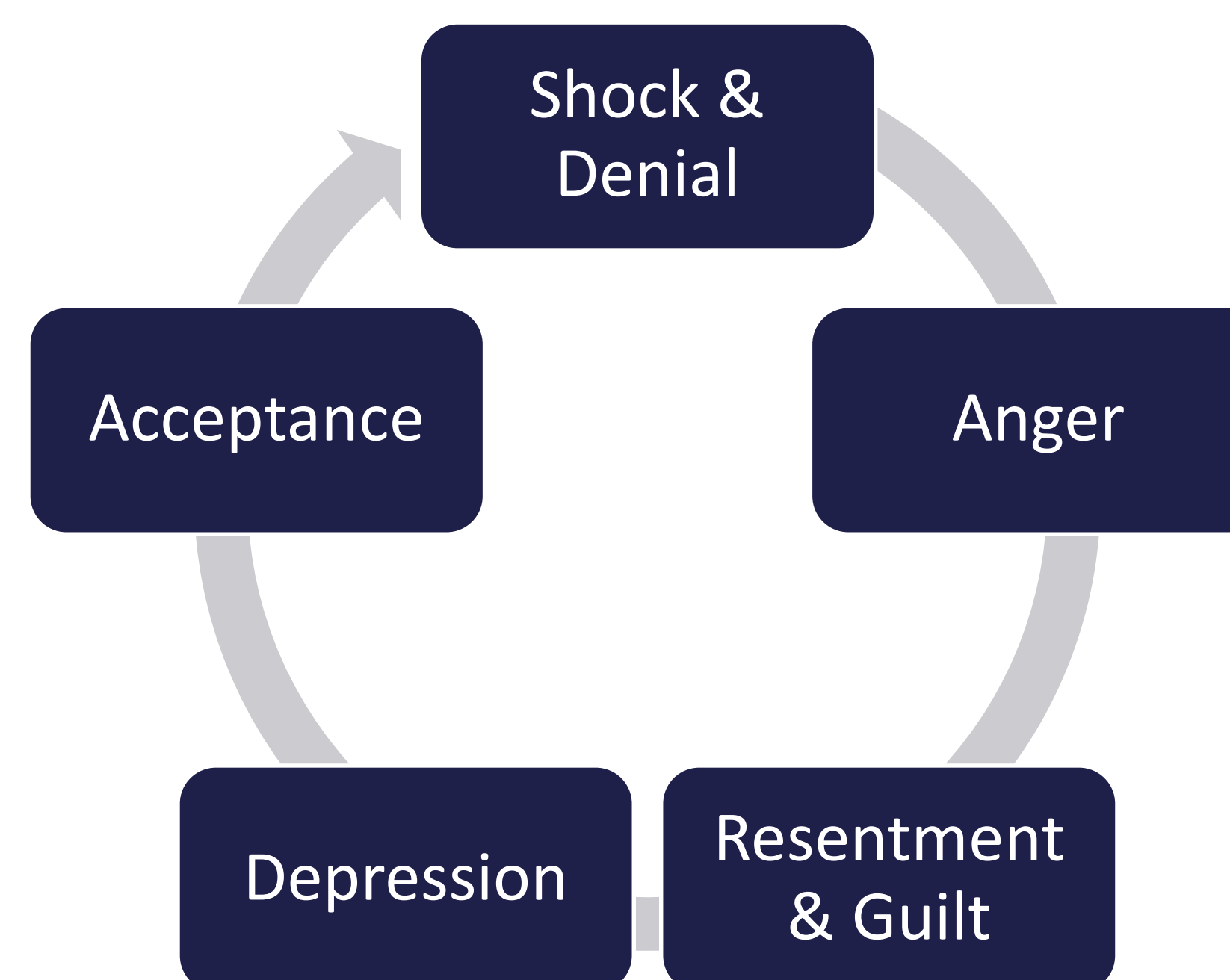
Serve & Return

- Crying = Getting fed.
- Gesturing = Being handed the toy they want.
- Babbling = Being talked to by their caregiver.
- Making eye contact = Receiving a smile.

This back and forth, cause and effect relationship is what creates a bond between a child and their caregiver. If a child attempts to communicate in one of these ways and their serve is not returned, they are conditioned to then believe that communication holds no meaning because it does not achieve the desired response.



The Stages of Grief



The cycle of grief does not end with acceptance. It begins again at the first IEP meeting or when the child begins transitioning into a new school. Anything that could serve as a reminder that life looks differently than they originally planned could start the cycle of grief all over again.

The Interviewing Process: Q & A

- How soon after being diagnosed was your child fit with devices?
- What was your initial response to finding out your child was deaf?
- What differences do you notice between your child who is hearing and your child who is deaf?

"We were devastated as parents. We thought we had done something wrong during my pregnancy. Our initial fears for him were that he wouldn't be able to communicate with others and life would be hard for him since he was deaf." (Shock & Guilt)

"It took us a while to realize he was deaf because he was always so visual. He was constantly assessing his environment and would continue doing so when sounds would occur. We just thought this was because he was hearing the sounds and assumed that the diagnosis was wrong, and he wasn't deaf." (Denial)

"I just want him to do his best and have no limitations. I just want him to be the best person that he can be, and I want him to be given the same opportunities that others have even though he is deaf." (Acceptance)

Conclusion

While many have taken on the task of researching serve and return, especially as it relates to communication development in children who are deaf or hard of hearing, more research is needed.

How does one differentiate between the effects caused by deafness regarding communication and the effects caused by a lack of attachment?

Either our student's communication development is being affected by their hearing loss and therefore, they need early intervention supports and/or their communication development is being affected due to a lack of attachment. In which case, they would require other supports and services.

Acknowledgements

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