



Arizona Hands & Voices

**2009 EHDI Conference**  
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**Empower Parents, Empower Children**

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# Welcome & Introduction

- Audiology Tech, Banner Desert Medical Center
- Follow-up Specialist, Department of Health Services Newborn Hearing Screening Program
- Newborn Hearing Screener and Coordinator, Phoenix Children's Hospital
- Founding Board Member, Arizona Hands & Voices
- Parent of a 16 year old son (Joshua) with typical hearing and an 8 year old daughter (Joy) with a moderate hearing loss



# Joy Identified

- Adopted at 7/12 months
- Identified 3 years 7 months
- Aided 3 years 9 months, bilatateral BTE's
- Connexin 26, possibly late onset
- Developmental Preschool public school district for 1 year
- Desert Voices Oral Learning Center for 2 years
- Mainstreamed for last 2 ½ years



# My Hope for Today....

Because we want our children to become increasingly independent as they grow...

- Our ultimate goal as parents is to have children who are self empowered to live their lives as individuals with all of the skills and abilities to advocate for themselves and achieve the highest goals for themselves within their gifts and abilities (whether typically hearing, hard of hearing or Deaf).



What does it mean  
to empower?

How do you feel when  
empowered?

# To Empower

- To give power or authority to
- To enable
  - Synonym: to commission



# Enabling Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing children to reach their highest potential.

- Attitude Check – life isn't what we expected
  - Have to start or continue seeking ways to come to acceptance of our child's hearing loss
  - Seek ways to feel supported in our feelings about and experiences with our child's hearing loss
  - Seek ways to be empowered in general as parents and in particular as it relates to being in the DHH world
  - Recognize our role and seek ways to empower our children

# Heart's Understanding, Heart's Voice

## ➤ What I mean by this

- My concept based on my individual experience and experience with parents of a newly identified child
- It's that internal sense, voice, knowledge
- It's something that is intangible, but known
- You don't know why you know it, you just do
- Hard to define, hard to explain, but is something you know is true
- For spiritual people it might be called their spirit



# Heart's Understanding

- A heart's understanding is built on knowledge
- Some of that knowledge comes from who we are and how we were raised
  - Many of us parent in similar ways or even opposite ways to our parents. We make many of these decisions unconsciously because how we were raised becomes a part of how we raise....
  - If our child is born into a deaf family, we have a greater heart's understanding of what that means for our child and our family
  - If the DHH world is new to us, we have to gain knowledge of this world and see how it applies to our child and family

# Heart's Understanding

- Heart's Understanding can be educated and empowered by what we learn
  - When our child was first diagnosed, we had less knowledge and therefore less understanding
  - We were less empowered because our understanding and knowledge was limited
  - But we already have a heart's understanding of our child so our heart's understanding is able to take some of the intangibles of knowing our child and piece that together with knowledge about who our child is now that we know them as Deaf or Hard of Hearing and come to a new understanding of them and our new life in the DHH world

# Heart's Understanding

- The Heart's Understanding gives rise to our heart's voice
  - Illustrations.....
- The new knowledge that we gain about our child's hearing loss and who they are as a DHH child gives rise to our heart's voice about their needs as a DHH kiddo
  - Illustrations.....



# Heart's Understanding-Heart's Voice

- Three types of people as it relates to speaking our hearts understanding...
  - Those whose heart's understanding is empowered to speak their heart's voice
  - Those whose voice is soft, maybe barely audible
  - Those whose voice is silent
- The second two often prevent one from trusting in and giving voice to one's heart understanding



# Heart's Understanding-Heart's Voice

- There are many who were never taught to listen for a heart's understanding-heart's voice
- There are those whose voice has been beaten down by others
- There are those whose heart's voice has been disempowered by listening to negative thoughts and feelings



# Heart's Understanding-Heart's Voice

- As parents, when our heart's voice is silent or soft, we are less able to empower our children.
  - We aren't empowered, so therefore our children aren't empowered. Their heart's understanding-heart's voice is not empowered.
- To be empowered we need to do those things that strengthen this understanding and voice.
  - Events sponsored by Hands & Voices can help you to connect with others who are striving to be empowered.
  - By educating and exercising our heart's understanding, our heart's voice is empowered and we are increasingly capable of listening to and acting upon them.



# Heart's Voice

- Heart's Voice is active. It is just that, giving voice to what we know, think, believe, and feel about our child regardless of hearing loss
  - I experience this and use this with both of my children
  - The heart's voice is what gives action to our knowledge and beliefs about our child as we interact with them and as we interact with the professionals in our lives



# Being Open to the Possibilities

- In the world of Hands and Voices we call this being unbiased.
- As we support each other as parents and professionals and encourage listening to and acting upon the heart's understanding and heart's voice this is a key to being effective.
  - Illustration – “Where to live?”





# Heart's Understanding-Heart's Voice

- As our children grow, we are with them less and less. Eventually we won't be with them when they are living their lives.
- They are the one's that will have to advocate for themselves.
- We won't be in every social circumstances
- We won't be with them at their work
- We eventually won't be with them when they are meeting with their audiologist

# Way's to empower our children

- Seeking ways to give our children greater responsibility for their equipment
  - Joy taking care of her hearing aids
  - Joy taking responsibility for having batteries
  - Joy taking responsibility for her FM system
  - Joy planning for the purchase of future hearing aids



# Way's to empower our children

- Seeking ways to involve our children in their educational needs
  - Joy setting the example in class for raising her hand when she hasn't heard something and saying "Can you repeat that please? I didn't hear you."
  - Joy taking the initiative to move to a place in the classroom where she can hear
  - Joy presenting to her class each year about her hearing aids and FM system
  - Joy participating to a greater measure in her IEP planning
  - Joy attending and participating in the teacher in-services



# Way's to empower our children

- Seeking ways to involve our children in their audiological care
  - Encouraging Joy to answer the audiologists questions (resisting as a parent to offer the first response)
  - Encourage Joy to describe what she's hearing or not hearing
  - Encourage Joy to speak for herself about the programming and her needs



# Call to Action

- What is your plan today to be and feel empowered in your own life as a parent or as a professional?
- What is one thing you are going to do today to help your child be and feel empowered?



# Thank you

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