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Parents Talk about Cochlear Implants

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Some of the names have been changed to protect the family's privacy:

Christofer deHahn talks about choosing a cochlear implant for his children:

"No matter what anybody tells you, this is always a very difficult decision. I have two deaf children, ages 6 and 11, both profoundly deaf, raised with sign - now oral - and implanted.

"The 6 year old was doing very well with aids until she had a shift in her hearing loss to 103dB. She was struggling during speech therapy, and wasn't getting all of the language in her integrated preschool setting. It was either digital aids or an implant. With a progressive loss, we decided on the implant. She is now 1.5 years post-implant, and we are currently evaluating her for the mainstream. Her private school for the deaf can no longer keep up with her.



"My 11 year old was implanted this past spring. He was a very successful digital hearing aid user; however, as the language became more complex, he had his difficulties. At first he ignored it, then he started to realize what he was missing. We left it up to him to decide whether he wanted an implant or not. It took him awhile, but he put together some great goals to shoot for post-implant. He has hit almost every one.

"I'm not saying that you should let a 5 year old decide for himself. You know what the goals are for your child. You know what they are capable of with their aids. You have to decide whether to go with the best hearing aids or with an implant. It's a tough decision.

"If I were to measure my children's progress post implant, it would be at least an order of magnitude better than how they progressed with their aids. Of course, there was no way to know that in advance. I see a lot of young kids with implants that show little or no difference. Some kids take time as well, showing slow but measurable gains over the years. There's just no way to predict."

Bonnie's mom talks about teaching a child with a cochlear implant:

"I think for Bonnie my main concern is the difficulty with which I think getting through the school system and doing well is going to require. Bonnie functions so well that you forget she's deaf. And that's a big detriment. You take for granted that she sees and she does and she hears things, but she doesn't. I guess if anything I would say that I don't want to ever take for granted that Bonnie is hearing when she's not...You can't change the effects of deafness on language development. We think Bonnie hears things when in fact she's hearing something totally different. The fact that this child has to translate continuously what she hears into what is the correct pronunciation. I mean it's like working in two different languages, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It requires that she attends at a hundred per cent what we take for granted."

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<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/meet/parents/ci.jsp>