


# Raising Psychologically Healthy Deaf Child: Top Ten Pitfalls

Lauri L. Rush, Psy.D., Director  
Gallaudet University  
Mental Health Center



# My Personal Background

## Family History:

- Maternal grandparents were deaf
- Grandmother helped raise us
- Hearing parents met at Gallaudet
- Mother was an teacher of deaf children
- Hearing sister graduated from Gallaudet's school psychology program - teaches deaf children
- Deaf relatives

# My Professional Background

- Doctorate – Clinical Psychology
- Gallaudet – special student
- Kendall School Psychologist
- Inpatient/outpatient psychiatric hospital intern
- California School for the Deaf, Fremont;  
Supervisor of Counseling
- Gallaudet Mental Health Center, Director

# My Professional Experiences

- Psychotherapy with deaf and hard of hearing of all ages & backgrounds
- Clinical supervision
- Parent groups
- Cochlear implant consultation
- Psychological assessment
- Research on psychotherapy with deaf individuals

# My Parental Background

- Serena – born New Year's Eve 2002!
- Expressive & spirited child
- Favorites – the color orange, french fries, the alphabet, dancing, Dora, computer games
- Medical challenges
- Hearing at birth
- Became deaf at 1 year
- Cochlear Implant at 2 ½
- Bilingual
- Kendall School Student

# Pitfall #1

## Abuse and/or Neglect Your Child

- Child development – deaf vs. hearing
- Parenting techniques - deaf vs. hearing
- The impact of family problems  
(not related to deafness)
- Experiences of deaf therapy clients
- Abuse of deaf children
- Importance of the relationship

# Pitfall #2

## Avoid Communicating with Your Child

- Communication choices
- “Dinner Table Syndrome”
- “Tell you later”/  
“Not important”
  - “Audism Unveiled”
    - Movie made by  
Gallaudet students
- Interpreters at family events
- “My child understands me”
- Bilingualism as an option

# Pitfall #3

## Avoid Deaf Adults and the Deaf Community

- Deaf children of Deaf adults
  - Research on social skills, academic skills, etc.
- Self-esteem & acceptance
  - Stories of growing up & “becoming hearing”
  - CI students and oral students entering Gallaudet
- Childcare options
- Deaf activities/events
- Hearing parents entering the deaf community
  - Handling your anxiety/fears



# Pitfall #4

## Follow the doctors' orders - No need to do your own research

- Researching communication options, technology, cochlear implants, educational options, etc.
- No “perfect” answers
- Seeking advice
- Dealing with unsolicited/ solicited advice



# Pitfall #5


## Wallow in Your Grief

- Denial
- Bargaining
- Blaming
- Guilt
- Fear and Anxiety
- Anger
- Sadness
- Exhaustion
- Acceptance
- Celebration




# Pitfall #6

## Make Your Child's Hearing and Speech the Primary Focus

- Identity
    - Separation/Individuation
  - Self-esteem
  - Debates over language hinder progress
  - Parent Groups
- 

## Pitfall #7

# Enlighten Your Child of His or Her Limitations and Disabilities

- Expectations for deaf children
  - Independence vs. Dependency
  - Social skills / Emotional Intelligence
  - My child is deaf, but...
- 

# Pitfall #8

## Overprotect Your Poor Deaf Child

- Dependent vs. Independent children
- Importance of social skills
- Self regulation & language
- Teaching advocacy skills

## Pitfall #9

# Ignore the Hearing Siblings & Favor Your Deaf Child

- Sibling relationships
- Sibling needs
- The neglected child role
- The caretaker role
- The interpreter role
- Overidentification
- Guilt
- Pride
- Bilingual households



# Pitfall #10

## Become a Martyr

- Caring for yourself improves parenting skills
- No perfect parent or child
- “Good enough” parenting
- Relax and enjoy your child



Celebrate and Smile!

