

Conversation Starter Questions for D/HH Guides/Individuals

When meeting with families, you can share these to help get the conversation started.

Medical

1. What kind of hearing loss do you have?
2. What is the difference between deaf, Deaf, Hard-of-hearing?
3. What is wrong with the terms 'deaf-mute,' 'deaf and dumb,' or 'hearing-impaired?'
4. Since you cannot hear, are your other senses stronger?
5. What do you wish hearing people knew about D/HH to make them more accommodating and/or sensitive?
6. Can you feel vibrations from loud sounds?
7. How do deaf people perceive thoughts? (Hearing people imagine a spoken monologue, do deaf people imagine pictures instead of words?)
8. Does being deaf mean being unable to hear anything at all?
9. Why does my child pull off his/her hearing aid or cochlear implant processor?
10. If you cannot hear, does noise bother you?
11. Why do deaf people stare?

Educational

1. What were some challenges you faced at school?
2. Where did you go to school? (What type of school?)
3. Did you attend college? Where?
4. Do government laws such as the ADA really help?
5. Do deaf/HH people understand rhyming or idioms?
6. Do hearing children with deaf parents have language delays?
7. How can a deaf person learn to read?
8. Can deaf people understand and appreciate puns and jokes involving homonyms?
9. Where can I find information to learn basic sign language at home?
10. Why do deaf people have trouble with English?
11. Do deaf people like to read?
12. How can I make sure my deaf child does not show literacy problems?
13. Where is the best place to get information about deafness?
14. Were you exempt from state testing or entry/exit level exams? If so, was that exemption helpful? Why or why not?
15. Were accommodations provided for exams? What kind? Where did you go to obtain necessary approval?
16. Were you involved in your IEP meetings or in transition planning? Were your requests followed, or were you typically redirected to other routes for educational choices?

17. Did you feel your choices with education were limited? Who mainly decided on your education plans and goals for the future? Did you feel your input, if any, was respected?

Technology

1. Do you use a hearing device? What are the pros and cons of the device?
2. What assistive devices do you use in your home?
3. Did you use tutoring, speech therapy, or audio therapy outside of school?
4. Do you use captioned TV?
5. Did you use a FM system at school?
6. How do you feel about cochlear implants?
7. How do deaf people wake up?
8. Do hearing aids or cochlear implants hurt?
9. Did you have a speech pathologist when you were a child? Why or why not? What was it like?
10. Can you use a cell phone? What kind? How do you use it?
11. How do you use relay services and what are the pros and cons to that?
12. If you can use a cell phone, why can you not answer company phones at work?

Personal

1. How old were you when you lost your hearing?
2. If you do not use a hearing device, why not?
3. What is your family like? (Siblings, parents, d/hh individuals?)
4. What hobbies or interests do you have?
5. Do you have a wonderful childhood memory to share?
6. How did your parents encourage you to become independent?
7. Growing up, did you have the same rules as your hearing siblings?
8. What kind of extracurricular activities were you involved in? How did that work for you?
9. How has your family helped you become the successful adult you are today?
10. Do you interact with the deaf world or the hearing world more? Why?
11. Do you ever wish you were hearing?
12. Do you get treated differently than hearing people? In what way?
13. Do you enjoy music? How do you enjoy it if you cannot hear?
14. Can deaf people drive? Date? Have sex? Etc.
15. Are there challenges driving a car?
16. Did you feel isolated as a child? What would you change, if anything?
17. Were you teased as a child? How did you cope?
18. What are some challenges you faced at home?

Communication

1. How do you communicate at home?
2. What modes of communication have you used? Do you prefer one over another? Why?
3. How was language development encouraged? (Did you do journals, use dictionaries, read books, etc.)
4. How do you communicate with your co-workers? Out in public? (e.g., restaurants, banks, stores, etc.)
5. Do you have deaf/HH friends who use a different mode of communication than yourself?
6. Can you lipread? Is it difficult?
7. Do you think sign language should be used by all D/HH people?
8. How do you feel about hearing community members taking advantage of sign language?
9. What is the best way to communicate with someone who does not know sign language?
10. Is sign language universal?
11. Hearing people may shout "OW!" when they stub a toe. What do deaf people do?
12. How do deaf people use the phone?
13. Are there accents in signers from different regions?

Future

1. What is your job like? What accommodations are made for you?
2. How do you apply for jobs? How do you get contacted for interviews?
3. Did you disclose your hearing loss on applications or at interviews? Why or why not?
4. Does the ADA make a difference in the workplace/community? Why or why not?
5. Do you have difficulty asking for accommodations? Why or why not?
6. What was the determining factor in choosing your current profession?
7. What advice do you have for a parent of a d/hh child?
8. What kind of jobs do deaf people succeed at? Are there challenges to employment?
9. What did your parents do right? What could they have done differently?
10. What kind of limitations did you have? Could you date? Drive a car? Enjoy movies or music?
11. How can I ensure my child is as successful as you seem to be?
12. What accomplishments are you most proud of?