

Transcript

Dreams Spoken Here

- [Narrator] There are many ways to teach a deaf child to communicate. This film focuses on teaching deaf children to listen and speak. Anna was born profoundly deaf, but now at age four, Anna can do something that you may find very hard to believe.

- [Interviewer] Can you say your name again?

- My name's Anna.

- [Narrator] She can hear some sounds.

- I'm four.

- [Narrator] She can speak and sing. ♪ Twinkle, little star ♪ ♪ How I wonder are ♪

- [Narrator] And she can dream. ♪ Up in the sky ♪ ♪ Twinkle, little star ♪

- [Narrator] How can a child who is deaf understand what people are saying?

- [Interviewer] Can you say your name again?

- I'm Bianca. I'm six.

- [Narrator] How is it that thousands of deaf children today are learning to talk?

- Hi, I'm Liz. Did you know that Heather Whitestone was Miss America and she was deaf?

- [Narrator] The answer to these questions is oral education.

- My dream is to be a pilot.

- [Narrator] Deaf children today can dream of doing almost anything, because they can listen and speak.

- No response. Okay, drop down to a low tone.



- [Narrator] This is Lila. She's 12 months old. For several months, Lila's parents have suspected she might have a hearing loss.

- Nothing, no response.

- [Narrator] The result of this hearing test is conclusive. Lila is, in fact, profoundly deaf.

- I am completely surprised. This is much more than I ever expected, that now she's, like, deaf, it doesn't seem real. It doesn't seem like these results are accurate. When it does start sinking in, you think, well, you know, she's not gonna have a first word. She doesn't know my name. She doesn't know Mommy, Daddy, kitty, simple, simple things.

- [Narrator] But because Lila has been identified so early, scientific studies confirm that she has an excellent chance of learning to listen and speak.

- Hi!

- [Narrator] Early identification is just the first step. A deaf child will also need the benefits of the latest hearing aids or a cochlear implant, and she will need parents and teachers willing to do the extraordinary amount of work it takes to teach a deaf child to listen and speak.

- [Instructor] How does Santa get in the house?

- He knocks on door?

- He knocks on the door?

- Yeah.

- [Instructor] And then what does he do?

- And then, "Hello."

- [Instructor] Hello!

- Ho, ho, ho, merry Christmas.

- [Instructor] Awesome job. ♪ Zip-a-dee-doo-dah ♪ ♪ Zip-a-dee-ay ♪



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- I think that's when we really got our first signs of hope is when we walked in here and, I mean, it's amazing. You see these kids who are communicating, they're talking. You know, you can tell that there may be something a little off in their speech. Maybe their tones aren't quite right, but they're communicating just like any child is, and they're playing just like any child is. And then you start to realize, well, they are just like any child is. ♪ Zip-a-dee-doo-dah ♪ ♪ Zip-a-dee-ay ♪ ♪ Good morning, good morning ♪ ♪ And how do you do ♪ ♪ Good morning, good morning ♪ ♪ How are you ♪

- I'm fine, how are you? ♪ I'm terrific, thank you ♪

- As you can see, deaf children today can learn speech and language better than ever before, thanks to a combination of breakthrough hearing technologies and the most up-to-date teaching techniques.

- Happy.

- [Narrator] So how is it that even profoundly deaf children can learn to listen and speak? Many deaf children have some residual hearing, which can be amplified better than ever before by a new generation of more powerful hearing aids.

- I thought deaf people couldn't hear anything. That's what I thought deaf meant. Of course, now I understand it's degrees of deafness, and that there's, you know, severe, moderate, profound. And now I know Lila's considered deaf. She's profound hearing impaired, but she does hear something.

- This is for you, I wanna hear.

- [Narrator] The latest hearing aids maximize what little hearing a deaf child has. Once a diagnosis of deafness has been made, a child is fitted with hearing aids, and the process of teaching a deaf child to listen and speak begins.

- Yay! Yay!

- Where do they go?

- Clap for us.

- Where do they go? Yeah, they go in your ears.

- They go in your ears. Nice understanding. Isn't that pretty to watch?



- [Instructor] Down.

- [Narrator] There are so many decisions that the parents of a deaf child have to make, and at the same time, they have to cope with feelings of grief, loss, and disappointment.

- Oh, I cried, yeah. It seems like I lost everything. And as a father, I hope I give him the fair chance to face the world and equal opportunities just like any other kids. But those hopes gone, just complete gone. And at the time, what's more difficult for me is I don't know what to do or how to start how to raise a deaf kid. I wasn't ready for that.

- For parents who have just had the diagnosis, there's always gonna be a mourning period. But know that there's a lot of hope. There's a lot that can be done. And just take the time to do the research and find the support. There's a whole community out there that you don't even realize exists when you're not tapped into it.

- When you first find out, it's very hard to find people to talk to. The doctors give you some information, but how did you come to find out what to do, find out, you know, where to go for him?

- We did check out the other options just to make sure we were educated about it, and those might be options for him later on, but we know at this time, we want him to try to become oral.

- [Narrator] Once the decision to teach a deaf child to listen and speak has been made, language learning should begin immediately, even when a child is as young as a few months.

- Good morning to you.

- [Narrator] Christopher lost his hearing to meningitis shortly after birth. And because he was identified so early, he got his hearing aids and started language and listening therapy before he was six months old. ♪ Good morning to you ♪

- Hi, are you happy today? Ah!

- [Narrator] Although hearing aids provide a great deal of benefit for some profoundly deaf children, they do not work for every child. When a deaf child has too little residual hearing to benefit from hearing aids, a cochlear implant may be of help.

- [Narrator] Andy received a cochlear implant when he was 18 months old. A cochlear implant is an electronic device that is surgically implanted in the child's ear. This electronically simulated signal makes it possible for children with little or no residual hearing to learn to listen.

- Open. Papa's turn.

- Knock, knock, knock.

- Knock, knock, knock.

- Open.

- Open.

- I hear Daddy.

- Andy's turn.

- Knock, knock, knock. Open.

- [Narrator] It is important to remember that hearing aids and cochlear implants are not a quick fix. They do not make it possible for a deaf child to hear well enough to learn to listen and lip read and talk without a great deal of specialized instruction.

- We have to roll it. We have to roll it. Yeah.

- [Narrator] The process of teaching children to listen and speak requires extraordinary dedication. It often takes months before children can say their first words until the wonderful day when the connection between sound and meaning, between O and open, between mm and more occurs.

- [Instructor] Uh oh, we need more. More.

- More?

- More, let's get some more.

- [Parent] You just wanna scream, you know?



- Oh, it's incredible.
- She's telling you she wants more food, and you just wanna look at your daughter, hug her and kiss her, and just go, "You're talking to me," you know?
- Open.
- Open.
- Open, there we go.
- There we go.
- When we found out that Rachel was deaf, we didn't know, would she be able to say Mommy? And now we can't get her to stop talking. She's talking in sentences. She's picking up...
- She wants it to be red.
- She's picking up words from TV. She's picking them up from her friends. She's imitating things that sometimes you wish she wouldn't imitate. It's just changed my way of parenting. It's constantly narrating life to them.
- [Narrator] Another important aspect of oral deaf education is giving children the skills they need to deal confidently in social situations, including when people ask what the implant or hearing aid is.
- When we're at the grocery store and someone asks me, it's amazing what they will ask, you know, "What is that, what is that?" And I tell them, because I think if I give Rachel and Abigail a model of what it's like to explain it and to explain what it is, the other person's fine with it, and Rachel and Abigail are learning. So no, I don't think there'll be any trouble, I hope not.
- The hardest thing, I think for me with Veronica's, in teaching her to talk and to speak, was knowing to be patient, to know that she could not pronounce C-H to Ch, and the Sh and the T sounds.
- [Instructor] The rats go in the closet.
- The rats go in the closet.



- [Instructor] Closet.
- Closet.
- Very nice, Veronica.
- And I would say to parents to be patient with this process. It's a long process, but it's a good one.
- Yes. What?
- Can you guess what I'm going to do tomorrow?
- [Instructor] What?
- Can you guess?
- [Instructor] Can I guess? Let's see, are you going to gymnastics?
- No.
- What?
- I'm going to do African dance.
- [Instructor] You're going to do African dance?
- [Narrator] Repetition, cognitive thinking, communication cues, working intensively in small groups, these are some of the specialized teaching techniques used to help deaf children learn to listen and speak.
- Does anybody know?
- Okay, this is a picture of the whole world and this pink country right here is?
- Mexico.
- Not Mexico.
- America.



- America, or the United States.
- [Narrator] Children also learn all the academic subjects typically taught in preschool and elementary school.
- What's this called, Nicolette?
- Mexico.
- Nicolette? Is your name Nicolette? Nicolette, what's this called down here?
- Mexico.
- It's stuck on my finger.
- Oh, the dress is stuck on your finger? Okay, I got it.
- [Narrator] It's fascinating to watch the progress a child can make when they've been fitted with the appropriate hearing technology.
- What you say?
- [Narrator] At 2 1/2, Caitlin became one of the first children in the U.S. to get a cochlear implant Step by step, the new electronic signal becomes meaningful as Caitlin learns to listen and talk over a period of several years from ages 2 1/2 to 6.
- Can you say, "Sha, sha, sha?"
- Sha, sha, sha.
- Beautiful.
- [Instructor] Can you tell me what this is?
- A chicken.
- Good, what's this?



- [Narrator] Caitlin has always been mainstreamed, and she received the continued support of speech therapists, audiologists, and other specialists who have contributed to her success.

- I made Easter eggs with my friend Heather.

- [Instructor] Yeah, what did they look like?

- We made fancy eggs.

- [Narrator] Caitlin today is a self-confident typical teenager who experiences great benefits from her cochlear implant.

- My implant? All right, my implant works like this. I have this microphone that's right there. It's very, very tiny. It hooks up onto my ear like that. And I have a magnet inside my head right there underneath the skin, and this right here is another magnet. So it hooks onto there. And what happens is sound goes through that microphone, down the wire, into this little computer, and it goes back up the wire through both of the magnets, down a string of electrodes in my cochlea that were used to replace the hearing nerves that I lost when I got meningitis. And those electrodes transmit sound right to my brain, and it happens like that.

- [Narrator] Vaughn Brown is profoundly deaf and totally blind. Since he cannot read lips, he relies completely on his cochlear implant to connect him with the world.

- We chose the oral option when Vaughn was still an infant. He was only about eight months old, seven months old. After thinking about all of the options and taking a look at them, we thought that talking would put him in touch with the world in general. When we found out when Vaughn was about four that he was gonna have vision loss, and eventually be blind, it was like, whoa, did we make the right decision. Because now it's even more important. Do you love to talk?

- Yeah, I'm a chatterbox.

- You're a chatterbox.

- All right, now I need quiet.

- Okay.

- [Narrator] Vaughn's cochlear implant opens up a world of sound and music to him.



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- One day, Vaughn and his best friend Heather was walking through the woods. They thought they heard music.

- He spends lots of time listening to books on tape, which is really one of the major advantages of the cochlear implant. I mean, it's hard to imagine what life would be like if he didn't have the implant.

- [Narrator] Vaughn, like so many deaf children, loves music, and there's nothing he likes better than a good audience.

- How about that?

- [Spectator] Great.

- I like music. My favorite band is the Spice Girls. My favorite girl is Sporty Spice.

- [Narrator] One of the goals of oral education is to support deaf children so they can succeed in most mainstream environments.

- Can you tell me about your birthday party?

- [Narrator] This is Taylor before she received her cochlear implant.

- She made a face on your birthday cake?

- One, two, three. Wait, one, two, three.

- Wait, faces, vertices, edges, which?

- There's only two.

- Two what?

- Faces.

- [Narrator] Today, Taylor is mainstreamed at an elementary school, and she is just like any other kid in her class. She not only can listen and speak. She can deal confidently in the classroom.

- This has a special name, because it is not a flat rectangle, is it?

- It is three-dimensional. So it has a different name. What are the places where the faces come together? What do we call this place where the face comes together? Taylor?

- Edges.

- [Instructor] Edges, right.

- [Narrator] Taylor is doing very well at school, and she is visited twice a week by a teacher of the deaf who provide support services.

- Oh, this is a tough one. Remember, it starts with a V?

- [Narrator] Taylor continues to benefit from speech, auditory, and language therapy, and this contributes to her success in the mainstream.

- And I see it written all over your paper.

- I know, I don't know how to say it.

- Oh, you don't?

- No.

- Listen, vertices.

- Vertices.

- Hi, I'm Julie, and I go to middle school. And I like it a lot. I meet a lot of new people, and it's really cool. My dream is that, when I grow up, I want to be a veterinarian, because I like animals, and I wanna take care of them and help 'em.

- [Narrator] It is not just children with cochlear implants that can look forward to being fully mainstreamed in education and the work world. Rebecca is profoundly deaf, aided only by hearing aids. Since she was eight years old, she has dreamed of being a teacher. Now at 20, she is in sight of her goal.

- Do you guys know what it's like to not hear?

- [Student] No.



- Why don't you try it? Why don't you cover your ears really, really tight? Really tight, tight, tight. Can you still hear the same? Can you hear anything?

- No.

- [Narrator] Rebecca didn't believe those who told her that, because of her deafness, she would not be able to teach. She proved to all those who doubted her that she could do it. Her gentle determination is a lesson to all

- As a message to parents, these kids, they have a voice, and they need to give their children's voices a chance and express their feelings with, to cry with, to laugh with.

- What is that?

- Two dogs?

- Ain-deer.

- Reindeer.

- Reindeer.

- Reindeer.

- Reindeer.

- A reindeer, a reindeer.

- Why was it important for him to speak? A lot of reasons. One of the main reasons is I really wanted Andre to be able to interact with the rest of the world. I wanted him to go to McDonald's and ask for his hamburger and french fries. I wanted him to go to any bank and go to any store that he wishes to and be able to get what he wants and ask for what he wants vocally. No, you don't have to have money. And you don't have to be Miss America to learn how to speak.

- Who's this?

- Who is that?

- Andre.



- Oh, Andre.

- So you want mustard and ketchup? All right, one with ketchup and mustard and one with ketchup and sauerkraut. This decision that my parents made has really affected my life deeply, because I wouldn't be right here if it wasn't for their decision. I'm in a mainstream school environment, so I do have deaf friends. But I also have hearing friends too. And so that sort of opens up my social life a little. I've always had people who understood me, and it never really mattered to my life that I was different. And sure, I am different, why does it matter?

- [Narrator] This is the No Limits Theater Group. All the children in the troupe are deaf, but it doesn't stop them from giving public performances of plays several times each year.

- One, two, three. Whoo, very nice job.

- Curtis Pride plays for Atlanta Braves. He is deaf. If he can do it, I can do it.

- [Narrator] These children have confidence in part because they can listen, and they can speak, which means they can do almost anything. Now they are free to dream any dream. The one thing they cannot do is do it alone. It will take doctors and nurses making early identification and referrals. It will take an educational system that fully supports the option of oral education. It will take the continuing development of new technology to enhance hearing. Everyone can do their part. What can you do? You can help change a child's life. Oral deaf education is available at some private and public schools and learning centers throughout the U.S. and Canada. For more information about schools and other oral deaf education resources, see our website at www.oraldeafed.org, or call 1-877-ORALDEAF for free copies of this and other tapes.