

## Module 3: Hearing Aids: The Basics

### Section: Troubleshooting



### Activity 3.3: Making a Plan to Encourage Hearing Aid Use

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- A. Ask the family about how things are progressing with their child's use of his or her hearing aid. Ask open-ended questions such as, *"Tell me about when your child wears his hearing aid."* or *"Since I've seen you last, when has your child worn his hearing aids?"* as opposed to *"How many hours does your child wear his hearing aids?"* Families will each have personal experiences with having their child use his or her hearing aids. Be mindful of addressing hearing aid use in a way that explores the family's experience but does not make the family feel guilty about their child not wearing his or her hearing aids for whatever reason. Acknowledge possible challenges and offer support.
- B. For families who are experiencing challenges in getting their child to use his or her hearing aids, explore patterns in barriers to hearing aid use and identify when hearing aid use is most successful. Acknowledge that sometimes there is a combination of issues that may impact the consistent use of the hearing aid related to the child's temperament and/or parenting styles. Include talking points such as:
- When are the times it is easiest to have your child wear his or her hearing aids? When is it most difficult?"
  - You said your child is least likely to wear hearing aids in the car, while running errands, and at the park. It sounds like it is difficult when you're out of the house.
  - You said your child doesn't wear his or her hearing aids when at daycare. It sounds like it is challenging to keep the hearing aids on when other people are caring for your child.

- You said it is easiest to keep the hearing aids on during meals and when you're playing with your child when his or her siblings are out of the house. It sounds like you're successful when you're able to give your child 100 percent of your attention.
  - You said your child usually pulls out his or her hearing aids unless he or she is watching TV or really interested in an activity. It sounds like your child keeps them in when distracted by something else.
- C. Identify and validate one challenge the family is experiencing with having their child wear his or her hearing aids. It takes courage for families to admit to early intervention professionals that their child is not using the hearing aids as recommended. It is important to acknowledge the real concerns of families and identify possible suggestions for addressing those concerns. Discuss possible suggestions to address challenges the family is facing. Some family concerns and realities may include:
- the child pulling out the hearing aid or the hearing aid continuously falling out,
  - fear of the child chewing on or choking on the hearing aid if the parent is not paying close enough attention,
  - bothersome feedback from the hearing aid while breastfeeding,
  - fear that they cannot appropriately monitor use of the aid while the child is in a rear-facing car seat,
  - family members or caregivers feeling uncomfortable putting on the hearing aids,
  - family members or caregivers who are worried about losing an expensive piece of equipment,
  - family members or caretakers who do not want the child to be seen with a hearing aid due to unwanted attention in public places, and/or
  - family members and caregivers who are not convinced that their child needs a hearing aid.
- D. Brainstorm strategies to increase the child's hearing aid use. (See strategies in Activity 3.2 to first check if the hearing aid is functioning.):

- Share helpful hints on how to get the child to put on the hearing aids:
  - Demonstrate a slow, calm demeanor when readying the child to put on the hearing aids.
  - Provide positive feedback throughout the process of putting on the hearing aids.
  - Keep little hands busy and distract the child while putting on the hearing aids.
  
- Suggest various methods to help keep hearing aids on or to prevent the child from reaching the hearing aids. Some strategies may include:
  - Hanna Andersson pilot caps—These lightweight caps are good for creating a barrier between grabby hands and the hearing aids.
  - Double-sided wig tape or fashion tape—This tape is helpful in preventing the hearing aids from falling off, having the child take them off, or preventing the hearing aids from repeatedly flopping off from behind the ears.
  - Huggies—A device to keep hearing aids from falling off the child’s ears.
  - Retention clips (such as Critter Clips)—These clips are helpful for keeping the hearing aids connected to the child if they fall off the ear.
  - Adhesive roll-on for behind the ear hearing aids—There are various manufacturers available through hearing aid dealers or online. One product is called It Stays.
  - Super Seals—These latex covers can help keep moisture out of hearing aids.
  
- Develop a log to document/monitor when a child wears his or her hearing aids. Develop a schedule for increasing use of hearing aids during identified times.
  
- Offer to train other family members and caregivers in putting on the hearing aids. If you are not available for this training, train the parents to teach others how to put on the hearing aids.
  
- Discuss possible talking points for families on how to explain their child’s hearing aids to extended family, friends, and other individuals in public places. Ask other families for talking points they have used. If social pressure or cultural beliefs prohibit the family from feeling comfortable with their child wearing hearing aids, have an open conversation with the family about having their child first use hearing aids at specific times in certain places and with individuals with whom they feel comfortable.

- E. If the parent does not understand the child’s need for a hearing aid, it may be best to focus the conversation on educating the parents about what a child can and cannot hear with and without a hearing aid. When family members seem to better understand the implications of using and not using a hearing aid, revisit the topic of increasing hearing aid use.
- Point out examples of types of sounds their child is not aware of when he or she does not wear the hearing aid (e.g., speech sounds when people are speaking at a typical conversational level, higher-pitched speech sounds, sounds that are far away).
  - Reinforce to families that IF the hearing aid is not being used, the child IS NOT able to access spoken language effectively during this time. Stress the importance of language access at all times either visually or auditorily.
  - Discuss examples of sounds the child may become aware of if he or she uses a hearing aid (e.g., speech sounds integral to learning to understand spoken language).
  - Provide families with simulations of their child’s hearing level. Provide research-based information on the impact of hearing on listening and spoken language development.
- F. Agree on an action plan with the parents that includes strategies to try for the next week or until you see them again. Discuss the child’s current hearing aid use and discuss what they feel is a realistic goal. Have the parents identify what they think would work. Small steps are okay; if they feel successful, they’ll be encouraged to continue adding time until they get to all waking hours. Don’t set goals that are not realistic. Monitor the goal and increase it in steps as appropriate to the child and his or her family.

**Additional Resources:**

*Tips for Successful Hearing Aid Use*

*Hearing Aid Choices: How Can I Help My Baby Adjust to Wearing Hearing Aids? - Practical Tips*

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