

Education and Communication for Individuals with Prelingual Deafness

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DESCRIPTION

Prelingual deafness is a condition where an individual is born deaf or loses their hearing before acquiring language and speech skills. This type of deafness presents unique challenges and opportunities for those affected, impacting various aspects of their lives, from language development and education to social interactions and identity formation.

Understanding prelingual deafness

Prelingual deafness often referred to as congenital deafness or early-onset deafness occurs when a person is born deaf or loses their hearing during infancy or early childhood, typically before acquiring spoken language skills. This condition can result from various factors, including genetic mutations, prenatal infections, and complications during childbirth, or exposure to ototoxic medications. It can be unilateral (affecting one ear) or bilateral (affecting both ears) and can range from mild to profound in severity.

Communication strategies

Individuals with prelingual deafness employ various communication strategies to interact with others and navigate their daily lives. These strategies include:

Sign language: Many individuals with prelingual deafness use sign language as their primary mode of communication. Sign languages, such as American Sign Language (ASL) or British Sign Language (BSL), have their own grammar and syntax, providing a rich and expressive means of communication.

Oral communication: Some individuals receive training in oral communication, which involves using lip-reading and speech to communicate. Speech therapy and cochlear implants may be part of this approach.

Cochlear implants: Cochlear implants are surgically implanted devices that provide access to sound for individuals with severe to profound hearing loss. They can be particularly effective for children with prelingual deafness, enabling them to develop spoken language skills.

Captioning and assistive technology: Captioning on videos and the use of assistive technology, such as hearing aids and

communication apps, can aid in communication for individuals with prelingual deafness.

Educational approaches

Education for individuals with prelingual deafness is a crucial aspect of their development. Various educational approaches are employed to support their learning and communication needs.

Mainstream education: Some individuals with prelingual deafness attend mainstream schools, where they receive support through special education services, sign language interpreters, or assistive technology.

Deaf schools: Deaf schools, also known as schools for the deaf, provide a culturally and linguistically rich environment where students use sign language as their primary mode of communication. These schools often offer a strong sense of community and identity for deaf individuals.

Bilingual-bicultural education: This approach emphasizes both sign language and written/spoken language skills, aiming to provide students with the tools to navigate both the deaf and hearing worlds.

Total communication: Total communication programs use a combination of sign language, speech, and assistive technology to facilitate communication and language development.

Identity and community

The deaf community is a vibrant and diverse cultural group with its own customs, traditions, and values. For individuals with prelingual deafness, their deaf identity can be a source of pride and connection. Many deaf individuals see their deafness as an essential aspect of their identity, and they often celebrate their unique culture and language.

American Sign Language (ASL), for example, is a complete and expressive language with its own grammar and syntax. Deaf cultural events, deaf clubs, and deaf organizations foster a sense of belonging and community among individuals with prelingual deafness. Deaf culture emphasizes visual communication, storytelling, and a rich artistic tradition, including deaf cinema and visual arts.

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Prelingual deafness is a condition that profoundly impacts the lives of those affected, shaping their communication methods, educational experiences, and cultural identity. While it presents unique challenges, it also fosters resilience, cultural pride, and a strong sense of community among deaf individuals.

Understanding the causes, effects, and communication strategies associated with prelingual deafness is essential for promoting inclusivity, raising awareness, and ensuring that individuals with prelingual deafness have access to the support and resources they need to thrive in both deaf and hearing worlds.