



COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS A-Z™

Communication Considerations for Friends

1. What are peer interactions and why are they important?

There is agreement in the literature that preschool peer interactions provide significant contributions to children's socio-emotional, academic, and communicative development. Early peer relationships can affect social acceptance, self-esteem, and the ability to form social relationships later in life (Antia, 1994, Ladd, 2005). When children interact with their peers, they start to become part of a peer group, which lays the groundwork for them to function in the adult social world (Corsaro, 1985).

2. What issues are at the forefront for friendships and social/emotional support of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing?

Children who are d/hh spend a lot of time with adults (e.g., speech-language pathologist, auditory-verbal therapist, teacher of the d/hh, etc.). While adult-child interactions are critical for children to develop their language skills, peer interactions are also important and contribute differently to children's learning (Ladd, 2005). Peers provide opportunities to function as equal partners, negotiate, resolve conflicts, and create together. They also give children the opportunity to experience the feelings and emotions of other children. Peer interactions are different from adult-child interactions, where adults are usually the initiator and modify their communication to accommodate the language and social needs of children. Children should begin to experience peer interactions around the age of 3-years either in formal preschool or informal playgroups.

Many children who are d and hh report feelings of isolation and a lack of friendships (see Bat-Chava, & Deignan, 2001). They may also not perceive themselves as socially competent (Hatamizadeh, Ghasemi, Saeedi, & Kazemnejad, 2008).

Relationships with other children who are d/hh is important so that your child does not feel alone, and their hearing loss and any technology they use (e.g., cochlear implant, hearing aids, FM system, etc.) can be normalized.

Speech clarity (intelligibility) as well as high noise in classrooms might make peer interaction difficult for some children. Removal of technology during outdoor play will also interfere with peer interaction.

3. What questions should every parent and professional be asking about friends relative to their d/hh child?

- (a) Does my child use their communication skills in positive peer interactions?
- (b) Does my child understand social rules and behaviour appropriate for their age?
- (c) Does my child participate in physical and social activities with same age peers?
- (d) Does my child have the opportunity to interact with other children who are d/hh?

4. Where else can I find information about (this subject)?

Unfortunately, there are few resources in this area.

<http://ccids.umaine.edu/resources/ec-growingideas/social-emotional-development/>

References used in the section:

- Antia, S. D. (1994). Strategies to develop peer interaction in young hearing impaired children. *Volta Review*, 96, 277-290.
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- Corsaro, W. A. (1985). *Friendship and peer culture in the early years*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation
- Hatamizadeh, N., Ghasemi, M., Saeedi, A., Kazemnejad, A. (2008). Perceived competence and school adjustment of hearing impaired children in mainstream primary school settings. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 34(6), 789-794.
- Ladd, G. W. (2005). *Children's peer relations and social competence*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

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Communication Considerations A to Z™ is a series from Hands & Voices that's designed to help families and the professionals working with them access information and further resources to assist them in raising and educating children who are deaf or hard of hearing. We've recruited some of the best in the business to share their insights on the many diverse considerations that play into communication modes & methods, and so many other variables that are part of informed decision making. We hope you find the time to read them all!