

# Peer Socialization for Individuals Who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Alyssa Keune, SLP Graduate Student, Interdisciplinary Preparation of Teachers of Deaf and Speech-Language Pathologists (IEPI 2) Grant Scholar

Faculty Advisor: Jenna Voss, PhD, CED, LSLs Cert. [AVEd](#).

## Abstract

Peer relationships are needed for positive development, but children who are deaf/hard of hearing (DHH) experience difficulties when socializing with their typically hearing peers. This poster will provide an overview of various supports that can be put in place to facilitate socialization for DHH children with their hearing peers. Opportunities for practitioners and parents to promote peer socialization will be provided.

## Why are Peer Relationships Important?

Early and successful engagement in peer interaction can contribute to children's social, emotional, communication, and academic development, as well as their social acceptance, self-esteem, and later ability to build social relationships (DeLuzio & Girolametto, 2011). A child's peer interactions teach them how to interact with others, what social standing is, what acceptable behaviors are, and that people can hold differing viewpoints than them (Lenihan, 2020). When children create friendships and develop peer support systems, they increase their optimistic attitudes towards their futures (Lasanen et al., 2017). Friendships are a safe place for children to turn to when they are transitioning through different stages of their lives (Bowen, 2008). For DHH children, peer socialization provides language models and introduces them to new vocabulary. Students with facilitated positive interactions can feel connected with their peers, are less likely to be picked on by their peers, and are more likely to fit in and succeed in school (Lenihan, 2020).

## What Difficulties Can Affect Peer Socialization?

Children with hearing loss experience the following challenges:

- Limited incidental learning
- Missing the tone or message/intent of communication
- Missing or mishearing information
- Not having many social experiences with peers
- Lack of self-esteem
- Delays in language, communication, and theory of mind development

## How Can Practitioners Help?

### Facilitate Participation in Conversations

- If a DHH child is dominating conversations, they may be trying to intentionally limit information misunderstandings or communication breakdowns, which can limit their peers into passive roles.
- If a DHH child is not participating enough in conversations with their peers, they may not make strong enough connections and decrease their chances of friendship.
- Practitioners can provide opportunities to practice conversational turn-taking, making sure that each conversational partner gets to talk, and listens to what others say.
- Practitioners can provide opportunities for spontaneous conversations between DHH children and their typically hearing peers.

### Facilitate Entrances into Conversation/Play Activities

- DHH children tend to use the strategy "wait and hover", where they wait outside of the conversation, watching and waiting to be invited into the conversation. This is an unsuccessful strategy.
- Practitioners can practice more successful entrances to conversation/play activities with DHH children, to avoid using "wait and hover." Joining the play, making a comment about ongoing play, and directly asking to join in are successful options DHH children can practice with their typically hearing peers.
- Practitioners can create play and conversational groups for DHH students to practice their skills with typically hearing peers.
- Practitioners can schedule more play into their services to allow for more time for DHH students to practice these skills.

### Busting Myths Held by Typically Hearing Peers

- Typically hearing children as young as 6 demonstrate the "Hearing Aid Effect", which are negative attitudes towards individuals with hearing devices.
- Children with typical hearing believe DHH children are often in trouble, causing them to feel sorry for these students. This belief is due to DHH children having their names repeated more frequently to get their attention, leaving the class for different intervention services, and having accommodations in the classroom.
- Typically hearing peers perceive that their DHH friends experience less communication and hearing difficulty in situations with background noise than they truly experience.
- Since children have these misconceptions, practitioners need to help DHH children educate their peers about hearing loss and work on their self-advocacy.
- Practitioners should be advised against constantly repeating DHH students' names frequently and find other options to get their attention.
- Practitioners should be mindful of when and how they pull DHH students from class for services.

### Supporting Other Professionals

- Practitioners can support other professionals by explaining and providing information about hearing loss to educators.
- Practitioners can hold in-services with the DHH students' school staff, such as cafeteria workers, recess aides, librarians, janitorial staff, etc.

## How Parents Can Help?

Parents can:

- Plan participation in social activities where DHH children are immersed in shared language and vocabulary, conversational turns, hearing technology, peer prompts, and social competence. These social activities can be joining a music class, meeting up with other families and their children, and going on play dates.
- Develop social skills by using situations they come across to talk about thoughts, feelings, and actions of people, as well as taking time to think through problems.
- Practice social situations they will come across, by role playing situations like meeting a friend at the movies or talking to a teammate after practice. Model conversations to practice serve and return, use friendly language and body language, and demonstrate listening to others.
- Model friendships – what friendships are supposed to look like, what kinds of things to say to friends, and that friends are allowed to make choices they may not agree with.
- Have conversations with other parents about hearing loss and hearing technology, the communication methods used, and what the expectations for the DHH child are.
- Work on texting with DHH children, since texts do not obviously and accurately convey the communication partner's tone of voice and facial expression.

## Resources for Parents and Professionals

### Stages of Children's Friendships



### Social Skills Charts (Preschool - 5th Grade)



### Tips for Parents to Support Social Skills



## References:

