

# L&L S1E3

**Christy:** [00:00:00] You are listening to the Love and Language podcast where we inspire hearing parents of deaf children and remind you that as long as you are giving your child love and language, you are doing a great job.

**Christy:** Hey, Beth. Hey Christie. How's it going? It's good. We are gonna dive right in today cuz I know we both have a lot going on this weekend. Today we're talking about language development in hearing the infants and how to foster it in deaf infants. We're gonna dive into the topic and we're gonna learn more about how we can give our kids the best possible start to language development and their speech skills.

**Beth:** As two, hearing moms with deaf children who both wear cochlear implants, we know firsthand the importance of language development and the impact it has on our kids' lives.

**Christy:** So let's dive into the topic and learn more about how we can give our kids the best possible start in developing language and their speech skills. Beth, why don't you talk a little bit about language development and normal hearing infants.

**Beth:** As we all [00:01:00] know, language development in normal hearing infants occurs through exposure to language and interaction with others. Think of a baby's brain like a sponge, constantly soaking up new information and experiences

**Christy:** exactly. So as they start to listen to sounds and speech, their brain starts to form connections and understand the language patterns that are leading to their development of speech and of language skills over time.

**Christy:** So this sort of leads into why for Beth and I and other parents who have made the decision to choose cochlear implants, why early implantation of Kiddos with hearing loss is important, and I will say real fast that it is now approved for kiddos as young as nine months old. So even the F D A recognizes how important listening is to their speech and language development. And that's changed a lot over time cuz when Charlie was implanted it was only approved for 12 months. And I know when Cooper got diagnosed is it was at the nine month mark already. Correct. At that point

**Beth:** yes.

**Christy:** [00:02:00] The more that the FDA and that the general public, public is able to see the benefits of early implantation, now that it's more accessible to children that might be earlier, earlier, and earlier, but that's where it stands right now. So let's talk a little bit about early implantation.

**Beth:** Early implantation of a cochlear implant is crucial to ensure that they start soaking up that language and speech as early as possible, just like they're hearing peers. And it's important to remember that the early implementation is just one aspect of that comprehensive approach to improving language and communication skills for deaf children. Other factors as we know that come into play are early intervention education and then access to sign language and other communication tools

**Christy:** What we think is important to touch on today that both of us wish that we had more conversations about, or could learn more about in the early time is how to foster that language and speech development in the months before implantation. Because for me that was an entire year that I wanted to make sure that Charlie was still getting the best headstart that she could. [00:03:00] For some people it might be more time or less time, but we definitely wanna share some advice on how you can foster that in this in between. .

**Beth:** Yeah. Think of it like plant planting a seed, the more you nurture it, the more it will grow.

**Beth:** So there's several steps and approaches that you can take as a parent in those kind of in between months while you're waiting for your child to receive a cochlear implant.

**Christy:** And this one is a personal decision for each family. We have said this multiple times in the podcast. We do not judge what somebody decides for their family or not.

**Christy:** But the first thing that Beth and I both thought about in our experiences, because we didn't know a lot more anyhow, so it might be the first thing that comes to your mind too, is sign language. And that's really an easy, very natural way for you to begin communicating with your kiddo with hearing loss.

**Christy:** It's a visual form of communication. It can help them understand and express themselves before they're able to speak.

**Beth:** Yeah, parents can learn basic sign language and start using it [00:04:00] with their infants from an early age, both hearing and deaf infants.

**Beth:** Some resources include baby sign language dictionary Signing time is a popular one. As I pro, the Complete Guide to Baby Sign Language and Sign to me Early learning.

**Christy:** Beth, did you have one that was like more, that you preferred more or less in those early years?

**Beth:** I had a hard time with anything that was like book related, just because sign language is really hard to learn through a book because books don't move unless you're in Harry Potter, so that was difficult for me. I'm a visual learner. I think. Helpful one for me was the Bravos, which is from like the nineties. I don't know if you ever had watched that in any of the I S L that you've done? No. So it's about an entire family of like basically a deaf a deaf family. It's super cheesy and super outdated, but it was really helpful in just learning those basic conversational skills. Oh, I think that's available on. I'm gonna pull it up really quick

**Christy:**

**Christy:** is it like a part, like a sitcom? Did they make a cheesy sitcom to learn the signs

**Beth:** basically . Okay. So it's on [00:05:00] dcamp.org, which actually has a lot of good resources. It's the described and captioned media program, and you have to create an account in order to access things on it. But it also has a lot of good like stories that are interpreted in a s l for kids, that kind of stuff.

**Christy:** Oh, I don't even know about this. So I'm gonna put that in the show notes. Yeah, I'm gonna be checking that out myself with Charlie. Super cheesy. Just Oh I love cheesy. Oh my, my favorite one that you just talked about, which hands down still my favorite when I tell people how they wanna learn with their kids, even though now YouTube has a lot more.

**Christy:** But signing time, I loved it's signing time with alex and leah . She's amazing.

**Christy:** Rachel the signing time lady, Leah's her daughter. She's d/Deaf and she also has a daughter who has additional needs. But she also did my deaf child.org that's another great resource for everybody out here as we're talking

about this. Rachel Coleman. There's a lot of different resources, especially with YouTube now, and it's just fun. I know a lot of hearing parents with hearing children use a s l to help their kid [00:06:00] communicate when they need to eat or eliminate and all of those things. But it's really fun because there's a lot of songs and nursery rhymes that you can sing and sign and can play games that incorporate it and drawing. So it's really, if it's the route you choose to go, it is fun to add in to your routine.

**Christy:** It feels really natural and for me, I don't know about, I feel like you probably would feel the same way, Beth. It felt really empowering and it made me feel in those nine months where there wasn't really a lot that I could do except for sit around and wait and see what would happen. It did make me feel like I was, doing something and learning something and something we had special together I. .

**Beth:** Yeah. I totally agree with that. And it's fun to see them start to form those connections and recognize signs so early and even start attempting some of.

**Christy:** It's so cute. Oh, it's so cute. When Charly first in milk, I just was like, oh my gosh. I just think it's so adorable and neat. They're so little. These are little tiny humans with these big old brains,

**Christy:** [00:07:00] chubby hands.

**Christy:** Thank God Morgan's getting an vasectomy. It's all I gots to say, let's go into the next one, because this one is important for every single child.

**Christy:** Huge.

**Beth:** The second one is to read to your infant, even if they can't understand the words. Just that exposure to books the sound, the rhythm, the changes in language. It helps lay the foundation for future language development for kids.

**Christy:** Exactly. And when you talk about the rhythm of the language, even though your baby cannot hear you, especially, I found it when Charlie was sitting on my lap or sitting close to me when we read at night. You do that's an easy thing to think about. If you put your hand on your neck or on your chest and you read, if you sing a lullaby or read a story, you do really.

**Christy:** Feel the rhythm of how stories go and how language feels. So it really is a good one, and there's so many great resources for finding children's books. Gotta throw this one out there, but Dolly Parton has the Imagination Library,

and it's not in every state, but I [00:08:00] love Dolly Parton, everything that she does for literacy in all children.

**Christy:** But if you live in a state that her Imagination Library participates in, , all you do is sign up and they send you a free book every single month. And they're really good. She's a great one and I know obviously the library, we freaking love the library.

**Beth:** I always get scared scared to take Cooper there. He's so loud.

**Christy:** Now it's a different time. I love the library when they were babies, as a matter of fact, I thought that I was being Such a good mom a couple weeks ago I was like, you know what, I'm gonna pick up the kids from school and take them to the library.

**Christy:** Once I got there, I was like, oh, I literally just packed up my chaos, put a jacket on it, shoes on it, and then took it somewhere where it's supposed to be quiet and yeah. but in the early years, or if you wanna run in, grab a book when you're on your solo mom, Target TJ Max run like I do run in, grab some books. Come home. We should make a book list though of our favorite books in this period of time.

**Beth:** I was just [00:09:00] gonna say kid to kid is different too.

**Beth:** Like for Cooper, he's always been more visual. So before he got implants, he would look at books, but now he does not read books when his implants are on and he can hear sound, he does not sit still. So when we read together, it's at night when his implants are off and it's still incorporating tons of sign language and it just looks so different than what I ever expected our, like reading time to look like. It's also really cool because that's that's where he does use sign language still when he's, cause he definitely prefers speaking. So to be able to have the, that time together at night is really cool.

**Christy:** Reading is just one of the best things you can do for your little humans, whether they're hearing or not. And it's really, sometimes it's easier to just not do.

**Christy:** There's been plenty of nights where we have skipped story time because I'm tired and that's one thing I always regret whenever I'm like, Ugh, I should have just read a book before bed. It just helps, especially to encourage the interaction by pointing to the pictures when you're speaking about things,

using eye contact animation. So just like we were talking about, a variety books [00:10:00] is great.

**Beth:** I have another fun one to throw in there that I have not tried yet, but I, when Cooper was little, so I came across this the other day and it's called Moonlight. And it's literally a like tiny projector that you get sent and it clips to your phone's flashlight, so it projects onto the ceiling and then the book is on the screen of your phone. So like the pictures are on the ceiling. . Yeah. And Cooper, when he was little, like we had this little star projector that we would play in the ceiling and he would just look at it for hours. So I honestly might order it now, even though he is older. But it's super cool.

**Christy:** Next we're just gonna talk about interactions.

**Beth:** This can include simple things that you do when you talk to people in general, like making eye contact, using facial expressions, and just responding to their sounds and their gestures.

**Christy:** When you are choosing a route that involves cochlear implants and hearing devices, when you're in that meantime, your baby still can recognize your emotions. they can still express their emotions and they're still getting that input from you and [00:11:00] figuring out how they can properly display that themselves as well. That it's all very important. Sound is certainly not the most important element to that. Even though your baby can't hear you

**Christy:** they still see your face. It's still so important for you to talk to them. I would actually venture to say that before Charlie got her cochlear implants, I was almost narrating our life more than I did after. Even though that's like a huge tactic that we do all the time as cochlear parents is to narrate everything.

**Christy:** But I almost did it more whenever she didn't have her cochlear implants cause. . I just wanted her to be able to see my lips move and see again the interactions and the gestures that we make. So even though your baby can't hear you, if that's where you're at if you're a parent listening to this in this face, still talk to them., Still sing to them. They can feel your vibrations. Lipreading is, I know for Charlie, It's insane how she lip reads and she [00:12:00] really, I think it really helps her communicate and just process everything. So I'm always very grateful that we did that .

**Beth:** I think it's not only is good for the kids, obviously, but I know I've shared videos in the past of like how much I talked to Cooper just about like mundane day-to-day things.

**Beth:** And I think people are surprised by that because. . It's constant when you're trying to make that language development so at the forefront after they are implanted, and I think it becomes something that you don't even really realize you're doing. Like I talk to him constantly and then I wonder why he talks so much and it's because I look back at videos and I'm like, it's because I literally repeat everything he says, but then I build off that and I like add new words to it and it's something that I got in the habit of doing before he could even hear me.

**Christy:** You did such a good job setting such a good example and he's proven it to you every day very loudly from what it sounds like. if you are looking for resources for just how to connect and interact with your baby, if you look locally, I know a lot of parenting [00:13:00] groups or plague groups, not just for deaf parents or deaf children, but in general your baby will thrive off of that social interaction.

**Christy:** It's good for them to see how other babies and children interact just as much as it is for them to see how you do. So baby and toddler music classes, movement classes, all of that is good for them.

**Beth:** Yeah. And there's easy things that you can do, at home when you're out and about to encourage that interaction and bonding with your child. As simple as making eye contact, talking to them while they're playing, eating, changing their diaper, those are all like, Routine things, but it's easy to build in that development in that time using those, really exaggerated facial expressions and movements, which I think people naturally do with babies, but like really exaggerating is what we did with Coop. I think he's really able to read expressions and people because of that. Encouraging your infant to play, explore, take turns, and like getting down on the floor, playing with them, being in their visual space.

**Christy:** I [00:14:00] think when you said exaggerating, I think a really good way to visualize that for parents listening is just think about when your baby has a crappy diaper, like a really stinky one. You're like, woo, wait. Oh my gosh. Like you are stinky. Oh, pee you. . Like you can do that with anything your baby does. You can be that exaggerative if you need to. Oh, wow look at you repeating Mama. nom nom nom Or look at you eating your little cereal. nom nom nom. In cheerleading, they always said that if you look dumb, it means you're doing it right.

**Christy:** I feel that's probably pretty similar to being animated and narrating for a kiddo with hearing loss in our home.

**Beth:** Not only that, but if you're planning to venture into a s l, it's, there is so much expression and I don't wanna say exaggeration, but it, for somebody like me who's not super like theatric all the time, that's been a hard part of a s l. And so I think being naturally like that with a child will help you too if, when it comes to diving into that more, if that's the path that you choose.

**Christy:** That's [00:15:00] such a good point.

**Christy:** I didn't even. I wasn't even really thinking about that when I just said that, but that is so true.

**Beth:** I did deaf mentor program with our state and then ASL one. And I got dysport in my forehead and I couldn't move my eyebrows, and she was getting so mad at me.

**Beth:** I was like I literally can't .

**Christy:** This could definitely be on our episode about things they didn't tell you. I get Botox and I'm like, I can't do the eyes up, eyes down for questions I meant to look that up one day, deaf people in Botox, and I guess if they opt out of it just for that reason. But did you ever have to tell the, like bubblegum story or the chopping down? Yes. The, oh yes. Both of those. The tree in the woods. Oh my gosh, I, but yeah I'll tell you who's got the theatrics.

**Christy:** Charlie. I can't wait to see her tell these stories one day, we just wanna talk about real fast before we end this podcast that we know a lot of you are really busy. We're all busy. Being a hearing parent and have a deaf kid certainly is a huge priority in our lives, but it's not the only thing we all have going on.

**Christy:** So we just wanna share a [00:16:00] few additional resources that are perfectly fine and available when you're a busy parent so that you can surround your deaf infant with language, approve their chances of developing speech skills. So it doesn't always have to be A chore or a whole course to learn sign language or a whole bedtime book routine.

**Christy:** On those busy days, we wanna make sure that you still have resources that are helpful.

**Beth:** There's so many at our fingertips with the world that we live in. Not limited to podcasts and YouTube, online radio stations, children music, programs, educational TV shows. We touched on a few of those. don't be afraid to pull those out.



**Christy:** YouTube. I'm a fan.

**Beth:** YouTube kids, the app, they can't even like get out of what you put them in. So That's a good one.

**Christy:** I love YouTube. Coco Mellon has the sign language version now, and Little Baby Bum has sign language versions that are really nice. So if you are somebody who wants to just incorporate more of that visual language into your screen time, because we, I'm pro screen time over here. I don't judge if you do or you don't.

**Christy:** I don't judge you guys. [00:17:00] Whatever works for you. Look, my youngest can read already. He's three. And you know what, I think it was all that baby Einstein that he had to watch in the car while I drove an hour and a half to get Charlie to and from that school in Memphis. So it's all good.

**Christy:** You do what you gotta do, and that's, the end of the short of it, but, I would love to hear from you guys anything else that you guys found really easy or other great resources? Like I said, Beth just pointed out that one with the sign language story times that I didn't even know about the cheesy family one.

**Christy:** So if you guys have more suggestions, we wanna hear them. We wanna be able to share them. There's so many opportunities for language every day for you and your little one. None of it's too little. None of it's so too small there's always a moment for it in the podcast.

**Christy:** But as long as you are giving your child love and language, you are doing a great job.

**Beth:** And don't forget to tune in next week for another episode of Love and Language where we'll continue to inspire, educate, and build community for [00:18:00] parents of deaf children who utilize cochlear implants or other hearing devices.

**Christy:** Next week's gonna be fun because we are doing a quick question and answer episode . we are gonna try to do one of those once a month. So if you have questions that you want to ask another cochlear parent, we can answer it. And we're also cool to source those out to other cochlear parents in our community through our stories.

**Christy:** So if you have questions, send them in, DM us, send 'em to the email, go onto our website and we will make sure that all of your voices are heard and

we can just get to the nitty gritty of all of this. So thank you guys and we look forward chatting next week.