



# Not Too Late to Listen: A Deaf Teen's Perspective on Family Support and Growth

BY: ALEXIS JONES

# INTRODUCTION:

- Rochester Institute of Technology
  - Studying Neuroscience with a minor in Clinical Forensic Psychology
- Serving on the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
- US Women's National Deaf Soccer Team
- Advocate for Deaf and Hard of Hearing youth and families

## High School Achievements

- Graduated from a CTE High School with a 4.4 GPA and High Honors
- Secretary for the Nevada Association of Student Councils
- Vice President for Ambassador Student Leaders, National Honor Society and Student Council Senior Year.
- Testified in front of the Nevada Legislature 2019–present regarding various issues regarding the D/HH Community
- Featured in a 4 Time Emmy Award Winner “Our World In Our Worlds” Short Film



# Late Identification: A Turning Point

Hearing  
differences  
existed...  
but they were  
not immediately  
recognized.

What changed  
after  
identification:

- Understanding past communication challenges
- Navigating hearing technology and accessibility
- Redefining identity and self-confidence
- A new journey for both youth and family

# The Conversation Around Hearing Loss:

## Most conversations focus on:

- Early Identification
- Newborn Screening
- Early Intervention

## But many families experience:

- Late Identification
- Questions
- Confusion
- Feeling “behind”



# What Families Often Experience:

## RELIEF

Finally having an explanation for years of confusion or communication challenges. Many families feel relief knowing their child's experiences now make sense.

## GUILT

Parents may begin replaying earlier moments and wondering if signs were missed. Even when it isn't their fault, guilt can still be a very real emotion.

## UNCERTAINTY

Families are suddenly faced with new information, decisions, and systems to navigate. Many are trying to understand the future while still processing the diagnosis.

MANY ARE TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE PAST  
WHILE ALSO FIGURING OUT WHAT TO DO  
NEXT.

# Suddenly There Are Many Decisions...

HEARING  
TECHNOLOGY

EDUCATIONAL  
SUPPORT

COMMUNICATION  
ACCESS

MEDICAL  
PROVIDERS

IT CAN FEEL LIKE  
ENTERING A  
COMPLETELY NEW  
WORLD.

# Technology and Communication

## Families may begin exploring:

- hearing aids/ cochlear implants
- assistive listening technology
- classroom accommodations
- communication preferences

There is no single path that works for every child.

Support should focus on informed choices

**AND** individual needs.



# Identity and Self-Understanding

UNDERSTANDING  
HEARING LOSS CAN  
BRING ANSWERS AND  
AWARENESS TO  
QUESTIONS LIKE:

Why were conversations difficult?

Why were certain environments  
overwhelming?

I was not falling behind.. I didn't have the  
resources that were best suited to me to  
help me succeed

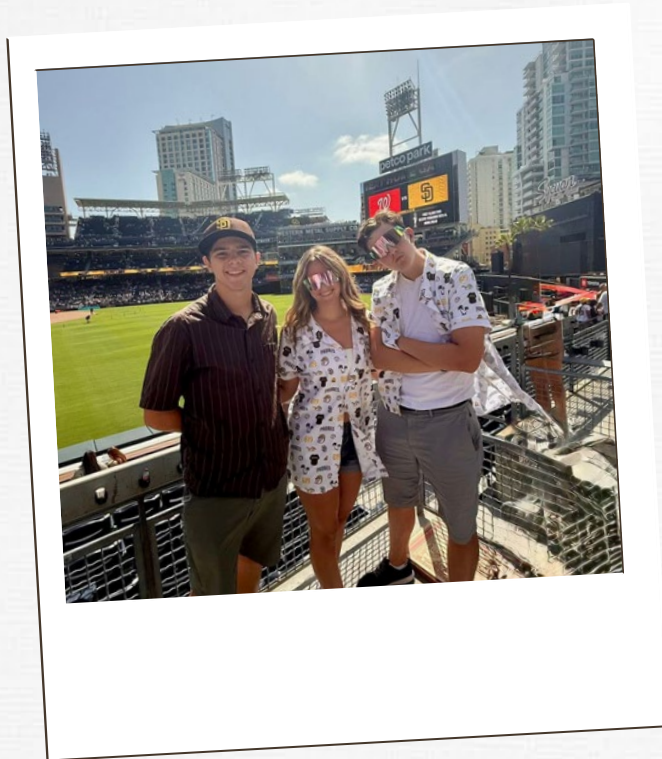
IT CAN ALSO  
LEAD TO:

confidence

self-understanding

connection to community

# The Role of Family



Family support can shape:

- communication at home
- confidence and selfadvocacy
- educational success
- sense of belonging



Even when identification happens later,  
families can still help build strong foundations.

# Finding Community

COMMUNITY SUPPORT CAN  
MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE.

THESE SPACES PROVIDE  
CONNECTION,  
INFORMATION,  
AND ENCOURAGEMENT.



HANDS AND VOICES



EDHI NETWORKS



D/HH COMMUNITIES



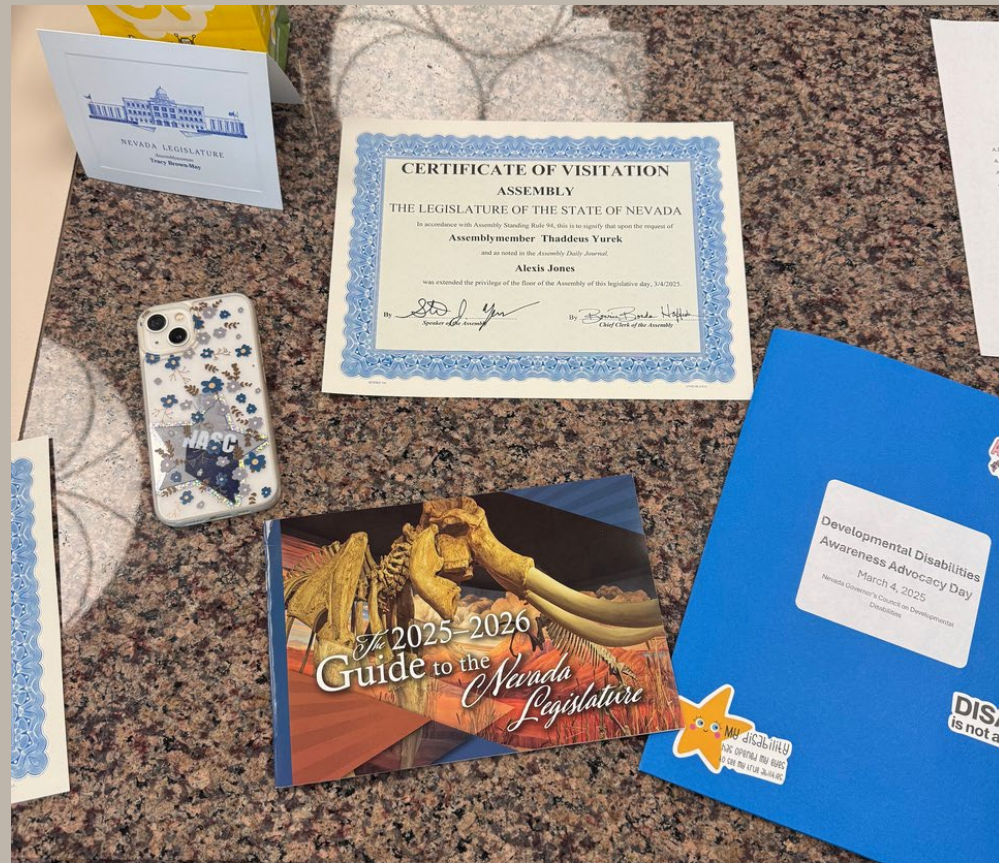
# From Experience to Advocacy.

Many families begin by simply trying to understand.

Over time, those experiences can grow into:

- advocacy
- mentorship
- leadership

Personal experiences often become a source of strength.



LATE  
IDENTIFICATION  
CAN BRING  
CHALLENGES  
BUT ALSO  
OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR GROWTH.

FAMILY  
RESILIENCE  
MATTERS.

# Key Takeaways:

COMMUNITY  
SUPPORT  
MATTERS.

MEANINGFUL  
ENGAGEMENT  
CAN HAPPEN  
AT ANY STAGE  
OF THE JOURNEY.

# Not Too Late to Listen

Even when identification happens later,

Families can still build support, confidence, and connection.

Lateidentified stories still matter.

## Contact me!



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