

# chapter 6:

## trusting yourself

### MAKING DECISIONS

As a new parent, you have many decisions to make. Before long, you'll find that a whole team of different professionals is working with you. These professionals are likely to present you with many different decisions to make about tests that can be done, ways of helping your child's hearing, and communication development programs you can go to.

Trust yourself to make the best decisions for your child. Take your time and believe in your ability to know what is best for your baby or child. When making decisions:

- Don't be concerned about what other people might think about your questions.
- Remember that some decisions need time and space to become clear. Try a new perspective – sit under a tree in a park, talk to someone who sometimes has different ideas to you but who you trust, talk to other parents, go for a walk. The famous philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once said 'All truly great thoughts are conceived by walking.'
- Also remember that very few decisions that you make cannot be changed in some way later on.
- For decisions that you know will have a long term effect or can't be reversed, wait until you are sure, but also find out what the impact of waiting might be.
- Trust your instincts.

Although the professionals working with your child have a lot of training in their field, and are experienced in working with children with a hearing loss, they don't know your child as you do. The time you spend with your child and the special bond you have with them means that you have the best overall picture of your child, and their strengths and needs within your family and community. Your role is to take the expert knowledge that professionals might have about particular aspects of your child and build it into your understanding of your child as a whole.

Because there are many ways to do things and no perfect answers, you'll find that on some issues you'll have different opinions from some professionals, as well as some other families you might meet. If this happens with professionals, it might be useful to talk with them about your different ideas, what the two of you agree on, and the pros and cons of taking one direction or another. Even though you might have different ideas, professionals also want the best for your child and talking these things through can help you work towards achieving this together.

Ultimately, it's always your choice which services you use, which tests you have done, and when you want to do these things.

### KNOWING WHAT YOU WANT FROM PROFESSIONALS AND SERVICES

It's possible that you might feel some pressure to take a certain path with your child's communication development, or connect with a specific service. These are big decisions about your child's future. Because you are the one who is responsible for making these decisions, you must respond to your own sense of what is right for your child and family rather than responding to pressures from other people.

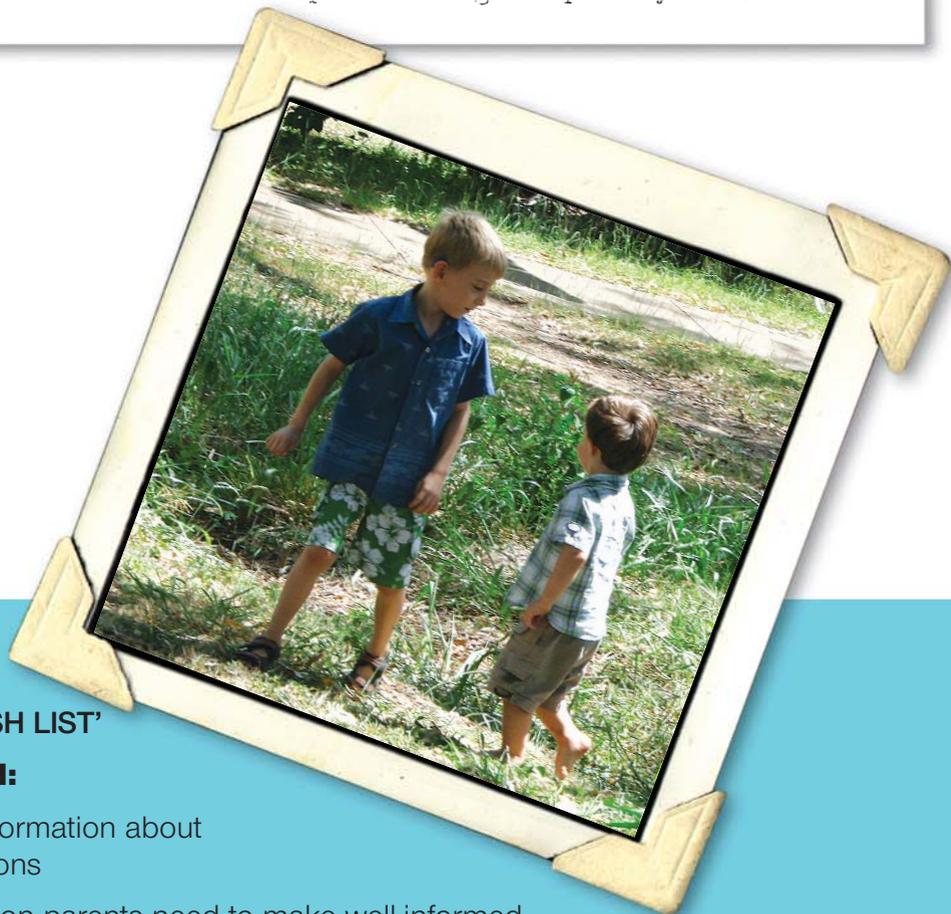
No two children with a hearing loss, or the families or communities they are part of, are the same. So each child and family will have different needs to be met in different ways. You don't need to feel that there is only one way to do things.

It can be quite liberating to take the first steps of positive action for your child. The important (but difficult) task you have is to get enough information to make the best decisions you can. So how do you go about choosing what path to take?

Trust yourself to make the best decisions for your child. Take your time and believe in your ability to know what is best for your baby or child.

One of the important things to think about is what you want from the people who help you. The following is a 'wish-list' that some parents of children with a hearing loss say they want from the professionals they connect with.

When you're exploring different services that your child and family might participate in, it might also be worth thinking about some of the things that are believed to be part of a good quality service.



## PROFESSIONALS 'WISH LIST'

### Professionals should:

- provide unbiased information about communication options
- provide the information parents need to make well-informed decisions; including books, brochures, phone numbers, support groups, anything that will be helpful in understanding a child's hearing loss and where to find help
- respect the choices that you make and let you make the final decision
- give an opinion when asked... but not deliver it in 'absolutes'
- let you know when they don't have the answer, and help you in finding the answer.

### Good professionals believe:

- that families bring unique expertise to the parent-professional relationship
- in the importance of families participating in all aspects of decision making for their children
- that family members' perspectives, ideas and opinions are as important as a professional's
- that parents should drive what happens for their child and family
- that trust is built and maintained from a foundation of respect for parents, their values, and their culture.

## ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD

Advocating for your child means promoting their welfare and interests. Parents are responsible for their child's welfare and have their child's best interest at heart – they are natural advocates for their children.

As your baby grows, you will enter situations where you require advocacy skills. It may seem overwhelming at first to think that you must become not only an expert about your baby's needs but also about the system designed to offer your family the assistance and support you need. However, involved and informed parents are also the most effective advocates for their children and you will not regret the time spent ensuring your baby's needs are met.

The tips below may start you along the advocacy path:

- Successful advocacy requires working with others in your baby's team. You are the central member of your baby's support team and so you will set the pace with the health care professionals involved with your baby.
- Be educated and informed about hearing loss and its effects on your baby. Read and talk to professionals and other parents to develop a good understanding about your baby's needs.
- Become familiar with the terminology, jargon, rules and processes of the various services providing your baby with assistance.
- Be confident about your abilities and rights, and use the knowledge and skills you already possess. Effective communication is one of the keys to success.
- Train yourself to write things down. Keep copies of all letters and reports and notes on phone calls.

### References

Aussie Deaf Kids, n.d., 'Building Blocks: a parent to parent guide for families whose baby has been diagnosed with a hearing loss', viewed December 2007, [http://www.aussiedeafkids.com/pdf/building\\_blocks\\_boy.pdf](http://www.aussiedeafkids.com/pdf/building_blocks_boy.pdf).

Hands and Voices, 2005, Early intervention: the parent perspective – a parents wish list for early interventionists, viewed January 2008, [http://www.handsandvoices.org/articles/early\\_intervention/wishlist\\_early\\_int.html](http://www.handsandvoices.org/articles/early_intervention/wishlist_early_int.html).

## SERVICE PROVIDERS 'WISH LIST'

### A good service should:

- respect that when you have access to good quality information and support you have the ability to make good decisions with the best interests of your child and family in mind
- assist you in this process in ways that are most useful for you
- work as a team with your family and all relevant professionals within and beyond their particular service
- develop a program, with your direct involvement, that responds to the specific communication development needs of your child and family
- provide, or work with other services to provide, a program that meets the overall developmental needs of your child
- accurately assess and review your child's communication and overall developmental progress regularly and modify the program as needed
- seek your feedback on your child's progress, and provide regular feedback on their assessment of your child's progress and achievements
- respond to changes in your child's needs and the needs of your family
- support you to access additional or alternative services that your child and family may need and communicate effectively with these services.