



BLUE
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SHUTTING
DOWN
STEREO-
TYPES:
CELEBRATING
DIVERSITY IN
DEAFNESS

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Deaf
Children
Australia.

We demolish some stereotypes about deafness and highlight the diverse ways deaf kids and adults are expressing their uniqueness.

What comes to mind when you think of a deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) person? Like it or not, we all have certain ideas about what deafness means. Often, these come from things we've seen in the media or in our daily lives.

But the truth is that, just like each hearing person, every DHH person is unique. And diversity is a wonderful thing. It fills our lives with richness, fascination, and the opportunity to expand our understanding of what it means to be human.

Here, we smash some stereotypes and celebrate the diversity of DHH children and adults.

Move over stars: Deaf people can dance

At three days old, Amelia was diagnosed with sensorineural hearing loss. At three years old, she started dancing – and she's never looked back. Now a teenager, Amelia is an accomplished performer and passionate supporter of DHH people pursuing their dreams.

She holds the titles of Miss Deaf Junior & Preteen Australia, has raised over \$60,000 for charity, and modelled for MarloKids and Mali Dancewear.

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“Life is not about the destination; it's the adventure along the way.”

VICTORS FAVOURITE QUOTE

In the dance studio, her hearing aids and an FM loop help Amelia hear the music. Her dance teacher says that when he met Amelia, he was struck by her capability, persistence and the easy way she became part of the group.

If you have a goal, Amelia believes nothing should stand in the way. As she says, “It doesn't matter what disability you have. It doesn't matter what you're going through. You can still achieve anything that you want to.”

Moving mountains: Deaf people seek thrills

Victor was born profoundly deaf, but it hasn't stopped him pursuing extreme sports that would make many of us quake in our boots. Mountain biking is one of them. “I always think to myself that some mountain is calling; I must go,” he says. “I really trained myself and improved my skills and confidence. Now I love the downhill speed, the jumps ... that's where my excitement is.”

Snowboarding is another passion. “It gives you a real feeling of freedom – being out in nature, going down the slopes, really enjoying life without any worries or responsibilities,” Victor says. He also loves watching Formula 1 racing and playing soccer.

Victor used to wear hearing aids and then got a cochlear implant. He enjoys hearing some environmental sounds (like Formula 1 race cars), but others (like barking dogs) not so much.

And his favourite inspirational quote? “Life is not about the destination; it's the adventure along the way.”

Off the fence: Deaf people can be Olympians

When Frank first heard about fencing at the age of 12, he knew he had to give it a go. Little did he know how far it would take him. Born profoundly deaf, Frank progressed from the school team to the world championships, where he made the top 16. He went on to represent Australia in fencing at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games.

He says this had a huge impact on him: “It was truly amazing. I thought I'm a deaf person and I'm in the Australian team. I couldn't believe it.”

These days, Frank uses his skills and experience to coach young fencers, many of whom are inspired by what he has achieved.



Game on: Deaf people play sports

Think deaf people cannot play in teams? Think again! Tom started playing Auskick at the age of four. Now in his early twenties, he has played at the same soccer club for over nine years.

Tom was born profoundly deaf and got cochlear implants when he was 14. His coach makes sure Tom is at the front of the group when he gives instructions at training. His clubmates have embraced him and value his skills as a player. "Everyone just loves each other," Tom says. "They treat you like family."

What about sports where you play with a partner? Deaf tennis player EJ wears a hearing aid and a cochlear implant. She and her doubles partner get up close to each other to talk about the next play. They also communicate using hand gestures like high-fives. EJ's coach uses a lot of visual demonstrations and brings EJ up to the net to explain things.

For other DHH kids and young people, EJ has this advice: "Different isn't bad. Don't be afraid to speak up and speak out."

Beautiful visions: Deaf people are creative

Although Kate is an accomplished artist and photographer, she once thought hearing loss was an obstacle to fulfilling her dreams. "[There's] something about being in a creative industry where I thought you have to be cool and attractive, and hearing loss is the antithesis to that," she says.

Now, Kate says these thoughts were "crazy". Diagnosed with hearing loss at the age of three years, she got hearing aids when she was 10. At 26, a chance encounter with a magazine changed her life. That magazine contained an article about a young deaf woman who was a photographer.

"It was the first time I had seen deafness viewed in a way that made it interesting and something that was beautiful," Kate says. "This woman was celebrating a part of her life. She had pursued a visual career. It was a light bulb moment."

Her next thought? "If one article could have such a profound impact, imagine what a whole book of stories could have." So Kate created Earshot: a book filled with stories and photographs of deaf people of various ages from all walks of life across different parts of Australia.

Kate says making Earshot helped her discover that DHH people have a wide range of personalities and interests. "I realised there are deaf people who are super extroverted and funny and quick witted and all these qualities that I thought I couldn't have because I was deaf."

"I've always thought that's why I created the book. I would just hand my younger self this book of stories that shows deafness as something that can be beautiful and interesting and celebrated."

Deaf Children Australia hold an annual art show to encourage and celebrate the artistic talents of DHH children and young people. Based around a new theme each year, the show brings out hidden talent in mediums ranging from graphic novels and cartoons to paintings and photographs.

**WINNING IS
TAKING PART**

“

My coaches know to turn and face me so I can read their lips and to speak a little louder.”

EJ, DEAF TENNIS PLAYER



deafchildrenaustralia.org.au/blueprint

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know more than 50% of parents of a deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) child worry about them taking part in local community clubs? Use these tips to help us knock that out of the park.

Blueprint isn't just for sports clubs. If you offer activities or programs for children or young people, we'd love to have you on our side!

For further information about Deaf Children Australia.
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Deaf Children Australia uses the term 'deaf' to refer to all degrees and types of hearing loss.
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