

# Junior clears white noise on deafness

## SPEAK UP

Yes, you can ask me questions. No, I won't participate in your little game where you mouth words at me and expect me to tell you what you said. As someone who has been deaf since the moment she came kicking and screaming into this world, I've pretty much seen it all.

I'll start off with the basics: the majority of my deafness is caused by a genetic disorder called Brachio-Oto-Renal syndrome. I know, it's a mouthful; I can't hear, and that's really all you need to know.

Growing up, my parents didn't want me to be considered an outcast from the rest of society, so I never learned sign language and was put in speech therapy as soon as I could properly pronounce both syllables in the word "Mama."

Every day I remind myself how much this decision influenced the person I am today. For that, I am eternally grateful to my parents. On the other hand, I regret that they didn't choose to have me learn sign language and become immersed in the deaf community from a young age.

Before discovering the deaf community last year, I was ignorant about all social aspects of my hearing loss. I thought I was

no different from everyone else and that needing minor adjustments made me less than my peers.

Learning the struggles and achievements of people who understood my experiences and often shared them opened my eyes. I learned from them that being deaf wasn't a burden or a disease, but a unique aspect of myself that doesn't hold me back, and can even push me to strive to be further than others.

That isn't to say, of course, that being deaf doesn't have its downsides.

Even growing up in a sheltered school environment didn't prevent the teasing that was often prompted by the sight of my brightly colored hearing aids.

Since I'm able to blend in mostly seamlessly with the people who have functioning ears, I'm often faced with others questioning if I'm really deaf, and if I really need for those around me to adjust their speech slightly in order for me to

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by **ALEX O'GORMAN**  
viewpoint editor



photo by K. Moreland

understand them.

Even my closest friends and family are not immune to these doubtful thoughts. On one particular occasion, when my sister, my cousin and I were settling down to watch a movie, I requested that the closed captions be turned on.

Since closed captions are absolutely necessary for me to keep up with movies, I foolishly thought no one would have a problem with this. I was wrong. My cousin began to loudly protest the closed captions, insisting that they were detrimental to her

enjoyment of the movie.

I, a good few years younger than her and with no one standing up for me, eventually gave in. To this day, the memory leaves a bitter taste in my mouth.

But since the cause of it was her annoyance at closed captions, it was worth it, right? Unfortunately, this was not the only time something like to this has occurred.

The truth of it is, people are just uncomfortable with the thought of deaf people. They don't want to ask deaf people questions, or even communicate with them at all. When they do encounter a deaf person who can participate in 'hearing' society, they pretend that they aren't deaf at all.

This is the reason others refuse to give me even the simplest accommodations. They're trying to forget I'm not another 'normal' person.

Hopefully, I've motivated you to push past this societal expectation. Ask questions, try to communicate and provide accommodations. Acknowledge deaf people. Our existence is not a burden, so don't treat it like one.

## MATERNAL MESSAGES

by **JESSICA EMERSON**  
online editor-in-chief

"Listen to your elders," they said. "The older the wiser," they said. They were right.

Save your mother an eye roll and listen to her on occasion. After 17 years of being best friends with my mother, I've picked up lessons on how to be a more tolerable human from my grey-haired queen.

### 1 You're a teenager. Therefore, you're ignorant.

You'd assume, that I, a 17-year-old high school student, would be an expert in all things, right? Heavy sarcasm intended. In truth, I know about as much about life as the average 4-year-old in the Wadley pediatric waiting room, digging gold from his nostrils and wiping his grubby, moist hands all over the communal playset.

I spend my days immersed in the glow emanating from a small rectangular screen and attempting to argue over

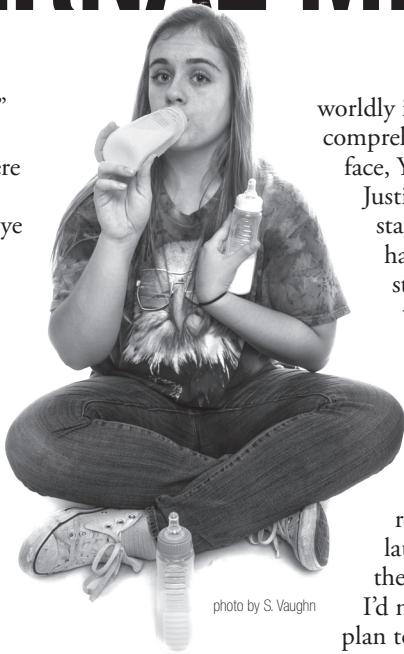


photo by S. Vaughn

worldly issues I cannot begin to comprehend. Since the duck face, YouTube bingeing and Justin Bieber infatuation stages of life, my mother has reiterated that I am stupid, (in the kindest way), and that I do not know everything, nor will I ever.

I used to roll my eyes, continue to ogle whatever was displayed on that shiny rectangular screen and laugh it off like she was the so-called "stupid" one. I'd never be like that. As I plan to move away to a foreign

place, college, without her guidance, I realize that I am unworldly. We all are.

### 2 Live eleutheros: free.

Now, my mother never uses Greek words. But, I'd like to think she's that poetic. "Eleutheros," was just the most aesthetically pleasing option. But, she truly embodies freedom. She oozes it; Breathes it. Seventy-five percent of the human body is composed of water, but my mother is

composed of 75 percent water and 25 percent independence and joy.

She's the loudest parent at any of the football games, and she doesn't even have a spawn on the field. She fully takes advantage of her right to act however she wants or say whatever she pleases without any hindrance or restraint. All of my life, she's taught me to be passionate, and pursue anything and everything, because everything is precious.

She's had adventures—things I can only pray to do. Whether it's living with musicians, going on a technology hiatus or eating healthier than any vegan or vegetarian could dream of, she's showed me more life in my 17 years than most people are blessed to witness in 100.

### 3 Listen to rad music.

My crib jams consisted of Stevie Wonder and Paul McCartney, with a little Joe Cocker in the mornings. Some kids had to recite their ABCs for a chocolate chip cookie reward, I had to spit out all the words to "Tiny Dancer" at an irritatingly high and off key pitch.

My first concert at the young age of 11 was to Randy Newman, a renowned singer-songwriter. Accompanying me of

## Senior remembers mother's wise words about life

course were my ever-so persistent mother and father. She forced me to broaden my horizons. "That music you listen to now is soda can, studio generated garbage," she'd say. "This could never touch 'Hey Jude.'"

### 4 Things were better in 4 Mayberry.

Wise words from Andy Griffith. In the course of my motherly apprenticeship, I've learned to envy the childhood my mom had. Swings were swung on. Slides were slid down. Bikes were rode. Milk came in cartons.

Life was easier because people could trust each other. She'd make forts out of sheets and play outside. There was no Xbox. There was no Twitter. She didn't care how many likes she got on an Instagram photo.

In less than a year, I'll bite down on my lip and drag my suitcase along my rocky driveway and head off to Austin, Texas, to start my own adventure, without my best friend. Not many teenage girls can attest to a great relationship with their mother. Over the course of my lifetime, I hope I can be half of the woman she is. I hope the apple really doesn't fall far from the tree.