Coping

There are many ways parents typically cope when they learn that their child is Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Adapting to a diagnosis of hearing loss is different for each family. Many stages in the process are common. Here are some of the feelings that a parent might experience:

- **Sadness:** "I spent the first two weeks crying, almost constantly."
- **Anger:** "My partner goes off to work for 10 hours. I wish I could escape too!"
- **Frustration:** "I feel as if no one really understands our situation."
- **Disappointment:** "My sister doesn't know how to help me."
- **Relief:** "I'm glad they were able to identify my baby's hearing loss early so that I can do something about it."
- **Guilt and Self-Reproach:** "I kept wondering what I did wrong to cause this."
- **Anxiety:** "I kept wondering and worrying if I was doing enough for him."
- **Comfort:** "I was pleased there were options and resources available to him."
- **Fatigue:** "All I wanted to do is sleep; I felt tired all the time."
- **Helplessness:** "I felt unable to do simple tasks."
- **Shock:** "I could hear what the audiologist was saying to me but I had no reaction. I felt as though I was standing outside my own body, uninvolved in the situation."
- **Yearning:** "I wished for a perfect child."
- **Hopeful:** "Our son is happy and healthy as he is. We have much to be thankful for."

Coming face-to-face with the reality of a diagnosis may look like:

- searching for a sign that the diagnosis is wrong or searching for a cure
- denying the facts or the significance/permanency of the diagnosis
- putting emotions aside while doing what needs to be done immediately
- feeling anger at professionals or others who bring the news of the diagnosis and force facing reality

Adjusting to a new reality may look like:

- wanting to talk with other parents of children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- feelings of anxiety decreasing and a feeling of control over your life returning as you learn how you can help your child
- accepting your child as he is
- thinking of a child's diagnosis without pain (though some parents report they continue to experience sadness or longing from time to time, but it happens much less frequently)

Incomplete grieving can cause parents to get stuck in one part of the process and can stop them from moving forward in their lives. If you are experiencing some of the feelings described above, you may benefit from getting additional support. Many parents find it helpful to talk with other parents who have children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. You can contact Alberta Hands & Voices to help you connect to other parents. Other potential ways to get support are included in the next section of this toolkit.

Adapted from:
-*BC Family Hearing Resource Society*