



Realizing Hopes and Dreams

A MinneStory™

Sonjay, and his mom, Rhonda, share the special moments and milestones that have led to Sonjay's success as an adult. He was born before hearing screening was available to all babies born in Minnesota.



Sonjay: I remember when the birds were chirping I was like, what is that? What is that? But then you told me it was the birds chirping and I realized, “Hey I can hear the birds chirping now.”

Rhonda: Yeah, I remember that. That was uhm, cause we started out signing to you and ya know I did the sign for bird, and connecting the meaning of that word, it was exciting to see you, to see you hear and know what that was.

Sonjay: Yeah when I first got my implant, I was like, so confused, all at once, because there were so many sounds coming to me, like background noises, I was trying to figure out what they are, so it took me awhile to get use to the cochlear implant because there was just so much going on and it was a lot to handle all at once.

Rhonda: And you had to work really hard.

Sonjay: Yeah.

Rhonda: People think that when you start hearing that all of a sudden it’s like magic and you understand. It’s not that easy is it?

Sonjay: No, it takes hard work to get to where you want to be.

Rhonda: So, after attending college, one of the things that I noticed is that you are a lot more comfortable with your deafness. Was there something that changed?

Sonjay: Well I went to RIT, which had a division for hard of hearing and deaf students. Either we’re hard of hearing or deaf, meaning they have cochlear implants or they have hearing aids or had nothing. And I made some friends with them, got to know from their perspective on things, their backgrounds, and I realized I’m not the only one who’s going through this, so I was able to get more comfortable about my identity as being deaf. So, it was definitely a big step for me. I’m very grateful that you worked very hard, ya know, getting me a cochlear implant, especially with the insurance companies. Sometimes they can be finicky about it. But uhm, so how did your friends, other families, relatives react as your son being deaf?

Rhonda: When we found out that you were deaf, I think people tried to make you feel better about the situation and make you feel like, oh it’s not that bad. And as a parent you’re grieving and you...your hopes and dreams are kind of shot. But when you are a parent who’s grieving, that isn’t what you will need to hear. But looking back, when I thought that ya know, all my hopes and dreams were shattered for you, I was wrong, because you are realizing all of those hopes and dreams that I had for you.

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