COCHLEAR IMPLANT INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF ACTION. AISBL
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South Africa

Caregiver Name: Moereeda

Age at Implantation: 2 Age Today: 22

My boy was born profoundly deaf. He was implanted at twenty-two months old in 2005. He was bilaterally implanted a week before his third birthday. **The biggest challenge at the time was having a limited knowledge about deafness.** In my community, deaf meant you were unintelligent and would have a limited chance at living a successful life.

We knew we had to teach him speech to communicate effectively. He had to catch up 3+ years of lost sound. It was a scary time. The community was ignorant as to what the devices were on his head and what it was for. Most people thought they were fancy, upmarket headphones for listening to music. **We overcame this challenge by raising awareness and advocating.** The other challenge we had while he was growing up was bullying and misunderstanding from his peers. We had to teach him coping skills and give him practical strategies to handle this.

The biggest emotional support came from my husband, for both of us, this was foreign ground and we had to navigate it carefully and also preserve our relationship. My parents helped with logistics like transport, finance, childcare for our daughter and other support that was needed. **We received immense support from the kind professionals at a centre here in Cape Town.**

After attending a mainstream primary school, he went to a mainstream high school with minimal issues. He is 22 now and finished his third year of film school with a bursary he had won all by himself. When he graduates, he will be qualified to direct, produce, screen write, etc. any film project he works on. **I can truly say that where he is today is one of the biggest achievements of my life.**

My advice to other parents is to trust your instincts. Listen to the professionals and give your child and yourself the benefit of the doubt. Most of the time you will be pleasantly surprised at the results, the rest is just character building.

The discovery of our child's deafness changed the trajectory of our lives! We were going to move overseas for better opportunities, but it was not meant to be. We discovered his deafness at the same time we made plans to leave the country, but we couldn't because he needed to be implanted as well as begin intensive therapies. I am still working at the same centre 20 years later helping other parents in similar situations believe in themselves and their ability to help their child.