

Inspiration

My Hearing Journey



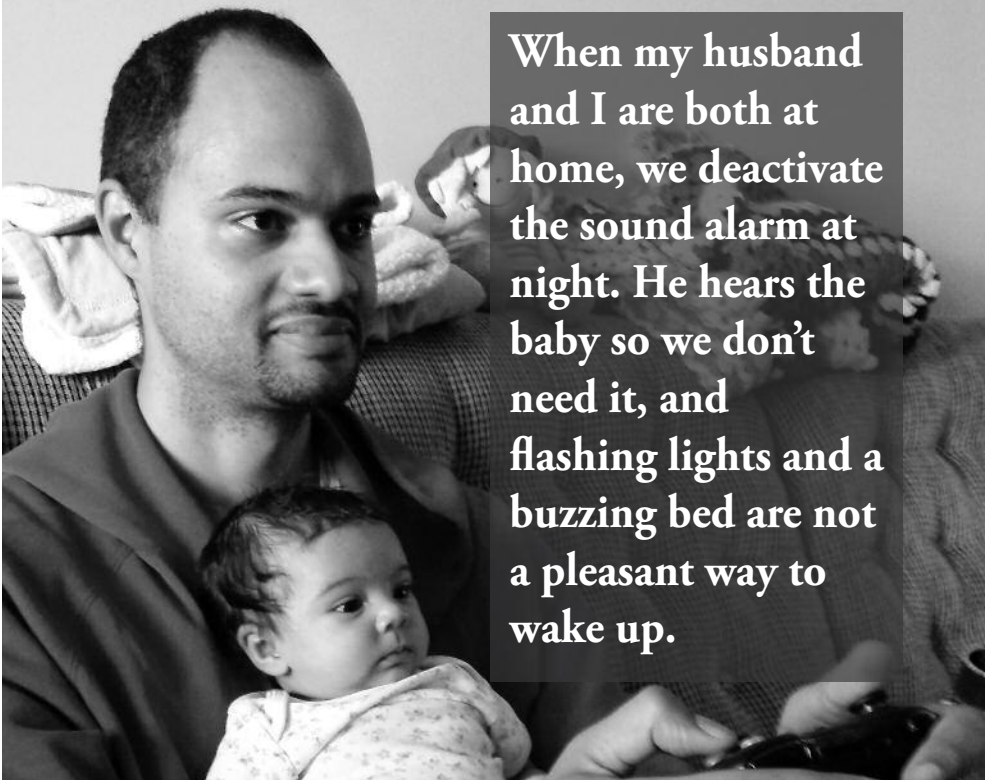
by
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Picture the scene: in a nameless maternity ward, a large, sweating man is wrestling his newborn daughter, who does not want her diaper changed. She's gripping the bars of her bassinet in her tiny hands and screaming bloody murder. Six inches away, the baby's mother is fast asleep in the hospital bed. She rolls over and snoozes some more, blissfully unaware of the epic battle occurring under her nose. By the time the new mother's eyes open, the baby has been changed, swaddled, and returned to sleep, and her husband is slumped back in the armchair. "Did you have a nice nap, hubby?" she asks.

Welcome to my life as a deaf parent. When my (hearing) husband, Derek, and I welcomed our daughter, Maggie, to the world on Mother's Day 2016, we knew that our lives would turn upside down, and that my hearing loss would add an extra dash of crazy to the whole business. Maggie is now a bouncing, happy, little girl, and I've recovered enough sanity to tell you about the experience so far.

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When it comes to looking after the baby, my hearing loss makes no difference. I don't need perfect hearing to nurse her, or make fart noises against her tummy, or kiss her cheeks and capture those little belly laughs. I don't need perfect hearing to talk and sing (off-key) to her, take her places, or stop her from flinging herself off the couch and change table fifty times a day.



When my husband and I are both at home, we deactivate the sound alarm at night. He hears the baby so we don't need it, and flashing lights and a buzzing bed are not a pleasant way to wake up.

I don't need perfect hearing to understand her babbling - instead, I just babble and blow raspberries right back at her. Speaking of understanding each other, I want to use baby sign language to communicate with her before she learns how to talk, and I definitely don't need perfect hearing for that!

Instead, my hearing loss only becomes an issue when I'm not interacting with the baby: when I might miss her cries in my sleep, or need help communicating with the outside world. Here's how we're dealing with both those situations.

Deaf parents in years past must have had to share beds with their babies, or perhaps tie strings from their hands to their babies' wrists at night. Luckily, we live in an age where there's a technological solution to almost everything, and we can spy on our kids from a distance. Before Maggie was born, I

asked the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre to send a technician to install a sound monitor next to her crib. Our house was already set up with the flashing lights activated by the doorbell and smoke detector, so it was simply a matter of adding one more device. Now, if Maggie cries loudly in her crib, the noise activates flashing lights around the house, and also sets off a vibrating alarm under my bed.

Derek and I also bought a video monitor for her bedroom, so we can see and hear her when she sleeps. Both of those devices have given me peace of mind, since one of my biggest fears as a new parent was to miss her cries. I wear a hearing aid and cochlear implant during the day, which allows me to hear reasonably well, but when I take them out to sleep, the baby can be having a crying fit and I'll never know.

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My hearing loss came in handy for Derek in return. Thanks to the magic of the 'off' switch, I was able to escape the worst of Maggie's

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