

The Social Construction of Deafness in EHDI Programming

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**What does
“disability” or
“deafness”
mean to you?**

- Write a definition for one or both.
- What influences shaped your definition?

What is Social Construction Theory?

Meaning is derived from a person's interpretation of something and develops through interaction with others.

Bogdan & Knoll, 1995

Basics of Social Construction Theory

Internal Factors

- The “condition”
- The person



External Factors

- The “social environment”
- Education
- Media
- Policy
- Language use
 - Colloquial expressions
 - Diagnosis
 - Euphemism

How
does this
impact
families?



**Why is this
important to EHDI
professionals?**

Providers' beliefs
impact what and how
they present
information to families

(Eleweke & Rodda, 2000).

The words they use
and the way they
present
information will
continue to shape
the view the family
has of their child

(Watkins, 1997).

Parents Report

○ 54% cited parent resources / social media

○ 45% cited EHDI professionals



Homework: Self-Assessment

- 1) What do I believe it means to be deaf/hard of hearing?
- 2) What are my thoughts about it? Why? What are my experiences?
- 3) What kind of language do I use when I talk about it with coworkers? With families? With my close friends? Is it different? Why?
- 4) How do educational/ political/ medical policies impact my beliefs?
- 5) Do I do what I do because of my beliefs or because it's best for the child/family? How do I know?



Questions?

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