Two Views on Deafness

**Pathological View**

- Define deafness as a *pathological condition* (a defect, or a handicap) which distinguishes *abnormal* deaf persons from normal hearing persons.
- Deny, downplay or hide evidence of deafness.
- Seek a “cure” for deafness; focus on ameliorating the effects of the “auditory disability” or “impairment.”
- Give much attention to the use of hearing aids and other devices that can enhance auditory perception and/or focus on speech. Examples: amplifiers, tactile and computer-aided speech devices, cued systems...
- Place much emphasis on speech and speech reading (oral skills); avoid sign and other communication methods, which are deemed “inferior.”
- Promote the use of auditory-based communication modes; frowned upon the use of modes which are primarily visual.
- Describe sign language as inferior to spoken language.
- View spoken language as the most natural language for all persons, including deaf people.
- Support socialization of deaf persons with hearing persons. Frowned upon deaf/deaf interaction and deaf/deaf marriages.
- Regard “the normal hearing person” as the best role model.
- Regard professional involvement with the deaf as “helping the deaf” to “overcome their handicap” and to “live in the hearing world.”
- Neither accept nor support a separate “deaf culture.”

**Cultural View**

- Define deafness as merely a difference, a characteristic which distinguishes normal deaf persons from normal hearing persons. Recognize that deaf people are a linguistic and cultural minority.
- Openly acknowledge deafness.
- Emphasize the abilities of deaf persons.
- Give much attention to issues of communication access for deaf persons through visual devices and services. Examples: telecommunication devices, captioning devices, light signal devices, interpreters...
- Encourage the development of all communication modes, including—but not limited to—speech.
- Strongly emphasize the use of vision as a positive, efficient alternative to the auditory channel.
- View sign language as equal to spoken language.
- View sign language as the most natural language for people who are born deaf.
- Support socialization within the deaf community as well as within the larger community.
- Regard successful deaf adults as positive role models for deaf children.
- Regard professional involvement with deaf people as “working with the deaf” to “provide access to the same rights and privileges that hearing people enjoy.”
- Respect, value and support the language and culture of deaf people.

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