



PARENTS & FAMILIES / FREE RESOURCE

Understanding Your Child's CODA Identity

A positive, practical guide to belonging, language and identity.

FOR: Deaf parents, hearing partners and family members

This guide offers ideas, not a test or a checklist. Your child can explore what being a CODA means to them in their own time.

Every family is different. Every CODA story matters.

Every CODA is different

There is no one correct way to grow up as a Child of Deaf Adults.

What does CODA mean?

CODA means Child of Deaf Adults. CODAs can be young children or adults. Some sign; some do not. Some are closely connected to Deaf culture; others discover that connection later. None of those differences makes someone more or less a CODA.

A child can belong to more than one world

A young person may feel part of Deaf and hearing communities, or may not use those labels at all. Their identity may evolve through school, friendships, language and family experiences.

- Use words your child is comfortable with, rather than deciding their identity for them.
- Celebrate Deaf culture, language and family traditions without requiring your child to feel a particular way.
- Let curiosity lead: a question may be an invitation to talk, not a sign that something is wrong.

A useful reminder

Having Deaf parents does not automatically mean a child needs additional help. Many CODAs have fulfilling, ordinary childhoods and enjoy the strengths of their families.

Ask what is useful for this particular child and family; avoid assuming there is a universal CODA experience.

Helping identity grow naturally

Small, everyday opportunities can be more helpful than a big conversation.

Listen without testing

Try open questions such as “What do you like about our family?”, “Has anyone asked you about signing?” or “Would you like to meet other CODAs?”. It is also fine if your child says “not today”.

Make space for the whole person

Your child may love sport, music, gaming or art far more than talking about identity. CODA is one part of their story, not their entire personality.

- Offer age-appropriate chances to meet other CODAs, if they want to.
- Enjoy Deaf community events together when accessible and relevant.
- Respect their choice to sign, speak or use different languages in different settings.

Respond to tricky moments

If a child feels uncomfortable when strangers stare or ask personal questions, affirm that they can choose what to explain. Offer a short response they can use, but do not require them to educate others.

Your notes or next steps

What makes our family feel like us?

What opportunities for friendships would my child enjoy?

Conversation starters for home

Use these ideas flexibly - they are invitations, not homework.

For younger children

- What is your favourite thing to do together?
- Are there signs or words that are special in our family?
- What would you like a new friend to know about you?

For older children and teenagers

- How do you feel when people ask questions about our family?
- Are there parts of Deaf culture you would like to know more about?
- Would meeting CODAs your age feel interesting, or not right now?

Where to go next

CODA UK & Ireland offers opportunities to explore community activities and connect with other CODAs. Ask about current arrangements rather than assuming that a particular camp, event or group is available.

Your child's voice matters. Their feelings may change over time - and that is okay.