

Presentation Title: From LEGOs to Letting Go: How a Deaf Mentor Changed Our Family



Henri & Dane, 1991 & 2021

Keynote Presenters: Leeanne Seaver (hearing mom), Dane Seaver (Deaf son), & Henri Medinilla Grau (Trilingual/ASL-English-Spanish Deaf Mentor)

Abstract:

Not long after our son Dane was late-identified as profoundly deaf, Henri came into our lives. His lived-experience as a Deaf man (native ASL & oral English fluent) had a seismic impact on us as hearing parents. We would learn things from Henri that no one else could teach us, and it changed us as a family, and as human beings. I have been writing about these themes (the difference between language and communication... IEP social goals vs being invited to birthday parties... the advocacy imperative... puberty... how to influence systems from a parent perspective... the high cost of misunderstanding... so much more) for years in my regular column in the H&V Communicator. It's high time Dane and Henri share their perspectives. This session is delivered as a shared (but structured) conversation between the three of us exploring the agony and the ecstasy of this pilgrimage through 30 years together.

Learning Objectives:

1. To understand the role of a Deaf mentor in a family—as experienced by the mentor and the family.
2. To increase awareness of the unique perspectives of Deaf adults, Deaf children in a hearing family, and Hearing parents.
3. To inspire and increase the practice of Deaf mentorship in family support systems.