

# Silence

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The following article covers the life of a child with delayed speech development. Delayed Speech Development refers to the failure to develop speech capabilities at the expected chronological age <sup>[3]</sup>. Adopted from Korea, the mentioned child's delay is thought to be an effect of the change in surroundings and environment. For the privacy and safety of the child and his family, all the names of the people and places mentioned have been modified.



She held him tight. After years on the waiting list, she finally received a boy of her own and nothing could make her give him up. She always dreamed of becoming a mother and, finally, a few years back, she applied to adopt a child from a third-world country. They barely resembled each other, but she did not care. Her thin, oxblood hair sat on her shoulders, and her smoky eyes watched his every move. Her colourless veneer deflected the surrounding light, while her son's soft, olive skin gently absorbed the illumination. Her son's brown, insightful eyes stared back at her, but his lips did not move. He raised his petite hand and brushed his new mother's cheek, his only sign of appreciation.

Merely two months after they met, Charlie and Jenny began to spend extensive time together. Jenny managed to bring her adopted son, Charlie, out of his cocoon. Charlie seemed to understand when Jenny praised him, which she did often. He hardly ever disobeyed her, for his goal in life seemed to pay her back for all her effort to connect to him. They lived happily, but Jenny frequently worried. Charlie's quick, observant eyes caught the emotions of everyone,

immediately knowing what they were attempting to convey. However, he only expressed himself through pointing. He never imitated any of the sounds Jenny cued in front of him while they played, nor did he appear interested in learning any of the nursery rhymes Jenny sang.

She researched speech disorders which gave both comfort and anxiety. Strictly speaking, only 5-10% of the world's population can speak perfectly. <sup>[1]</sup> A normal child between twelve and fifteen months should start using a vocabulary of one to two meaningful words and understand simple commands. <sup>[2]</sup> Charlie's receptive language seemed normal, if not above average. His expressive language skills needed work. Charlie's specific symptoms were listed under the diagnoses of Delayed Speech Development.

From friends' suggestions, Jenny found a speech therapy organization that evaluated the patient's speech and language skills and tended to their specific needs. For Jenny's convenience, a therapist came to their house twice a week for over a year. The therapist helped Charlie express himself through sign language, and taught him simple word phrases, such as "get the cup". Charlie caught on quickly, still understanding others more than expressing himself, but it settled Jenny's major worries. The therapist assured Jenny that Charlie, as far as she could tell, did not suffer from any hearing barriers that unabled him to learn. She still suggested that Jenny take Charlie to the doctor to run some basic tests. Charlie stayed brave through the trip and he actually surprised the doctors with his astonishing intelligence.

About a year passed and Charlie moved on from the speech therapy organization to meeting a specialized teacher from a local school once a week. Jenny scheduled fun activities and play dates to balance work and play, but also to encourage Charlie to speak around other people. Jenny would accompany him at Toddlers Gym, where she crawled through obstacles

chasing after Charlie. Together, they made plenty of racket with instruments at Musical Groups. Charlie also enjoyed spending time with toddlers his own age. They manoeuvred toy trains, explored the outdoors, and wiggled to silly music together. To Jenny's relief, the children's innocence prevented them from noticing anything strange or unusual about Charlie. Life became almost routine for Charlie and Jenny, and they treasured each others' company.

Now, at the age of three years old, Charlie has almost reached normal standards. He now goes to the city's best speech therapy center. There the therapist assists him to set goals for himself. He practices responding to "WH" questions using phrases or short sentences. He also works on using two to three words in his sentences. The therapist keeps his attention by playing games and switching between activities. He designs "Potato Head" and then explains his creation to the therapist. This increases his vocabulary and lets him get a visual idea of each item he describes. They look for hats, brooms, and shells in "I SPY" books, and test his memory in memory picture games. The therapist, Jenny, and Charlie read interactive story books, color on coloring sheets, and race cars together. The therapist throws in questions and starts conversations during the activities, asking Charlie who the caterpillar takes to the party or what color the car is. They take turns talking to prevent one-way conversations. The therapist encourages him to stay on track, work hard, and obey the rules by rewarding him with stickers, toys, and lollipops.

Along with his significant progress in learning to speak, Charlie's personality has blossomed and has made an impression on everyone he meets. Fascinated by nature, he enjoys running and exploring the entire back lawn. Charlie's observant, hushed nature has never left him completely. He still sits quietly, taking in his surrounding if he finds himself anywhere new. At night he adores to snuggle in bed and listen to his mother read to him. He also works to please the people he loves. His current therapist describes him as friendly, independent, and persistent

at what he does. She cannot help laughing when she tells Charlie to listen and he drops whatever he is doing at the time. He neatly folds his hand and looks at her attentively with his large, innocent eyes. As his mother said, “His personality grows on you like a vine.”



Charlie, only one of thousands of children with some speech or language disorder, courageously survived the thick and thins of his life. <sup>[2]</sup> These disorders shed light on truly valiant children and unearth hidden wonders. Communication bonds almost all the people of the world, and communication impairment drastically limits an individual. Only through both Charlie’s and Jenny’s perseverance could they make it through life’s obstacles as successfully as they did and will forever continue to.

## Acknowledgements

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### Work Cited

<sup>[1]</sup> “Speech and Language Disorders and Diseases” American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. ©1997-2009 American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.  
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