



# Social Model of Disability

As parents of children with hearing loss, we want to protect our kids from discrimination and ensure they have equal access in society. Deafness and hearing loss are complex issues that affect each child differently. A social model of disability accepts their individual differences and removes barriers so they can participate in their community and develop a positive sense of belonging in the world. It may be helpful to teach them about the social model of disability.

The Australian Federation of Disability Organisations explains the social model of disability on their website, which says:

*“The social model of disability is a way of viewing the world, developed by people with disability.*

*The social model of disability says that people are disabled by barriers in society, such as buildings not having a ramp or accessible toilets, or people’s attitudes, like assuming people with disability can’t do certain things.*

*The medical model of disability says people are disabled by their impairments or differences, and looks at what is ‘wrong’ with the person, not what the person needs. We believe that the medical model of disability creates low expectations and leads to people losing independence, choice and control in their lives.*

*The social model helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for people with disability. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers people with disability more independence, choice and control.”*

*Example: The problem isn’t that your child cannot hear the educational video, it is that the video is not captioned nor has Auslan interpretation.*

Medical Model of Deafness	Social Model of Deafness
The focus is on the hearing loss	The focus is on the individual
Hearing loss is a personal problem that needs to be fixed	Hearing loss is an individual difference that needs to be accommodated
The person with hearing loss should adapt to fit into society	Society should accommodate people who are deaf or hard of hearing so they can participate in all activities