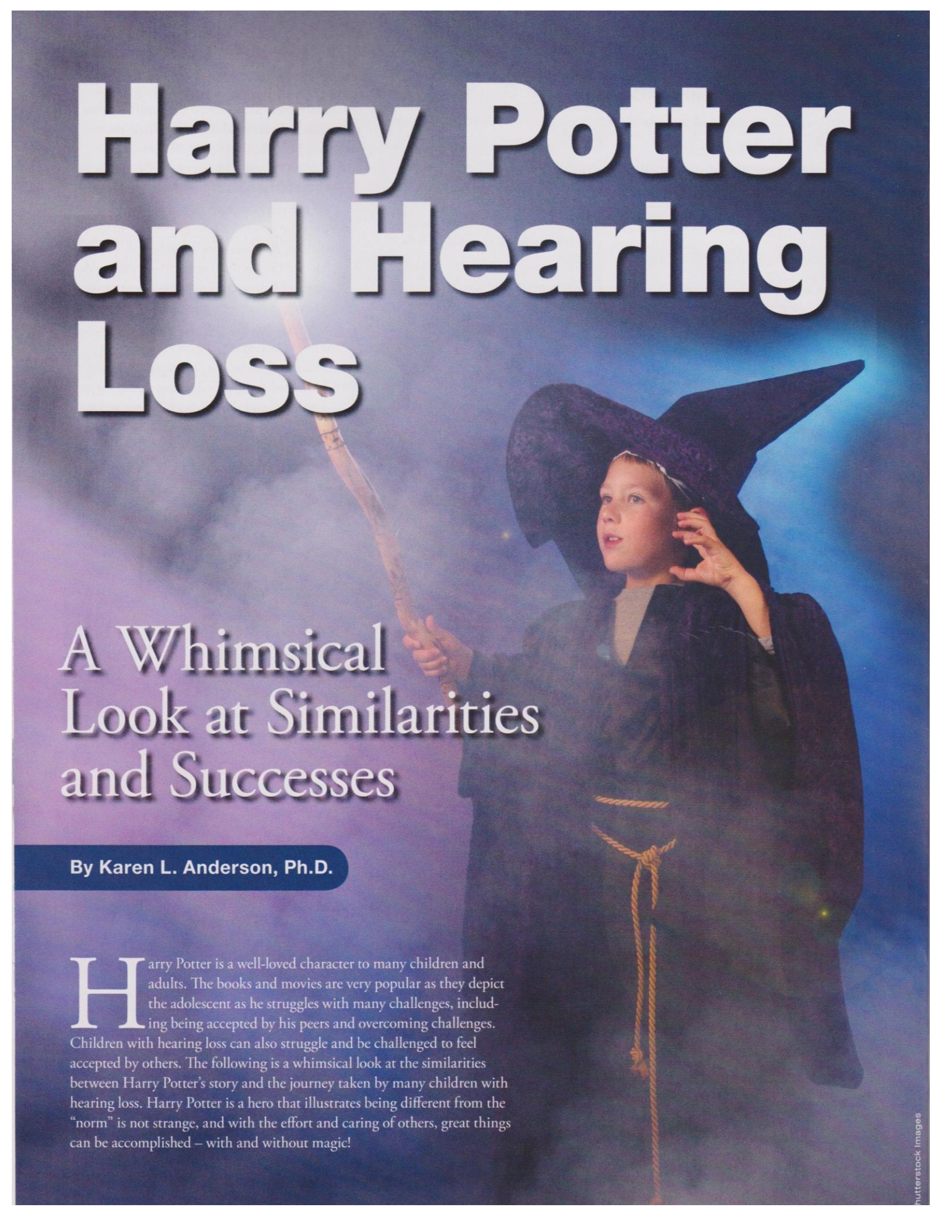


Harry Potter and Hearing Loss



A Whimsical Look at Similarities and Successes

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Harry Potter is a well-loved character to many children and adults. The books and movies are very popular as they depict the adolescent as he struggles with many challenges, including being accepted by his peers and overcoming challenges.

Children with hearing loss can also struggle and be challenged to feel accepted by others. The following is a whimsical look at the similarities between Harry Potter's story and the journey taken by many children with hearing loss. Harry Potter is a hero that illustrates being different from the "norm" is not strange, and with the effort and caring of others, great things can be accomplished – with and without magic!

	Harry Potter	Children with Hearing Loss
The Critical Role of the Family	Harry was raised by a family that was not magical. Being “muggles,” his uncle and aunt were unaware of how Harry was different from other children.	Approximately 19 out of every 20 children born with hearing loss are born into families with parents who have typical hearing. ¹ The parents are usually unaware of the potential impact of hearing loss on their child and his or her resulting needs.
	Although his uncle and aunt thought that there was “something funny” about Harry, they did not want to admit that it was because he was a wizard.	For children with late onset hearing loss, most parents come to realize that there is something “not right” with their child, but it can take them awhile to suspect the reason is hearing loss. Because of their fear that something may be wrong, they may delay getting the child’s hearing tested.
	Harry’s uncle and aunt did not want to believe that he was a wizard, denying him anything magical or any contact with the magic community.	Some families, especially of children who have mild or unilateral hearing loss, can observe that their child responds to sound. They may deny that there is anything different about his or her hearing and not pursue the use of amplification or contact with hearing loss professionals.
	Hermione’s parents were muggles who embraced the reality that she was a witch, supporting her successes.	Many children who are deaf or hard of hearing have wonderfully supportive families that interact frequently and foster good communication skills, which are the foundation of their children’s success.
	Ron’s parents and family were all magical going back generations. He grew up immersed in the magical community.	About 5 percent of children with hearing loss are born into families that have members who are deaf or hard of hearing. ¹ These children are often raised within in the Deaf community and embraced by their culture.
Technology	Wizards and witches use wands to access the world of magic.	Children with hearing loss who are developing listening and spoken language use hearing aids and/or cochlear implants to access the world of sound.
	Broken wands result in inaccurate magic.	Broken or malfunctioning hearing aids and/or cochlear implants results in fragmented or inconsistent hearing. This can cause misunderstanding of conversations or questions, and result in the child saying something that does not fit.
Teaching	In Harry Potter’s world, student wizards and witches use spells and their wands to achieve magical results. Learning spells takes much practice, time and effort do perfectly. The more that the students are expected to learn and perform spells correctly, the better at magic they become.	Learning to listen and talk, and learning full, rich language all takes much time, practice and effort for most children with hearing loss. Having high expectations is important. Requiring basic elements, like wearing consistent amplification, is necessary before listening and speech skills can progress. Addressing gaps in language and providing rich language experiences helps to develop vocabulary and keep language skills at an age/grade-appropriate level.
	When the students were taught Defense Against the Dark Arts by highly skilled teachers and had engaging learning experiences, they developed many skills rapidly. When they had teachers that were unsure of their goals, what to teach or a philosophy that did not encourage true learning, the students did not develop many solid skills.	When children with hearing loss and their families have teachers or therapists who are very knowledgeable about speech perception and language learning and who are able to set goals based on the natural hierarchy of skill development, children develop many language skills rapidly. When children have teachers or therapists who lack a clear understanding of auditory and language learning skills and strategies, the children make limited progress in developing listening and spoken language.

1 Mitchell, R.E., & Karchmer, M.A. (2004). Chasing the mythical ten percent: Parental hearing status of deaf and hard of hearing students in the United States. *Sign Language Studies*, 4(2), 138-163. Available online from www.infanthearing.org/ncham/presentations/SunriseSessionPPT.pdf

	Harry Potter	Children with Hearing Loss
Socialization	When Harry started at Hogwarts, he was talked about as “the child who lived.” People wanted to see his scar and whispered about him.	Many students with hearing loss are educated in their neighborhood schools where they are the only children with hearing aids and/or cochlear implants. Other students may not have been around a child with hearing loss, do not know what to expect and are often curious about amplification devices.
	There were many times when Harry was an outcast, made fun of and treated poorly by groups of students. He usually did not react or lash out at his tormentors. Other students were singled out and picked on too, but the reader was mainly concerned about Harry.	Teasing happens in every school and to most students at one time or another. Poking fun at someone can be a way of appreciating him as part of the group or as a method of flirting. Teasing can also be hurtful. Children who are “different” in any way, including wearing amplification devices, may be targets for teasing. They should learn the difference between teasing as a part of friendship and negative teasing (and not to react when teased).
	Harry had Ron and Hermione as friends to help him emotionally and academically. They accepted him for who he was. It was hard for Ron sometimes when Harry got all of the attention. They eventually resolved this problem, but it would have helped if an adult had mediated.	Like all children, those with hearing loss need friends. There should be a balance between therapies and homework, and just being a child. Supporting a child’s opportunities to develop close friendships should be a high priority for families. They should remain aware of the jealousy and bad feelings that can arise when all children in the family do not receive enough attention. The child with hearing loss has special needs, but siblings need special attention too.

	Harry Potter	Children with Hearing Loss
Competition	When Harry was chosen for the Triwizard Tournament, he was competing against students who had more advanced skills than he did. For each of the trials he needed to determine his strategy for the challenge, then work hard and practice so that when he was competing, he would be successful.	Many times students with hearing loss have one or more skills in which they are behind the other students in their mainstream classes. They require expertise from a knowledgeable listening and spoken language professional to help them identify learning, compensatory and self-advocacy strategies. They also need to work on skills and practice them so that they can succeed at school. Children with hearing loss need the support of their families to practice at home and complete homework.
Success	Ultimately, Harry was successful in all of his challenges because he tried his hardest and he had help. It was not fair that he had to face Lord Voldemort again and again. It was not fair that the other students did not believe how hard it was for him and thought that all of his extra involvement was a way for Harry to get attention. He did not ask to be special. But Harry, with the help of his friends and his teachers, persevered, tried his hardest and was true to who he was as a person. Therefore he succeeded against all odds.	Most children who are deaf or hard of hearing did not wish to have a hearing loss. It is not fair that they need to wear amplification or have therapy and other services that most children do not need. It is not fair that they face listening and understanding challenges in many situations that are effortless for their peers who have typical hearing. It is not fair that they need to learn to advocate for their own right to access spoken language so that they can learn. Ultimately, children with hearing loss will be successful because they try hard and have support and assistance from their families and teachers. They need to believe in themselves and that they can succeed. Children who are deaf or hard of hearing, with the help of their families, friends, teachers and therapists, must persevere and be true to who they are as people to be able to succeed in a hearing world. ♻️

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