

English transcript of Fifi Garfield's interview with Alim Jayda, Chandrika (Chandu) Gopalakrishnan and Matt Dixon

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- based on live voiceovers by Rose Lennon, Sean Johnson, Sandy Deo
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Fifi	Hello everyone, welcome to the audience. I'm Fifi. Welcome to today's BSL live stream today, it's been ages since we've done one. So today, everyone you can see on your screen are CODAs; we've got Alim Jayda with us, Matt Dixon and Chandrika Gopalakrishnan. I'm so excited to say we're going to be talking about what it's like for them growing up with deaf parents... their experiences. As an audience, you can send us in your questions through the live stream from 8 o'clock, but firstly, we're going to have a little interview with all three of them. Hi everybody.
Alim/Matt/ Chandrika	Hi, really happy to be here.
Fifi	It's so lovely to see you. Hold on – sorry about that – a Zoom thing. So, we've been talking about the BSL Zone programme, Getting Personal with Pierce Starre . Deepa was interviewing him. So as CODAs, and this is the sign for CODA, at the moment, have you ... were your experiences similar to Pierce's growing up? Anyone want to talk about their experiences ... Matt?
Matt	Well I've seen it three times, for the third time today, and there were a number of elements that my experiences and Pierce's matched, in terms of his emotional experience. My experience through school was quite different. My teachers were really supportive of me, so I had some empathy with him and I really felt for him because I think he had a horrible experience, but that wasn't the same as mine.
Fifi	Before we carry on, those of you who are wondering what CODA might mean, it means Child of Deaf Adult. So that's a hearing child, or any child, in fact, that was brought into a family where their parents are both deaf, or perhaps one of them is.
Fifi	Alim, have you had similar experiences? Or Matt?
Alim	I was watching that, really, in the programme and I really empathised with the story of being a CODA. On screen I was really, really happy to see it. There's lots of moments where I had empathy with the trauma that Pierce experienced, and also those experiences, you know, and I really agreed with it, absolutely.
Fifi	Chandrika, what did you think?

Chandrika	I would say my experience was quite different. My mum is deaf but also blind, so there are communication methods that differ. She uses hands-on BSL, for example. So the deaf community themselves see her as a new person, I suppose. So I think my experience is probably different.
Fifi	What about school, did you feel that you fit in? Did you feel that you were treated differently?
Chandrika	Well, going to school, you know, all of my friends were actually really keen and really enthusiastic. They wanted to learn about sign language; they wanted to know what it was, what it was like. I used to get teased from time to time, and they would use the standard kind of known swearing signs, as they saw them, but yes, I think they treated me as a normal child.
Fifi	Yes, you're right, the rude sign request is very common, isn't it? Pierce talked about identity during the programme, you know, fitting into both the hearing world and the deaf world – “where do I fit”? Did you have that same similar identity crisis, like, “who am I”?
Matt	Yeah, growing up I didn't know anything different, but then when I was 16 or 17, then ... I mean obviously I went to football at school and the school was hearing, so I was involved in that, but I was also involved in the Deaf Club; in the Walking Club and the Deaf Youth Club. So the hearing world... I was attracted to it, but then I actually came back to the deaf world because I felt like I didn't fit in properly. It just... there was something in the hearing world, but when I came back to the deaf world I was comfortable. And I felt that that was home. It's hard to articulate. I mean, identity is a massive topic, and growing up I certainly felt some, you know, when I was teased, I felt some discomfort, but I definitely didn't put it all together.
Fifi	Alim, was there a theme there?
Alim	Identity is such a complex thing. There are very rare ... it's rare to see CODA role models out there, you know, in society, or in the media. It's very rare, so to meet those people who have gone through those shared experiences, you know. It was confusing growing up initially. Now I'm a little bit older. I'm involved in the hearing community somewhat, but, you know, my humour, my mannerisms are deaf, you know, sometimes I think something's really funny and they won't. And the same thing happens in the deaf community; if I find something really funny it could be from the hearing world. So there is that element of not being able to fit in entirely, but I have to say, now that I'm an adult, I do feel like I can fit in both worlds with no issues and adapt. The identity problem I'm having now is when worlds collide, almost, whether that's birthdays or occasions or events, I have to be quite mindful of who I invite, whether they can sign or not, whether I want to be interpreting all night, so that's where identity comes into it.
Fifi	And Chandu, do you feel ... did you feel different? I mean when you were little, for example, did you kind of notice any differences with your peers?
Chandrika	I suppose, growing up, I did have times when I felt different to other children. Sometimes they'd all just be talking and talking and I think... sometimes, usually in the playground, you have parents who stand outside to pick up their children and all the parents talk to each other, or the children are talking to each other, and my mum would just be waiting there

	patiently. And then I'd run over and greet her, and then everyone would kind of look, because obviously we're signing and yeah, I kind of wish that everyone ... if everyone knew sign language, there wouldn't have been that kind of spectator sport, if you like.
Fifi	I felt the same when I went to school for pick up. I'd just, you know, I'd just grab them and hurry off. I totally know how that feels. So, the sign CODA is like this (<i>demonstrates</i>). Should we have another sign, or do you think it should be fingerspelt? How was it even created?
Matt	I have no idea. I don't know who invented that, who came up with the sign in this way. I mean, 'Deaf heart' is kind of a literal translation. I'm not sure about that – I don't agree that all CODAs have the same experiences and all fit into the Deaf world in the way that we're talking about. Some, for example, grow up with deaf parents who might speak, rather than sign. They don't sign themselves. So, I don't know if that's the right sign. I mean, I didn't find out about the term 'CODA' until I was an adult. As a child, I was never aware of it. Someone said to me "are you a CODA?" And I thought, "CODA, what's that"? And then there's this label being applied to me and I'm quite ambivalent about it. I don't know if I agree or don't agree. I don't like labels anyway, I suppose.
Fifi	Yeah, CODA, hmm. Did you ever feel, looking back, you know, your parents or children of deaf adults were relied upon, you know, perhaps for phone calls or doctors' appointments, etc, back then? Do you think it's different now that we've got technological access with text messaging, remote interpreting services and emails?. Do you think that parents are less reliant on their children now, or do you think that still exists? Chandrika?
Chandrika	It depends on the situation and different cultures, as well there are different views within different cultures. My background is Indian, so there's not much independence encouraged, you know; you tend to culturally rely on family members and rely on children. So, my family actually speak Tamil and I'll go along with my grandmother to her doctor's appointment, to her dentist appointment. I make sure that I'm there and I will interpret for her, so we're very much kind of ... we work together in that sense. I just think it's brilliant actually, growing up now is to empower people and to say ... encourage them to be independent and to build up their self-confidence. I think that's great, so I really like to see that now, which is different from when I was growing up.
Fifi	Alim?
Alim	That's a really interesting point and I absolutely agree with everything you say. My background is Indian as well, a different part, but yes, I mean the culture is very much family orientated. In terms of signing, my parents' generation wasn't allowed to sign and then English wasn't learnt, so they relied on me. But, do I agree that CODAs should be interpreting for their parents? No, of course not. But, and a lot of trauma has resulted from that reliance and having to interpret. That's not my parents' fault; that's the government, the medical institutions, not having access to interpreters. But – and a big but here - one element to pick out from that is ... one thing I've noticed is having a CODA take on a sort of Deaf Relay role can add a really rich, important layer.. You know, my mum recently went to the hospital and, you know, I went with her, I took the time off, you know, I met the interpreter that was there ... it was an absolutely brilliant

	<p>interpreter. Interpreted to such a high level. I then ... my mum looked at me and then asked what was said. It's a habit, yes, but she also had a bit of a struggle with their style.</p> <p>And my Dad comes from an Indian background so some interpreters don't understand him. So there are very useful elements of having that CODA experience but I think, you know, potentially there should be a CODA there with the interpreter to support, but relying on the CODA primarily is dangerous.</p>
Fifi	Matt, do you have a different view?
Matt	<p>I appreciate what you're saying, Alim. But, in my experience I've certainly campaigned and fought for interpreters to be booked, and then I went with him to support; my role was to support my father. So, for example, when he was having cancer treatment, I was there to support him, but they never would book an interpreter so I had to fight and ask them for that.</p> <p>But the system is not designed for deaf people; it's not designed to be accessible. They simply don't think about the need to involve deaf people in building these structures in NHS processes. And so, as a CODA, you go with them, and then you get put upon to become the interpreter. I'm not saying, oh, pity me, pity poor CODAs. Actually, it's about the deaf person and their rights, their right to privacy. You know, they don't want to have their child giving them all the information in a medical context, or controlling the information that they get given and thinking about who gives the family the information after the appointment. You know, it's the patient's right to share that; the deaf person's right, not that of the CODA who's there as part of the family.</p> <p>If they were just an interpreter, rather than being there as a CODA interpreter as part of the family, they wouldn't have the power to share that information. So, it's about protecting... I think it's about being able to be the family they're supporting afterwards. And of course, my other point is that then as a CODA interpreter, you are imposed on and things do get stuck in your mind, and I have a massive regret that I was forced into that situation out of my control. And it's something I can never forget.</p>
Fifi	So, that's interesting... how long ago was it with your dad?
Matt	12 years.
Fifi	12 years. And you're right, we should think things have improved since then, but they haven't. Take what happened in Sheffield recently, with Ronnie Kelly and his daughter, who had to give him bad news. They should have learned and improved in those 12 years. The system has failed deaf people, it's failed us, and how do we... advocate ourselves, how do we get people to wake up, you know. Do you think this is going to continue forever?
Alim	<p>I absolutely agree with Matt's comments. I really hate the sympathy and the pity that some CODAs could receive but, you know, this problem has been occurring for a very long time and I don't know how change could be enacted. There's no real easy answer, but looking back, you know, there's masses of trauma and events that you remember.</p> <p>For example, when I was 12, my dad had some heart surgery, a triple bypass. You know, normally, when someone's in hospital, you go with your family, but I got a tap on the shoulder, "come and see your dad," and I followed as he went down. I was told to count down; "so tell him 10, 9, 8, 7", so okay, I did that, and as I was counting, my father's eyes rolled to the back of his head! What had happened was they'd been putting him under, but they had not informed me that this was occurring, you know. So I was really, really startled, and they just shooed me out of the room. I was like, "mum, he's dead, he's dead", but he</p>

	<p>wasn't, he was alive, he'd just been put under anaesthetic. But I hadn't been informed that was what was happening. I was 12 and I'm now 30, but that invoked such a strong emotion in me, that trauma. That's one of many different occasions.</p> <p>Even recently, my family was involved in a car accident and they let me know, but they hadn't booked an interpreter, so I had to leave work, drive for 2 hours, arrive at the scene and there's a person sitting there. And I was like "oh, what's going on"? And, when I arrived, I had to completely start interpreting, you know, as Matt said, even now, in the 21st Century, it's 2021, this issue has not been resolved. There are still problems.</p>
Fifi	I'm so sorry that you had to go through that when your dad had been put under. I wonder what the medics might have been thinking; they didn't think about you in that scenario, they just dealt with their everyday stuff. They put people under every day and perhaps that's why.
Alim	Absolutely. I mean I don't mind sharing these experiences, you know, know, the trauma. Previously, I've been to therapy and that's when I realised... for example, my maternal grandmother passed away. So I went to the hospital, as you would normally go to the hospital, and the nurse came up to me and said, "oh, please can you interpret" and I was like, OK, and then I had to interpret the news that my grandmother had passed away, and I had to tell my mum, her daughter, you know. And then my mum asked me "has the nurse asked if you're alright?" Oh no, the therapist said to me, "did they ask if you were OK, did anyone ask if I was OK? Has anyone asked the CODA if they're okay?" That's such a rare occasion. They just make the assumption that everything's OK and they forget that it has an emotional impact on that person.
Fifi	<p>Thank you for sharing. They're really personal, those stories.</p> <p>Do you think all CODAs have similar accounts? Should they have therapy? You mentioned therapy, Alim. Do you think therapy is a good thing to help people through? Chandrika, have you had similar experiences?</p>
Chandrika	<p>I think everybody would benefit from therapy; all people do. We all have things that we hide away from the world; we hide them from ourselves, we don't tend to delve into those past experiences and traumas, to really work out why we feel the way we do.</p> <p>For years, I've gone with my mum to hospital appointments and so on, and I remember that they said, "tell your mum that her eyesight is going to deteriorate and in a year's time she's going to be fully blind. She won't be able to see." And I was just relaying this information. And then I obviously started to get emotional my mum was completely devastated, and I was just trying to process this information. I was 12 years old, you know, and I think looking back on it, I shouldn't have been there. I wasn't there as an interpreter. I should have been there as her daughter. I should have been able to provide her with some comfort.</p> <p>And what I do now is I phone and make sure there's an interpreter with hands-on BSL experience, because so often, an interpreter will be there at the appointment, and they'll realise, oh no, they can't provide the hands-on BSL, so then I end up having to take over. About a month ago, I went along and I said, "look, I can support you, don't worry" and a lot of interpreters will say they're not qualified to do hands-on so they can't really do it.</p> <p>So I think, the question about all CODA experiences being the same? No, I don't think they are. I don't think some CODAs are members of the Deaf community. Some people only communicate with their parents; they don't want to learn sign language or they don't want to be involved in the Deaf community. I think there's so many differences.</p>

Fifi	Let's try and lighten the mood, let's think about your funny memories, as CODAs, like unplugging the Hoover, for example! Any kind of pranks you used to get up to?
Matt	Well I have one which for me, is a lovely memory. When I was walking to school, I could hear my father shouting "Matthew, Matthew!", obviously the way he would shout at me, "Matthew!", with a deaf voice. I would walk back and there was no-one there, and then I realised there was a pigeon going "coo, coo, coo, coo" so every morning when I was walking, I could never tell if it was my father or a pigeon cooing, because it had the same sound when he said my name. My father would regularly tease me about that. And then he would say "Mattheeeeeew!"
Fifi	That's really funny.
Matt	Hold on. Sorry, just one more thing I'd like to tell you about! So, I was the only hearing child in my family; my brother, sister and parents are all deaf. I'd be upstairs in my bedroom and I'd hear my father or mother shout "Matthew, Matthew!" so then I'd have to come down and they'd go "can you go and get your brother?", and then I'd have to go and get my brother who's deaf! Or it would be, "can you go and get your sister?". From childhood they used me, and I got used to it! Hearing privilege? I'm not so sure there!
Fifi	Alim, you were going to say something.
Alim	Same here!
Chandrika	I think mine was quite similar. So obviously you can see that, you know, my name is quite long, so that wasn't very easy for my mum, she could never quite get it right, and my cousins tried to teach her! But now, I've shortened it to Chandu! She never gave me a sign name, my mum never gave me one. But now, I've told her, from interpreting in the Deaf community they've given me this sign name, and she said "oh, okay", so now it's always "Chandu, Chandu", so that's a change.
Alim	Exactly the same, as Matt was saying, you know, they would always shout "Alim!" and then I'd have to go over, and it'd be, "oh, can you do this?" because they couldn't be bothered! But to turn that on its head, I've got so many different stories, but on this particular occasion I was with my little sister, our age is quite similar. We always argued, you know, as you do with younger siblings. So, I would say the F word, you know, a rude word, for example. And my mum would always look over and tell me off! I never knew how she'd know! The only time she'd turn around was if I said a swear word – if I was arguing or fighting she wouldn't look, but as soon as I said that swear word she'd be on it, and I'd think, "how?!" I tried to work that out for so many years, and when I finally got to 18, I asked my mum how she knew I was swearing behind her! She told me that in the kitchen, she could look at the window, which mirrored what was behind her! I thought, all those years she kept that to herself! She was so strong in keeping that to herself.
Fifi	Another question. So, with a CODA being a child with deaf parents, the Deaf community is very small... they'd suddenly hear your news, wouldn't they, the news of any family will travel around the Deaf community! Did you ever wish you had hearing parents because everyone knew what you were doing all the time?!

Matt	Yes, my partner's a CODA. She's got a family of six generations Deaf. Whenever she gets any information, she only has to tell her father, and almost immediately, the information spreads throughout the Deaf community! So she always finds out things have been passed through the family.
Fifi	And have you met other CODAs in your lifetimes, you know, where you just felt the similarity was vast. I mean there are gatherings, aren't there, CODA gatherings? I don't know if you can provide some advice to people that might be watching. Perhaps they've grown up as a CODA and don't know how to contact other CODAs. Are there any organisations or networks?
Alim	Growing up I rarely met CODAs. Just my brothers and my sisters, that's the relationship I had. And it wasn't until I was about ... I would have been about 18, 19 years old... that was through Deafinitely Theatre, throughout the theatre world, that's when I started meeting other CODAs, but prior to that, not much. You know, my parents aren't involved in the Deaf community at all, they're quite a private family, but ... sorry, what was the question again?
Fifi	Organisations for signposting... how could you, if you are a child ...
Alim	Oh yes, absolutely. I, you know, I think that information is so valuable. I wish someone had told me about CODA camps. There is a CODA camp out there, that is separate from CODA International. A CODA camp, I think, is absolutely vital for that network between children who have deaf parents. I wish that I was told back then, whether that was through education or other people. Looking back, I wish I was told, but it was a different time.
Fifi	And Chandrika, do you have any knowledge about networks?
Chandrika	I would probably say similar to Alim. I have three cousins that I grew up very close with, and you know, there are a lot of people that I didn't meet, I've never really met another CODA. I'd never heard the term until I became an interpreter. A lot of people asked, "are you a CODA, are you a CODA?" Then, I said, oh, okay, there must be quite a lot of CODAs! There was one interpreter who's really nice actually; he said I could join their WhatsApp group, and sometimes we set up holidays and social events and things like that. I was really surprised, but yeah so I joined that group and it's lovely. We have loads of conversations.
Fifi	Audience members – you can start typing your questions now!
Chandrika	Yeah, absolutely, it was something that had never occurred to me, to be honest. It's gone really quiet on the WhatsApp group; I'm not really sure why it's just suddenly stopped.
Fifi	So, audience – you can start posting your questions now. I have a question from Nadia; she's asking "do you naturally say mother father deaf or CODA?" What's your natural delivery?
Matt	If I meet somebody for the first time I would never say I'm a CODA in this way. If someone asked where I'm from, I might say my parents are deaf, my mother and father were deaf. I suppose ... in a way, I don't know where this CODA, the child of deaf adults has come from, but yeah.
Fifi	It's interesting, isn't it, I've noticed that a lot of CODAs do become interpreters, why is that?

Alim	I think, empathy is a real key factor when being in an interpreter, that's my personal view, I think CODAs naturally have that. Growing up, they see the discrimination, they see, and they're having to support, and having to emphasise is really important. You know, but then again, am I saying all CODAs are suitable to become interpreters? No, but when CODAs are becoming interpreters, empathy is a real key factor.
Fifi	Chandrika, do you agree? Matt?
Matt	I used to work as a police officer and a detective and then my father became ill and I had to support my father. And it was after my father died that I realised that I had no qualifications in interpreting or sign language, so I thought I'd do Level 3, they told me I could go for that and I did Level 6, I went for that. And I thought, if I do Level 6 in BSL, would that be enough? But actually I started to get the bug because from the age of 20 to ... well, when I say I was involved with my family, I wasn't so involved in the wider Deaf community. And then after my father died, something in me just made me want to get back into the Deaf community. So I met other interpreters, went to university, and qualified and I realised – why am I in the police force? I'm not enjoying myself. So I left and moved into interpreting. And now I feel happy, I feel like a lucky person. There is a natural attraction for me, there's just something about that, about being back in this community.
Fifi	I'm sure your father's watching and very pleased that you're back in the community. Chandu?
Chandrika	Well as for my three cousins, one became a doctor, one became a vet, one is a game designer and I became an interpreter. So we're all CODAs but we're all completely different in terms of the employment that we sought, but yeah, I think naturally, I've always loved BSL. I've always been immensely attracted to it as a language and I never really understood the depth of the language. It was only when I started looking at other deaf people and other hearing presenters I thought, oh, actually, you know what, I want to become an interpreter, this is beautiful. And just seeing, you know, other people's cultures, their experiences and things that I've never known growing up. It's just really interesting. I don't know; I'm just really, really attracted to it.
Fifi	That's nice. We've got another question from our audience. They're wondering if any of you have met any CODAs who have grown up with deaf parents who don't use BSL? Alim?
Alim	Yes, so many, so that goes back to my point - are all CODAs suitable to be interpreters? No. I'm sure my brother won't mind me mentioning that he doesn't sign. He grew up not being able to sign fluently. I've met other CODAs who don't sign, you know, because their parents communicate orally. So, as a whole, CODAs vary wildly with regard to language. For example, it could be influenced by whether your parents are grassroots deaf or otherwise. My parents are grassroots and I sign. My brother does not. You know, he gestures. So, it does vary.
Fifi	If I can just jump in. Who's oldest, you or your brother?
Alim	Him.
Fifi	Oh, interesting. It does tend to fall on the first born, I mean there is a trend, but it's the other way around for you.

Alim	I think, you know, he grew up taking on those responsibilities until he was about 16 and then that got handed over to me when I was 6. My sister is deaf so my sister's very much supportive, almost as a second mum. She taught me ASL; she lives in Canada, and that was brilliant. So I think, you know, my parents and my sister's relationship...that's why I learned to sign.
Fifi	So Matt, what about you, have you met CODAs that don't sign and have parents who don't sign?
Matt	Yeah. When I was growing up, my best friend was a girl who was in the Deaf Club. My brother is deaf, but they all thought I was deaf because I would sign and my brother didn't sign, even though he was deaf. I really struck a relationship up with this girl and her brother was hearing and never signed, had no interest in it. But, although they were similar ages, he just gave the responsibility to his sister to use sign language in the family. I think I meet most CODAs through work as an interpreter or friends. So, yeah, so most of the ones I know now can sign.
Fifi	Chandrika, yours are fairly similar?
Chandrika	Yes, quite similar.
Fifi	So another audience question: When you are using BSL or using spoken English, which language do you find it easier to express your emotions through? Is it easier in BSL or in spoken English, Chandu?
Chandrika	That's an interesting question. When I'm communicating with my mum, and we're using hands-on BSL, she can feel my emotions, you know, and I'm sure, that's just really interesting. She can just feel it from me. She knows whether I'm angry, or whether I'm happy, just from touching me. So, she'll just ask me "what's wrong, what's happened?" And that's just through touch. It's so amazing that that's even possible, you know, and I think naturally I'm quite expressive. I think people can really tell if I'm upset because maybe my voice will be a little bit more ... it might break. So yes, I think it's easy to tell.
Fifi	Interesting, what about you guys? What about Alim, Matt?
Alim	That's really interesting. I'm not a very emotional person, I've got quite a cold heart. When I use spoken English, I tend to get quite emotive, but when I'm signing, not so much. You know, that's where therapy is useful, as I said earlier, when I'm signing, I have to just be ready to work, whether that's interpreting or supporting my parents, I've got no time to cry, no time for emotions, no time to show my emotions while interpreting. You have to interpret, get the job done and then leave, and then you can bear the brunt of those emotions. So when I'm signing I do find it hard to show emotion, yeah.
Fifi	Matt?
Matt	Yes, I'm a really emotional person, anyway. So through the police training, however, I mean, it's quite funny ... if something really dramatic happens, let's say I was driving home, I could just switch off after a day with the police. You know, as with Alim, I can be quite cold. Now as I've got older and I've got my own kids, through my own life experiences, my father's died, actually, I've discovered that I've changed, I'm more in contact with my emotions. Stupid things can make me tearful, you know, I'm always getting teased, my

	brother will say, are you alright now? I just well up all the time. I'm trying to think, sign language or speaking, I actually think that for me I'm as expressive emotionally in both.
Fifi	So we have another question, from Adrian. How would you describe your identity? Is your identity framed by your audiological status, your hearing, or your language, or something different? So is it led by what you hear or the languages you use or something different? Am I making sense?
Matt	I think this a topic we've discussed earlier. Last year... when we were talking about identity, I think a lot of your identity comes from childhood influences. So if you have parents, in my case my parents were very deaf, and that was obviously a core part of my identity. I was part of deaf rallies, I was in the deaf world, absolutely. Now my identity is, I've clearly had hearing privilege, but the influences, the cultural influences, I think they're probably deaf. My body language, my experiences, all of that that's under the surface. Now of course, I am hearing, that's how I'm labelled, you know. But I think that topic can also be political, and if people say to you "you're hearing, that's it, you can't be deaf as well." I really ... I don't have a Deaf identity, but culturally there is something in me, in the same way that both Alim and Chandrika have said, that is of the Deaf community. I feel more comfortable with deaf people, rather than in the hearing world sometimes. There's something about it not being quite right. I don't quite fit with the hearing world in a way that I do fit with deaf people and the Deaf community.
Fifi	Chandu, is it different for you because your mum's deafblind? So I'm going to repeat the same question for you; can you answer it?
Chandrika	Well, I think, I mean my mum's quite well-known in the Deaf community. So, when I'm interpreting, or I'm doing something work related. You know, I always get "oh you're Raji's daughter aren't you, you must be?", and then I'm like, "oh, yes, I am, yes". I kind of want to separate that and say "no, no, no, I'm Chandu, I'm an interpreter. In this case, in this scenario, I'm not her daughter." And I think that can be quite difficult to differentiate, you know, it's like, what do they know about me what do they know about my background, you know, sometimes you kind of second guess yourself. I'm not embarrassed about my background at all, but sometimes it's, I want to keep my work life separate to my personal life. Yes, I'm my mum's daughter, but I'm also Chandu and that can be quite difficult.
Fifi	So, outside work, if you're at home, how do you base your identity? Is it, is it language? No, you're just Chandu...
Chandrika	Yes, I'm just Chandu.
Alim	I absolutely agree with Matt, I think labels are quite helpful. I don't much like them. When I grew up, I've got that Asian Muslim background which really influenced me, I've got those deaf influences, there are so many things, so many factors that form your identity. But putting that to one side, you know, growing up, whether that's language or culture, I think it really stems back to having deaf parents. I never say the word CODA really. I never say I'm a CODA. I never say I'm a signer. No, just, my parents are deaf. But going back to what Matt has said, you know, growing up, I didn't realise that I had that hearing privilege, I had that control, you know. It is a very political area as such, but being a CODA is an identity, it is a culture. Yes, you have that language, it's very unique. But still, you have that hearing privilege. We have to band together and take our CODA hats off and say, "right, I can hear, therefore I have privileges as a result." We have to try and empathise,

	look back and try and build and empower deaf people, and really put them at the forefront. You know, it shouldn't be CODAs in front of deaf people here, we need to take that privilege, take the clout away from us, and empower them.
Fifi	That's a really valid point. We've got another question from the audience – Megan. Do you feel that being CODAs has made you grow up faster, like you're more mature than perhaps other people in your age group? Are your behaviours different? Chandu?
Alim	Definitely.
Matt	Absolutely.
Chandrika	Definitely, you know, I think growing up, everyone was always like "oh you're so mature," and I just realised I was quite different from my friends. I would always get asked how old I was, you know, for example now when I say I'm 24, people are always really surprised. And I think, is it... do I look old or is it my behaviour?!
Fifi	You're beautiful and young-looking for your age.
Alim	Sorry, what's the question again? I forgot!
Fifi	As a CODA, do you feel you grew up faster than your friends? Did you grow up fast?
Matt	I don't think it's, it's always the case, you know, certainly there was teasing at school which I was never involved in. I don't know if that's linked to my CODA identity or whether my parents just taught me well, I don't know. Go on...
Fifi	I think it means like, of course you had those experiences where you had probably very adult conversations, doing phone calls or got involved with very adult scenarios, interpreting for your parents. So you knew more than your hearing peers, I guess.
Chandrika	Well, perhaps, I think being involved in the deaf community, you learn adult things a lot quicker, I think, because you know, as CODA children we watch, we watch all these conversations, we learn all this information, and yes and I think that's where it came from. Oh sorry, I think my internet froze then. Where did I stop?
Fifi	Maybe at "because"...
Chandrika	Ah yes, that probably was why we seem to be perceived as being mature than our peers?
Fifi	But then why don't hearing children see that from their hearing parents, are they just oblivious to their parents? It seems that hearing children with Deaf parents pay more attention to them those with hearing parents, do you think? Matt, Alim?
Alim	The thing that I have noticed is yes growing up quick absolutely happens, I found it really hard to fit in at school. And once I grew up, I realised that I could do these things - if you need a loan; if you need a mortgage; if you need to go to the hospital and explain what is occurring with your heart - I can handle all these things. I had the knowledge of them.

	<p>But when I got to about 20 years old and started socialising, I found socialising a real struggle. Maybe it's a hearing thing and the hearing world, you know? In the Deaf world, it was absolutely fine. I really struggled to adapt my behaviour to fit in socially. I could control situations; I could make phone calls and I could run a business, but in social situations I really struggled, you know. Now I'm 30, I'm starting to feel comfortable in both. I think there's two different worlds. You can't learn this one but the skills I learned growing up, you absolutely can.</p>
Fifi	So, is that your experience, or...
Alim	No, as you say, there are lots of different CODAs from very different situations; not one of them would be comfortable making phone calls. Some people will just defer that to their parents, so I absolutely believe that there is.
Fifi	What would you want to add, Matt?
Matt	<p>When I look at my daughters, I've got one at 15, one at 12, and one at 2. With the 15-year-old and the 12-year-old, when I think about what I could do when I was their age, I could iron, I could use the washing machine, I cooked, I could make phone calls, I was really confident on the phone sorting out bills. I could phone anyone, I could talk to adults, no problems at all. My children... could they call for me? Even if I asked, no, no, they don't want to. I'll say "it's easy, you can do it", but they actually don't want to, so that's very different from me in that way.</p> <p>When I think back, that absolutely is linked perhaps to what my father taught me; he taught me to be more independent. And now my daughter always says the most important thing is that you have to be independent, you know, don't rely on somebody else. I always try to tell my daughters this. As an adult, you must be independent, and that's from my experience. That's what I think, and my partner's very similar. She has that same sense of independence, of being able to do things.</p> <p>Now I think society, with social media influences, I think people expect an easy life. If I was thinking back, things weren't like this now when I was 17, you know, thinking, "oh, will I have a house by 20?" Well it's ridiculous. In the real world, when you get those real world experiences as a CODA, you understand things better and you absolutely understand earlier, I think, as a CODA.</p>
Fifi	So we've got another question from our audience, let me just have a look. The questions are amazing, we've got 10 minutes left, so do please keep them coming. Is there anything you think is important to bring up, a message or statement? And if you guys want to say anything in the last few minutes...?
Matt	I think from the conversation we've been having, we've been talking about trauma and Alim was talking about counselling. I think also, with my father's death two or three years later, someone contacted me and said do you want to write a story about that? And I had, I was really in two minds, because I didn't want to talk about my family in that way, it would affect my brother and sister, I didn't want to kind of, I don't know, take the skeletons out of the closet, in a way. But actually this was about just sharing your story and making sure that if your story influenced, say one other person, to think, actually, when I go to hospital I'm really going to be more assertive and ensure that my parents get an interpreter. You know, the system is not going to change soon. The BSL Act might improve things if that gets enforced. But parliament, always the same. Well, you've got the Equality Act haven't you? You know that's good enough, surely? Well, actually, we need to educate and share and

	<p>support people. And I don't mean in a patronising way or pitying way to raise people up to be assertive for themselves.</p>
Fifi	<p>We have to get the message out there to the right people, to show the right people what we're talking about. I'm thinking about time now, so very quickly Alim, I want to make sure everyone has a chance to put their questions to you guys.</p>
Alim	<p>Yes, I absolutely agree with Matt, but we also need to change the culture inside the Deaf community, you know for many years, many deaf people have said well, hearing people know best here, hearing people know best. We need to change that; deaf people can do things. Deaf can do. You know, it doesn't matter if you're deaf, you can do it.</p>
Fifi	<p>I think that's an ingrained habit that goes back to the days of the missionaries, who helped deaf people.</p>
Alim	<p>Of course, absolutely, absolutely. But that's what we need to change in line with the government's guidelines and the BSL Act. That's what we need to change in line with that.</p>
Fifi	<p>Absolutely. We do have another question from Abigail – do you think organisations such as CODA UK and Eire/International should be more proactive in terms of campaigning with deaf organisations to ensure access for deaf people? Is it that we should be more aligned to campaigns or do you think we are very segregated?</p>
Matt	<p>I have nothing to say on that.</p>
Fifi	<p>Is it too controversial to answer?</p>
Matt	<p>I know that deaf organisations have already a hard time with trying to, you know, if you're thinking about the BDA and some of the disappointments recently where they should ... they are organisations, but should be more networks, working more together with a shared aim. It seems that all of these organisations focus on their individual projects and they're precious about this and that's more important than openly working together? I think if we all work together, all these organisations work together, deaf organisations work together, we would achieve so much more. It just becomes too political, I think. Alim?</p>
Alim	<p>I absolutely agree. I think we all need to work together, but to put it bluntly and honestly, whether that's deaf companies or CODA International or in the UK, they're very, very segregated. I've got so many things I disagree with, but I feel like there is a real divide there in the communities. You know, I think we're all so similar. There is no need to be so divided and accusative, but I think there needs to be that more shared aim, as you said, to really complete that shared goal because we're all going on our own paths and we're all trying to achieve the same thing, but going about it different ways.</p>
Fifi	<p>And Chandu?</p>
Chandrika	<p>I think communities, you know, they don't live by themselves. Deaf people might have hearing children, deaf people have deaf children, why are these organisations working separately? You know, why do you have this organization specifically for these people? Actually, what we should do is all organisations could band together, we would have a bigger community, and we would be able to generate much more noise.</p>

Fifi	I totally agree. I'm much in agreement, I think, I mean, it's a very controversial subject, and hopefully we can reach a resolution through that collaboration. I'm just wondering if you guys here have any advice for deaf people with hearing children. What advice would you give to parents, having had your experiences? I'll give you an example, let me help you. At dinner time, everything, everybody's around the table and you get that bang on the table, "I can't understand what you're saying." How do you encourage more use of sign language or, you know, things along that line, Matt?
Matt	Well it's always been there. I think if something happens, you just try and talk about it. My father was fantastic and could just be open about any topic and discuss it, and I think I was incredibly lucky growing up with a father like that. Having deaf parents, having that heritage. I think it's just so important to be open and be able to talk about things. And I think as a CODA, what I noticed most is that you know, CODAs don't want to upset their parents, they want to keep things to themselves. But actually, parents know when there's something wrong with their kids. So I think for children, just try and be open and talk to your parents.
Fifi	Alim?
Alim	Yes, I absolutely agree. I think if you're thinking whether your child's OK, even if he's absolutely fine, it's always worth checking and always worth asking if they're OK. "Are you OK?" That's such a small question. You know, there have been times at school where I've been teased over my mum's voice, I've been in fights, I've had a bloody nose, and when I've got home, they've said "oh what's happened?" and I would make up an excuse. I would not talk about it because you want to protect your parents. If they'd asked me, you know, what's wrong, sit down and tell me what's wrong, it would have been really interesting to have had that dialogue at that time. I think asking your child if they're OK and encouraging that dialogue is important.
Fifi	Chandu?
Chandrika	I wish when I was growing up that I knew that I could ask for an interpreter. I wish I knew that. So, for example, at parents' evenings at school, I didn't know that that was something I could actually ask for, I thought it was on me to do that, to provide that service. Whether it was my grandfather or, you know, a hearing person in my family, I'd try to get them along to my parents evening. And actually, it should have been someone going with my mum, and there should have been an interpreter. So what I would say is – make sure your children know they can ask for an interpreter, they can fight for an interpreter, whether it's at their school or another organisation, and I wish that my mum had known that too. It was her right to have that knowledge and accessibility to her daughter's education. So I really wish that was something that I had known, growing up.
Fifi	So that's advice for deaf parents. You know, I mean you've covered it, Chandu. And what would you say to a child, a young CODA child? What would you say to the younger version of you? What would you say to yourself, if you could say anything to your younger self?
Matt	I think that as a CODA, you might struggle when you grow up. But if I think about the 20 years I spent outside of the deaf community when I'd had enough of that... It took my father being ill, and then dying. And then when I look back, I realise how lucky I was with my upbringing, how blessed I was to have sign language, to have the rich cultures that were shared with me. I've been lucky. So if you're a younger CODA, and you're struggling, one

	day you'll look back and you will definitely realise the power of what you've gained from the experience.
Alim	I absolutely agree, that's lovely. You know, CODAs will absolutely encounter an identity issue with not fitting in. But I think for me to talk to my younger self, I would say, be yourself. You know, the life experience you're gaining is invaluable. Yes, you will experience trauma. But there's such a richness in the experiences that you gain, and you can't buy that. You know, it's a real element to add to your soul there. And the other thing I would say is, I'd recommend to CODAs: please think about yourself, work on yourself with the issues that you're having; for example, I've tried to work on my saviour complex over time. You're going to struggle; I would say, be yourself, and you will be absolutely OK.
Fifi	Do you have anything to add, Chandu?
Chandrika	I would say, CODAs need to embrace their good fortune, being part of this community. There's so much that we've learned that we can't really articulate, from those who are in that community and that experience, really understand. Actually, when you're young, you're kind of just like, "oh, I don't want to do this, I wish I had this, I wish I had that." But actually, when you grow up, you really understand the value of your experience.
Fifi	That's so right. My advice is – if you're a young CODA put your music up as high as you can and enjoy the moment because you're really, really lucky. Just make sure you don't get in trouble!
Matt	They know, they can feel those vibrations. And you'll get the Council coming and fining you for noise pollution, so that actually happens!
Fifi	Thank you to everyone for participating in this amazing discussion. I'm sure we could talk about this for hours on end; we could go on and on until the cows come home, but we do have to stop, time is against us. Thank you very much to the audience for watching. I hope you've enjoyed tonight's live stream. Don't forget to watch Getting Personal with Pierce Starre and Deepa. It's on the BSL Zone website and app at the moment. Give it a watch. Thank you and good night, and most importantly, stay safe.
All	Goodbye!