

I Hear You, I See You

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Abstract

(The title of this post comes from an episode from Season Two of NBC's *Parenthood*;

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(The title of this post comes from [an episode from Season Two](#) of NBC's *Parenthood*; Zeke, the patriarch, learns in marriage counseling that he must listen to his wife and let her know he is listening.)

I've been toying with several ideas for blog posts all this month—and considering that this is my last post for a while, I wanted to go out with a bang. (I'll still be posting, just not every month, so stay tuned for [our regular contributors](#) who will be filling in for me.) In the wake of Mother's Day, and since this was my first Mother's Day, I decided to write about something a little more personal: my daughter and sound, and my decision to record her during this first year of life.



Since she was in the womb I've recorded Miss E's sounds. I've [posted before](#) about my experience listening to her heartbeat at every obstetrician appointment. Late in my pregnancy I managed to record her heartbeat. I still play it and replay it in amazement; those beats were a sign of the life growing inside of me. I felt like I was eavesdropping on her every time we tuned in. It was sonic peeking. After she was born, I wanted to continue recording the sounds she made because I wanted to have recordings as well as pictures for her when she grew up.

For the past eleven months I've recorded my daughter's sounds at different stages with my iPhone (as I've mentioned in my latest [KC post](#), my iPhone is my preferred recording device if only because it is always within reach). I record when I remember, or when she adds a new sound to her repertoire. However, I try to record her once a month. The same way that she has gone from not moving at all to crawling all over our apartment, she has gone from not making any sounds to babbling, squeeling, and laughing. The sounds she makes are an indication of development, but they are also a sign of her awareness of the world around her.

As a first-time mom, I expected a lot of things early on. I didn't understand why she held her fists closed for the first few weeks or why she didn't follow me around the room. It almost felt like she was ignoring me. The same thing happened with her sounds. The fact that she didn't respond to my words with sounds worried me. I always wondered if she was sad! And it's no wonder: all she would do was cry. Of course, I realized soon after that her crying was her only way of

communicating with the world. One of my first recordings of Miss E is of her shrill crying, and it still makes my chest tighten up when I hear it.

My second recording is of her at three months. By this point the cries have morphed into more of a grunt. As I typed this post I listened to my recordings, and it's remarkable how inarticulate she sounds compared to what she sounds like now. But back then, I was excited that she was making more sounds other than crying. Indeed, the fact that she wasn't always crying was a relief. These new sounds, to me, were her attempt at trying to communicate, or rather discovering ways to communicate. It's almost as if she had discovered that she had a voice. The silences talked as much as the sounds, for at this stage she spends more time awake (and more time awake without crying).

As Miss E has grown throughout this first year, her sounds have started to vary. Very much like a language, she has different registers, different sounds depending on what she wants to say. Whereas before she would only give me a smile when she woke up, now she provides me with a running commentary on her dreams and her giraffe while I change her diaper. Even her giggles developed different registers. She had different kinds of giggles! Now she makes sounds on her own, not as a response to something I had done but because there is something she wants to respond to. I read in her babbles the beginning of her path to independence. It's a long way until she moves out of our household, but the fact that she wants to talk to other people or talk about what she wants, and not in response to what I am saying or doing is amazing. It's also a little sad, for it's also an indication of her willingness to move on to other things.

We tend to forget that during that first year babies have little interest in interacting with people outside of their nuclear family. They stare at strangers or shy away. But the moment they start talking to themselves or their toys, you are no longer the center of their world. And it's a bone-chilling thought.

Recording her sounds is important to me just as much as taking pictures. (I don't take video of her mostly because we didn't have any way to do that until recently when I updated my phone to an iPhone 4). I wanted her to have visuals as well as audio, and even though video recordings could do just as well, the effect of just listening to sounds and being able to focus on that is an interesting (if jarring) experience. Those sound recordings trigger memories just as vividly as pictures do, or even more so than pictures. I hope to keep these recordings until she is older so that she can see herself as well as hear herself when she was just a little girl. I want to know that "I hear you, I see you," that hearing is just as relevant as seeing.

Bonus tracks: Here's Miss E at several stages in the last year.

[Miss E at 3 months \(trying to get Mommy's attention\)](#)

[Miss E at 6 months \(syllables and bathtime\)](#)

[Miss E at 10 months \(banging and making music\)](#)



