

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR HEARING LOSS

"When someone in the family has hearing loss, the entire family has a hearing problem." -Mark Ross, Ph.D.

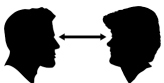
Sometimes, **even with** hearing aids and/or assistive listening devices, gaps in communication can exist. **Communication is a two-way street**, where both the listener with the hearing loss and their communication partner, can contribute to reducing breakdowns that arise during a conversation.

Below are some communication strategies for both the listener and the communication partner that can maximize successful conversational experiences:



1. GAIN ATTENTION

- Gain the listener's attention **before** you begin talking.
- **Examples:** saying his or her name, or by touching the listener's hand, arm, or shoulder lightly.
- ***This simple gesture will prepare the listener to listen and allow him or her to hear the first part of the conversation.***



2. MAINTAIN EYE CONTACT

- ***Visual communication is very important. Your facial expressions and body language add vital information to the communication.***
- **Examples:** you can "see" a person's anger, frustration, and/or excitement by watching the expression on his or her face.
- Most listeners make use of **lip-reading**, naturally. By lip reading, you can better understand some sounds that are more difficult to hear, especially in difficult listening situations.
- Positioning yourself in **good lighting** whenever possible will help visual communication.



3. HANDS OFF

- When talking, **keep your hands away from your face.**
- Maintain good manners by not speaking with food in your mouth.
- You will produce **clearer speech** and allow the listener to make use of those visual cues.



4. SPEAK NATURALLY

- Speak **distinctly**, but without exaggeration. You do not need to shout. Shouting can distort the words and sounds when speaking.
- Do not mumble or speak too rapidly, as this type of speech is very hard to understand, even for people with normal hearing. **Speak at a normal rate**, not too fast nor too slow.
- **Use pauses** rather than slow speech to give the listener time to process speech.



5. REPHRASE RATHER THAN REPEAT

- *If the listener has difficulty understanding something you said, find a different way of saying it.* If he or she did not understand the words the first time, it's likely he or she may not understand them a second time. So, **try to rephrase** using different words.



6. REDUCE BACKGROUND NOISE

- *Try to reduce background noise when conversing.* Turn off the radio or television. Move to a quiet corner or away from the noise source.
- When going to a restaurant or making dinner reservations, ask for a booth or table away from the kitchen, server stations, bar, or large parties. Having the person with hearing loss sit with their back to the majority of the noise can be helpful as well.
- *Take control of the environment when possible; do not let it control you.*



7. USE ANTICIPATORY STRATEGIES

- Stay up-to-date on current events, read reviews of movies or plays in advance of attending, learn names of conversing partners at the beginning of the conversation, and obtain meeting agendas in advance.
- *A bit of preparation can help you anticipate the topics of conversation, making it easier to converse.*

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