

Hearing Loss and Communication

Whilst a person who has a hearing loss needs to take responsibility for their own part in good communication, there is a great deal that their partners, family, friends, work colleagues and the wider community can do to make communication with a hearing impaired person easier.

- Make sure that you have their attention before speaking to them. Say their name, or touch them on the arm to alert them to the fact that you are speaking.
- If possible, get a little closer to the other person. If you are too far away the person will not be able to see your face clearly. Try not to speak to a hearing-impaired person from another room.
- One of the most important tips is to look at the person whilst you are speaking to them. Maintain eye contact, particularly when you are in a group, so that they know that you are speaking to them.
- Speak a little more slowly than usual, particularly if you are normally a fast speaker, enunciate carefully but don't exaggerate lip movements. Keep your hands away from your mouth.
- You won't need to shout! You may have to speak a little more loudly especially if you have a soft, whispery voice, but not excessively so.
- Gestures can be a great help in giving the other person cues as to what you are saying.
- Higher voices are more difficult to hear than lower. If you have a high voice, you may need to consciously lower it.
- If there is a noisy environment and the person still has difficulty hearing, it may be possible to take them aside to a less noisy area to speak to them.
- If they still don't understand you and you have repeated yourself, rephrase what you want to say. Some words are more difficult to hear than others, or are very similar to others.
- If all else fails write it down.
- If you show willingness and understanding without being patronizing, it will be very helpful to the person and they will feel more confident about talking with you in the future.
- Don't ever say "it doesn't matter" when someone who doesn't hear well asks you to repeat yourself. It is hurtful and isolating to be told this. Even if your original remark was trivial, it is important to the other person to have the chance to hear it.

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