

# Listening in a group

When you are in a group situation that you cannot expect to hear everything that is said - nobody does, but you may be able to improve your ability to hear by trying some of these tactics.

## At Parties

- Avoid noisy areas like the middle of the room near the kitchen and close to music.
- Choose a quiet corner and perhaps a smaller group of people.
- You may be able to find a good speaker to concentrate on.
- Handing around food and drinks help a person to circulate.

## At Meetings

- Have a copy of the agenda first.
- Sit next to someone who is willing to let you use their notes.
- Position yourself to get the best vantage of the chairperson or main speaker at the meeting.
- Let the committee know of your hearing difficulties and inform them how they can help minimise these difficulties.

You may like to try out one of the special aids discussed later.

## At Lectures

Find the best position to sit. Try the second or third row where you get a clear sound, it is good for speech-reading and you can 'tune in' to the visual clues of the people in the row in front.

## At Home

You can control the environment at home by:-

- Using soft furnishings, carpets, heavy curtains and wall hangings to minimise unwanted background noise.
- Placing foam under the table-cloth to reduce 'dining room' noise.
- Carefully positioning family members around the dining table to best suit your hearing loss.
- Have adequate lighting on people's faces.
- Keeping background noise, eg. music, TV, to a minimum when not actually being listened to.
- Educating your family about the problems background noise can cause and how they can assist in 'controlling' it.
- A solid high wall, shrubs and trees in the garden or double glazing of windows if street noise causes difficulty.

## At The Theatre

Find out about the theatre before you go.

- Where are the best positions to sit to get good acoustics and vision?
- Are there any special aids provided for people with hearing difficulties at the particular theatre/cinema?
- At the cinema look for films with subtitles.

## HEARING ASSOCIATION NELSON

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- Find out as much about the plot before you go so you are already 'tuned in'. Small live theatres often have better sound and you are situated closer to the stage for better visual information.
- Be prepared to go several times to a good play if necessary - its worth it. Be prepared to miss out some of the dialogue - 'let go' and enjoy what you can hear.
- Rest before you go - you will probably need to concentrate.

### **Parties at Home**

- Decide the number of people that you can handle comfortably. If you are dining, arrange guests around the table to best suit your hearing loss. Arrange the lighting so you can see clearly.

### **General Tactics**

- Explain your loss to people and tell them how they might help you minimise difficulties. Let them know when they have helped you. People need to be aware of the right things they do. Asking for repeats creatively is one way of achieving these goals. eg. 'I'm interested in what you're saying but I need to see your lips clearly'.
- Don't expect to hear everything. Try initiating conversation - introduce a topic for discussion. Useful questions which require yes or no answers or which require the speaker to repeat only the parts of a conversation that you have missed are worth trying. eg. 'Where did you say you are going after work tomorrow' is often better than a 'what did you say'. Ask for the exact information you require rather than whole statements. As well as using tactics, you may also like to investigate assistive devices.

### **Special Aids**

- Induction loops are sometimes installed in buildings, churches and theatres. If you wear a hearing aid with a telecoil facility ('T' switch) you may get a clearer sound using these loop systems.
- There are other sound systems used in buildings. For example some churches and cinemas have earphones available.
- In a car you might investigate a microphone connected to an earpiece to make conversation easier to follow above the background noise.
- Some modern hearing aids have a facility for a 'hand-held' or 'clip' microphone to be attached - this gives a very clear sound. Perhaps the microphone could be passed from speaker to speaker during conversation.

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