

Communication Strategies

Tips for Individuals with Hearing Loss

Regardless of whether you use a hearing device, living with hearing loss can make communication more challenging, but there are strategies you can employ to enhance your communication experience.



Visual Cues

- Face the speaker
- Observe non-verbal cues
- Turn on the light and open curtains



Conversation Tips

- Inform others about hearing loss
- Ask clarifying questions
- Acknowledge when understood



Modify the Environment

- Move to a quieter area
- Sit or stand with the noise source behind you
- Minimise background noise e.g. TV, music,, etc
- Consider using assistive devices, such as remote mic

Visual Cues

When you don't understand parts of speech, your brain relies on visual information to help fill in those gaps. To give yourself the best chance of understanding speech, it's important to actively focus on the speaker and use the following strategies:

1. Face the speaker

Ask the speaker to face you, not cover their mouth, and maintain eye contact, as clear visibility of facial expressions and lip movements can provide important cues for understanding.

2. Observe non-verbal cues

Pay attention to non-verbal cues such as gestures and facial expressions as they can provide clarifying information. While you shouldn't concentrate only on the speaker's lips, lip-reading can also help you understand what is being said.

3. Ensure the speaker's face is clearly visible

Turn on the light and open the curtains if the room or area is not bright enough. This can aid lip-reading and interpreting visual cues.

Conversation Tips

By communicating to the speaker whether you have heard or missed something, adjustments can be made to improve your understanding during conversations. Don't hesitate to:

1. Inform others about you hearing loss

Don't hesitate to ask them to speak slower, repeat themselves, or provide tips on how else to improve communication with you.

2. Ask clarifying questions

If you don't understand something, ask the speaker to rephrase their statement or ask follow-up questions to gain a better understanding.

3. Acknowledge when you have understood the speaker

Use verbal nods such as "mhmm", "yeah" or "uh-huh" to acknowledge when you've understood the speaker.

Modify the Environment

If you notice that speech is particularly difficult to understand due to background noise, modify the environment so that it is best suited to you. Consider the following:

1. Politely suggest to the people you are talking that you move to a quieter part of the room

2. In a noisy environment, position yourself with your back to the noise source

If it is not possible to walk to a quieter area, sit or stand with the noise source behind you. This will reduce its impact on your hearing.

3. Minimize background noise wherever possible

Lower the volume of the TV or radio and distance yourself from sources of loud noise such as air-conditioners or traffic.

4. In a seminar/lecturer/performance, position yourself in a place that best suits your hearing needs.

5. Reduce the distance between you and the speaker

Speech is difficult to understand over long distances. Minimising the distance between you and your conversation partner will give improve speech understanding. Avoid having conversations from different rooms or when the speaker is not facing you.

6. Consider using assistive technology such as remote microphones or speech-to-text apps to overcome background noise. If your hearing aid has a T-Coil fitted, take advantage of hearing loops available in public spaces like cinemas, places of worship, theatres, train stations, and airports.

Remember, not everyone is familiar with communicating with individuals with hearing loss. If others get frustrated or fail to understand your needs, explain that you have a hearing loss and kindly ask them to employ these communication strategies.

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