

Following these tips when talking with the hard of hearing can help to get the message across. Hearing instruments help, but cannot restore hearing to normal.

- 1. Draw attention to yourself.** Get the hard of hearing person's attention before you begin speaking.
- 2. Get closer.** Important consonants do not travel as far as the stronger vowels, yet carry more information. Getting closer also helps to put your voice above any noise.
- 3. Don't talk too fast.** People who are hard of hearing have less information in words to perform "closure", to fill in the gaps to ascertain meaning, much the same way we do when working a crossword puzzle. Slowing down the rate of speech gives more time to process, and generally improves the articulation of the speaker.
- 4. Pronounce words clearly and naturally.** It is usually not helpful to exaggerate words or to try to speak loudly. A raised voice generally will change intended meaning. When you raise your voice, you may sound angry.
- 5. Whenever possible, face the person you are speaking to.** The hard of hearing person often unconsciously relies on facial cues to aid in getting the message. This is not lip-reading per se, as many of the sounds of speech are produced back in the mouth and are not visible, but we do read certain cues from facial expression.
- 6. Reduce noise.** Move away from noise sources or turn them off if you can. Having a range hood or dishwasher on makes it more difficult to converse in the kitchen.
- 7. Ask** if the hard of hearing person has a "good side", and speak from that side.
- 8. Don't talk with your mouth full.** Eating, chewing, smoking and the like makes our speech more difficult to understand.
- 9. Keep hands and other obstructions away from your face while talking.** Speaking from behind a newspaper, book, hand, or other obstruction can reduce facial cues and blur the sound.
- 10. Get in the light.** Try to make sure that your face is not in shadow and that the hard of hearing person is not faced with glare. Good lighting helps with "speech reading".
- 11. Rephrase.** If it is difficult for the hard of hearing person to understand you, try another way of saying the same thing. Some words are more difficult to understand than others due to phonemic content.
- 12. Reinforce letters and numbers.** "B" as in "Boy" and "V" as in "Victory" can prevent confusion.
- 13. Don't change the subject.** Avoid abrupt changes of subject. Give the hard of hearing person some announcement or clue as to the subject of the conversation.
- 14. Be mindful** that the hard of hearing person will understand less if they are tired or ill.
- 15. Keep a note pad handy.** If you must, write your message down.

Good Communication takes practice

We are all creatures of habit, and it is no different with our speech habits. We tend to talk at a certain rate and level that we have become comfortable with over the years. Sometimes these habits get in the way of good communication. For example, we often try to multitask, speaking at the same time that we are attending to other matters or we speak to someone from another room. We may make a brief comment that we dismiss as unimportant if the hard of hearing person misses it, leaving them puzzled and sometimes irritated.

Practice using the tips in this brochure, and ask the hard of hearing person to remind you when you slip up. For example, we may slow our rate of speech down for a few sentences, but find ourselves speeding up to a habitual rate without noticing it.

The hard of hearing person has to practice too, actively listening, watching, and attending to a person who has gotten their attention and wishes to talk with them. Our thoughts that we communicate are like the ball used in a game of catch. Just as in tossing a ball, the person throwing the ball has to be accurate, and the person catching the ball has to be ready.

Focusing on Function

There are four main functions in our efforts to help the hard of hearing:

1. **Sensory management:** Hearing instruments, assistive listening devices such as FM systems, TV listeners and amplified telephones help to make sounds audible, yet not uncomfortable.
2. **Instruction:** learning to use devices and methods to improve communication.
3. **Perceptual training:** to improve such auditory skills as closure, figure-ground discrimination, dichotic listening, executive function, and temporal sequencing.
4. **Counseling:** tying it all together and making it applicable in the patient's life and relationships.

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