

# Communication tactics

Ways to help you manage your hearing problems



People rely on their hearing, hearing aids, lip reading and communication tactics to help hear speech. Problems can be wide-ranging, with hearing aids not always solving the problem on their own.

Some people with normal hearing can also struggle to hear speech in background sound. This is due to difficulty picking out one sound from another.

## **Communication tactics are strategies to use when hearing is difficult.**

### **Get the speaker to get your attention first**

- Ask people to say your name before they speak to you. This will get your attention and you are more likely to understand the beginning of the conversation.

### **Make sure you're in the same room**

- Speaking from another room makes conversation difficult and can be frustrating. Face each other and stand no further than 3ft to 6ft apart.

### **Look at other people's faces and body language**

- Watching their lips and body language can give important information about what is being said.
- Body language can also give you clues about a person's mood and feelings and also whether you have misunderstood (if they perhaps look puzzled).

### **Controlling and coping with noise**

Wearing hearing aids in background sound can make conversation more difficult. This is the same for some people with normal hearing who have difficulty picking out one sound from another.

Friends and family may find this difficult to understand as noise does not affect them in the same way.

- Where possible if at work or in a meeting, ask that only one person speaks at a time. Social groups are not easy, but if people know how to help you, it can help improve your confidence.
- If you are trying to have a conversation at home, reduce background sound whenever possible – for example, turn down the TV.
- In a noisy room position yourself in a corner or with your back to the wall, as this will reduce background sound.
- If possible, avoid conversations in rooms with hard surfaces and large open spaces where the sound quality is poor.
- It will be much easier to hear in a room with carpets and soft furnishings, as these absorb background sound.
- Tell people if it is too noisy for you to hear; you can ask them to move somewhere quieter if possible. Remember that by just letting them know, you are still communicating!

## **Listening to the radio or television**

- Changing the tone control on your TV or radio can make speech clearer.
- Try more treble and less bass tone.
- Some TVs have newer settings – they are for reducing background sound. For example 'Clear Speech'.
- Place the TV or radio in a corner or against a wall. This may help you to hear more sound, or sit closer to the TV.
- There are many assistive listening devices available today, including 'Blue Tooth' technology – for example Streamers, TV listeners or Sound bars.
- You can also have a programme put on your hearing aids to use with a loop system.

## Asking for help

Remember communication is a two way street and that people cannot help you if they do not know that you have a hearing loss or struggle to hear in noisy situations. Explain how they can make communication easier by using these tactics.

- If someone is softly spoken you could ask them to move closer and speak louder.
- If someone shouts it makes speech sound distorted and their face can look angry – so shouting is not helpful.
- Ask the speaker to look at you if they are facing away, or take their hand away if they are covering their mouth.
- If someone is talking too fast (especially on the telephone) tell them that you are not hearing everything and ask them to slow down.
- If you have missed some of the conversation, ask them to repeat it or say it in a different way.
- No-one hears everything! If you only hear one word, you can repeat that word to show that you are listening e.g. "Did you say that you are **going** somewhere?" If you start communicating, it shows that you are listening and interested. You are also less likely to be told "it does not matter" or "forget it", which is both upsetting and frustrating.

## Being positive

- Remember no one hears every word, especially in noisy places.
- Please say if you have not understood the conversation. This will stop others thinking that you are rude or uncaring, which can happen if your reply does not make sense.
- Sometimes you can understand more by asking questions e.g. "Did you say something about ....."?
- By confirming the conversation you will feel more confident that you have understood e.g. "Can I just check that you mean next Wednesday at 3.00 o'clock?" Or "So you want to meet up at ....."?

- Sometimes being anxious, tired or unwell can make it harder to understand what is being said. Practising these communication tactics with friends and family will make them easier for you to use. This will help you to improve your listening ability and build your confidence.
- Try to say thank you if someone has made an effort to communicate well with you – it might help them to remember what to do next time.
- Joining a lip-reading class can help develop skills in a friendly environment, helping you to learn visual clues to support your hearing.

## **Any questions?**

Friends and family may also benefit from reading this leaflet. If you have any further questions or are still having problems with your hearing or hearing aids, please telephone and see if any further help can be offered.

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If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

