

## Hearing Tactics

### Listening in a Group

The information on this sheet has been collected from people who have hearing difficulties in group situations. A number of tactics are outlined to help minimise the confusing effect of background noise. Remember 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. Consider the tactics you already use.

#### At Parties

- Avoid noisy areas like the middle of the room, near the kitchen or close to music.
- Choose a quiet corner and perhaps a smaller group of people.
- You may be able to find a good or familiar speaker to concentrate on.
- Handing around food and drinks helps a person to circulate.
- Ask your partner to help cue you on topics and topic changes.

#### At Meetings

- Obtain a copy of the agenda before the meeting where possible.
- Sit next to someone who is willing to let you use his notes or negotiate to sit near the minute taker.
- Position yourself to get the best vantage of the chairperson or main speaker at the meeting.
- Where possible, let the chairperson know ahead of time about your hearing difficulties and how the group can help minimise these difficulties.

#### In Lectures

- Find the best position to sit. The second or third row is good for speechreading. Sitting slightly to the side of the row will allow you to turn, if needed, to get a better view of those behind you. If you wear hearing aids, consider devices such as an audio loop system or radio frequency unit.

#### At Home

- Use soft furnishings, carpets, heavy curtains and wall hangings to minimise unwanted background noise.

- Place foam under the tablecloth to reduce the clatter of cups, plates and cutlery.
- Try to reduce background noise as much as possible and turn the radio and TV off when not actually being listened to.
- Consider the furniture arrangement and your position in relation to others in the room. For example, are you close enough to the speaker but far away from any unwanted noise? Where is the main source of light in relation to the speaker's face?
- Educate your family about your hearing loss and the problems background noise can cause. It will be important for you to tell them how they can assist you. If street noise causes difficulty, a solid high wall, shrubs and trees in the garden or double glazing of windows may help reduce its effects.

#### Parties at Home

- Decide the number of people that you can handle comfortably.
- Consider the style of your party - a BBQ, a buffet or sitting at the table; which will best suit your hearing loss?
- Arrange the lighting so you can see clearly and if any music is necessary consider how to control this to maximise your listening skills.

#### At a Restaurant

- Many of the issues identified for the home are relevant - lighting, furnishings, background noise, and position in relation to others. It may be important to carefully choose the restaurant you attend or the time of day - e.g. planning an early or late lunch rather than going at peak time.
- Book ahead and reserve the table that suits you best.

#### At the Theatre

Find out about the theatre before you go:

- Where is the best position to sit for good acoustics and vision? Can you book a seat in advance?
- Are there any special aids provided for people with hearing difficulties at that particular theatre/cinema,

such as an audio loop facility for people with a telecoil facility, ('T' switch), on their hearing aid?

- Consider attending performances which offer captioning or contain greater visual content as opposed to dialogue-heavy productions.
- Find out as much about the plot before you go - so you are already 'tuned in'.
- You may be able to obtain a copy of the script.
- Small live theatres often have better sound and you are situated closer to the stage for better visual information.
- Accept that you may miss some of the dialogue - 'let go' and enjoy all that you can.
- Relax before you go - this will help you maximise your concentration.

### General Tactics

- Explain your hearing loss to people and tell them how they might help you minimise difficulties.
- Let people know when they have helped you. They need to be aware of the right ways to help you.
- Be creative and confirm what you have heard.
- Do not 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. For example "**Where did you say that you are going after work tomorrow?**" is often better than "**What did you say?**" Ask for the exact information you require.

### Special Aids

- As well as using tactics, you may also like to investigate special aids.
- Audio 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. It is important to ask which seats are in the looped area.
- Personal communicators or extension microphones may improve speech reception in group settings or when travelling in the car.

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### Related Information Sheets

- How Not To Say I Beg Your Pardon
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