



## Hearing Tactics Effective Strategies for Communication Partners

Having to repeat statements can be frustrating for both the hard of hearing individual and their communication partners. Listed below are a few guidelines that you as a communication partner can use, to make communication with a hard of hearing person more effective.

1. Get the person's attention before speaking.
2. Let the person with the hearing loss know the subject of the conversation beforehand if possible, and try to cue him or her in to any change of topic.
3. Speak distinctly and clearly and a little slower than normal. However, exaggeration or over emphasis of words will distort lip movements, making speech (lip) reading more difficult.
4. Look directly at the person while speaking and be at the same eye level if possible. Even a slight turn of head can obscure vision. Keep visual distractions to a minimum.
5. Do not have objects in your mouth such as gum, cigarettes or food.
6. Ensure that any lighting is on your face and not behind you. Lighting behind the speaker will create glare and possibly shadows across your face, making it more difficult for the hard of hearing individual to gain visual cues for speechreading.
7. Use facial expressions and gesture to add meaning to your spoken message – A large portion of our communication is non-verbal!
8. Move closer to the person and repeat or re-phrase your message when you are not understood. i.e. You could rephrase "I have my tea white" to "milk please".
9. Avoid noisy background situations or cut down background noise where possible.
10. Enhance acoustic (sound) cues for speech
  - Maintain adequate voice level, particularly at the beginning and end of a sentence
  - Do not shout. This distorts facial expression as well as speech and the loud sound may cause discomfort to a person with a hearing loss.
  - Pause before and after key syllables, words or phrases.
  - Provide a little more emphasis on the parts of the word not normally stressed so that all parts of the word are detected.
11. Enhance visual cues for speech:<sup>1</sup>
  - Increase duration of the sounds /m/ and /n/ to distinguish them from /p, b/ and /t, d/.
  - Place the tongue between the lower and upper teeth to clarify the 'th'

- Bite the lower lip with the upper teeth to indicate /f, v/

### Other Points to Consider

1. Allow enough time for the person to respond to what you have said
2. Find out whether you have been understood before you continue (do this by having the person with the hearing loss repeating back important information).
3. Modify or shorten the conversation if the person is tired or ill, and specifically do so if s/he has any known changes in cognition, such as poor memory or impaired concentration/attention.

### Specific Ways That you can Clarify a Sentence During a Conversation

#### Say it again

- (i) Repeat the entire sentence
- (ii) Repeat the first part, the last part, and several key words

#### Speak more clearly

- (i) Articulate clearly using your lips and tongue to shape the words, but do not over exaggerate
- (ii) Use speech rhythm and intonation (e.g.) emphasise key words or pause before and after key words
- (iii) Check that your voice volume and speech speed is adequate

#### Substitute a word or phrase that has more meaning

- (i) A synonym (e.g. 'rug' for 'carpet')
- (ii) An equivalent phrase (e.g. 'baby dog' for 'puppy')

#### Modify sentence structure and content

- (i) Use common words and language
- (ii) Simplify word order

#### Give more Information

- (i) Identify the most important word (topic)
- (ii) When talking about a specific event, refer to what happened before and after the event.
- (iii) Prompt the person with the hearing loss by using related (redundant) words. E.g. "football is a dangerous sport" as opposed to "football is dangerous".

#### Do something different

- (i) Talk about something else
- (ii) Try again later

If all else fails, use gesture or write it down. Be patient, keep a sense of humour and communication will become so much more enjoyable!

Remember, communication is a two-way process.

The Expression Audiology team run a Managing Your Hearing Loss course. Family and friends are also welcome to attend. These courses are held at various locations. For further details please contact:



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