

Tips for Communicating with Someone with Hearing Loss

Many of the residents we visit are suffering from hearing loss. Here are some tips to help maximize communication. Hope they help.

- Face the person and do not turn away while speaking.
 - Before speaking, get the person's attention with a wave of the hand or a gentle tap on the shoulder.
 - Try to converse in a well-lit area so your face is clearly visible. Many people try and read lips to help them understand.
 - Do not cover your mouth or chew gum.
 - If a person is wearing a hearing aid, do not assume the individual can hear you. Speaking too loud can be painful to the hearing aid wearer or distort the words; talking too slow can be quite distracting or even offensive.
 - Minimize background noise and other distractions whenever possible.
 - When you are communicating orally, speak slowly and distinctly. Use gestures and facial expressions to reinforce what you are saying.
 - Remember that only about one third of spoken words can be understood by speech reading.
 - When communicating by writing notes, keep in mind that some individuals may lack good English reading and writing skills.
 - Talk at your normal rate, or slightly slower if you normally speak very fast.
 - Only one person should speak at a time.
 - Use short sentences and simple words.
- ☒ Ask the person what will make communication easier.
- ☒ State the topic of discussion as you begin. When you change the topic, make sure the listener is aware of the new topic.
- ☒ Speak clearly, at a normal pace. If you tend to speak quickly, slow down. Do not overly exaggerate or slow your speech at first. If the person has difficulty understanding, slow your speech more, break the sentences into smaller portions, and check for understanding again.

- ☒ Use open-ended questions to check for understanding.
- ☒ Repeat the statement, then re-phrase if the person is unable to hear the words spoken.
- ☒ Use shorter, simpler sentences if necessary.
- ☒ Do not shout. A loud voice may increase distortion or give the impression you are angry, without improving comprehension.
- ☒ Use gesture, facial expression and body language to assist with communication.
- ☒ Be patient and take time to communicate. Saying “never mind” or “it’s not important,” causes the person with hearing loss to feel they are not important.
- ☒ Be aware of fatigue. People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind must work harder to communicate, and this can be extremely tiring.

Remember, hearing aids provide those with hearing loss access to the everyday sounds of their lives however, they do not return the user’s hearing back to normal. This means that while the user may hear your voice, they still may have difficulty understanding some words. Implementing clear speech, optimizing visual cues, and when possible making special accommodations are all effective ways to improve communication but always remember to be kind and patient when communicating with the hearing aid user. There may be times when you may need to repeat, rephrase, simplify, or write down what you are trying to say. If you do become frustrated, imagine how the person with hearing loss feels as they feel this every single day. (Lindsay Prusick- Starkey Hearing Technologies- June 2014)