

# Communication strategies

**More successful communication can be achieved through the use of the following strategies in conjunction with hearing aids.**

Remember, communication requires at least two people, so although it may be that only one person has a hearing loss, everyone taking part in the conversation can help to reduce communication difficulties.

## Tips for the listener



- **Reduce background noise:** Mute the television; turn the tap off; move into the same room. This will help tremendously.
- **Use visual cues to fill in the gaps, such as lip-reading and facial expressions.** Make sure you're in a well-lit area and the speaker is looking at you.
- **Move closer to the speaker.** This applies to any situation, whether it's one-to-one, a lecture or meeting. Arrive early to ensure a good spot for yourself.
- **Confirm details if you're unsure of what's been said,** such as the time and place you're meeting someone. Ask for details to be written down.
- **If you didn't catch something, don't fake it.** Ask for clarification and be specific with what you need repeated. For example, rather than simply saying "Pardon?" try "I heard you mention your new car, but I didn't catch the make and model."
- **Be assertive and acknowledge your hearing loss.** Don't try to hide it. Your hearing loss is invisible and people will need reminders.
- **It may be that you're used to 'tuning out' because that is what has been easiest up until now.** However, it will be more beneficial to pay attention to the speaker and practice your listening skills.
- **Be positive!** Use phrases such as "Could you please speak a bit louder?" rather than "I'll never hear you if you keep talking like that!"
- **Go easy on yourself, and be patient with yourself and your friends.** Realise that if you're tired or sick, you'll have a harder time. Try to keep a cheerful attitude and look for opportunities to use these communication strategies!

## Tips for the speaker



- **Reduce background noise:** If you're making dinner reservations, ask for a quiet table in the corner rather than a table near the bar.
- **Face the listener when talking and don't block your face with your hand or teacup.** Beards, moustaches and chewing can impair visual cues as well. Also, don't talk from a different room.
- **Gain the listener's attention prior to speaking with a light touch or by saying their name.** This is a simple gesture that will allow them to prepare to listen and to catch the beginning part of what you're saying.
- **If you're not sure if they understood what you said, ask them.** Confirm details so you can feel confident.
- **Rephrase rather than simply repeat.** This will provide more clues to the listener to help fill in the gaps they may have missed.
- **Speak naturally.** Use pauses, rather than slow speech, to allow time for the listener to process what was said. Your speech may become distorted if you yell, slow your words, or try to over-emphasise.
- **Be aware that it is a strain for people with hearing loss always having to pay extra attention during conversation.** Be understanding if they get tired.
- **Be positive!** Don't get frustrated if the listener asks for repeated clarification. Realise that s/he is interested in what you're saying and wants to be part of the conversation.
- **Realise that hearing loss can be very isolating.** If you're with a group, and your friend with a hearing loss hasn't participated in conversation for a while, check in with them. Catch them up with what's been said and make sure they feel included.