

Communication Strategies

Even with the benefit of a hearing aid, hard-of-hearing people are limited in their ability to hear sounds from a distance and are subject to more distractions from background noise than normally hearing people. We suggest the following communication strategies:

Speaker Controlled:

- 1 Get the person's attention before beginning to speak to the hearing-impaired listener. Call them by name to initiate conversation. Give a frame of reference for discussion by mentioning the topic at the outset.
- 2 Speak clearly and slowly, but naturally, and enunciate your words. Don't shout. Some hearing-impaired people are especially sensitive to loudness.
- 3 Try to maintain a line of sight visibility with listener, so visual cues are readily available to supplement auditory information. Make sure there is adequate light so your face is clearly visible.
- 4 When part of what you said was not understood, rephrase it in a simpler way for the listener.
- 5 Trim excess facial hair. Avoid placing hands or other objects such as chewing gum, pencils, etc., in or in front of your mouth so as to block or impede the visibility of lip movements.
- 6 Turn off the radio, television, air conditioner and running water. These sounds, taken for granted and ignored by many, are amplified by some hearing aids and interfere with communication.
- 7 Group situations require extra consideration. Only one person should be talking at a time. Repeat messages when necessary.

Listener Controlled:

- 1 Repeat what you thought was said if you are not sure or only understood part of what was said. Don't bluff and nod "yes" when you're not sure.
- 2 Try to see the speaker's face so that you can supplement the auditory information with visual cues from lip movements and gestures. Don't face a brightly lit window when speaking to someone because you will see only a silhouette and have limited visibility.
- 3 Selectively seat yourself close to speaker/signal of interest and away from the noise sources when possible, or with as much background noise behind you as you can. At church or lectures, seat yourself near the front.
- 4 Move away from or remove extraneous noise sources if it is interfering with your ability to understand the speaker. Turn off the radio, television, or air conditioner. Carpets and drapes in your home will help cut down unwanted noise.
- 5 Verbally confirm phone numbers and spelling of names, etc., when taking information over the phone. Use "S" as in Sam and "F" as in Frank to clarify.
- 6 Let a speaker know that you may experience listening difficulties, and to speak slowly and distinctly. Leave a reminder to others on your answering machine for callers to "speak slowly and clearly after the beep."
- 7 Ask your audiologist about the California Telephone Access Program if you are having difficulty communicating on the phone and want access to a free amplified phone.