

Communicating with Individuals Experiencing Hearing Loss



RECOGNITION OF ISOLATION & FRUSTRATION (WITH OR WITHOUT HEARING AIDS)

Consider those around you that are experiencing a speech and/or hearing difficulty. Dealing with the every day struggles of a hearing loss can be frustrating and isolating, particularly if the person has not pursued wearing hearing aids. Although today's hearing aid technology has vastly improved from the past, hearing aids are not perfect. Hearing aids are just that; an aid to hearing. There will likely still be some situations where an individual may struggle to hear, even if they are wearing hearing aids.

MAIN FACTORS WITH HEARING LOSS

Two Main Factors with Hearing Loss:

- *Loss of Volume*
- *Loss of Clarity*

While a hearing aid will benefit for loss of volume, it is not as easy to restore loss of clarity. When clarity is the issue, even with increased volume, the sounds and words will be distorted when heard. The message is not synchronized, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to discriminate words. Shouting will not improve clarity, rather it will only distort the words further.

To determine whether you have loss of volume OR loss of clarity (or both), it is important to have your hearing tested since this is something that can be determined through testing. Whether wearing hearing aids or not, the tendency is often to shout, but shouting only distorts words making it an even bigger challenge to hear.

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING

As a spouse, family member, friend or colleague there are tips you may consider in order to enable a hearing aid wearer to communicate and listen more easily.

Speak clearly and naturally:

- *It is not necessary to shout since this can distort the voice.*

Move closer:

- *Reducing the distance between speaker and listener can improve speech understanding.*

Cue the listener:

- *Ensure the listener is ready for what you are going to say before starting to talk.*

Face the listener:

- *Position yourself so the listener can see your face and lips.*
- *Lip reading will help supplement the sound of speech.*

Attract the listener's attention:

- *Use the person's name, enter the field of vision or tap them lightly on the shoulder.*

Take the surroundings into account:

- *Avoid conversations between rooms.*
- *Be aware when there is a lot of background noise and either move to a quieter environment, turn down the volume or speak when it is quieter.*

Be aware of performance constraints:

- *Do not put the hard-of-hearing listener under too much pressure.*
- *Both the individual and the performance of hearing aids have their limits.*

Understand that using hearing instruments can be tiring:

- *Be sensitive of signs of fatigue; listening is actually very taxing, particularly for new hearing aid users.*

Be patient:

- *Respect the speed of progress and encourage the person with hearing loss.*
- *Be a good listener and help the person achieve the goal in participating in conversations.*