

Communicating with Someone who has Hearing Loss

If you have a friend, loved one, or co-worker suffering from hearing loss, you know it can be tough to communicate with them. Even if they have hearing aids, their hearing ability might not be the same as yours. Fortunately there are some ways you can improve your own ability to communicate with people with hearing loss.

Gain Their Attention

One of the best things you can do to improve your communication with people with hearing loss is to make sure you have their attention first. By doing this you'll ensure you have their attention and that they don't miss any of the conversation. Some good ways to do this are to:

- Say their name before you start speaking.
- Touch them lightly on the hand or shoulder.
- Wait until anyone else speaking has finished to begin talking.

At the same time, make sure you also pay attention to them as they listen to you. If they look puzzled or unsure, they might be having trouble understanding something you said - in which case you can pause or ask if they understood everything you were saying.

Make the Conversation Easy to Follow

If your conversation is taking place in a group situation or is especially important, you'll need to take a few extra steps to ensure they understand. One of the best things to do is adjust your conversation to be inclusive. You should:

- Acquaint your listener with the general topic or any important details at the start. Don't trust that they'll pick up on all the details themselves.
- Avoid changing topics suddenly - make sure you introduce your topic clearly so the person with hearing difficulty can contribute and understand.
- Take turns speaking and try to avoid interruptions. Tracking multiple speakers at once is difficult for anyone, but it's even harder with a hearing disability.





Speak Normally and Naturally

One of the hardest things about communicating with someone with a hearing problem is adjusting your speech to compensate for their ability. You should never overcompensate for someone else's hearing problems - doing so can seem insulting and can actually make you harder to understand. Instead, you should:

- Speak in your normal tone and at your normal volume. Try to speak distinctly, but don't exaggerate your words or raise your voice.
- Try not to mumble. Mumbling both lowers the volume of your speech and reduces the movement of your lips, making you much harder to understand.
- Slow down your speech, but with pauses rather than slower talking. This gives the other person time to process your speech without being demeaning.
- Don't talk too rapidly or use sentences that are overly complex. Instead, try to speak simply and to make your ideas easy to comprehend.

Maintain Eye Contact

Another way to help encourage understanding is to maintain eye contact and keep yourself positioned correctly. You should always face the person with hearing loss as directly as possible, at a distance of no more than a few feet. This allows the other person to watch your facial expressions and body language easily, which in turn makes it easier to understand you. Try not to position yourself at an angle, and don't start conversations from another room or move around too much while talking. The only exception to this is when someone has better hearing in one ear than the other, in which case it's usually better to position yourself on that side so they can hear you more easily.

Rephrase - Don't Repeat

Occasionally, even if you follow these tips, the person you're talking to will have trouble understanding something you said. In these cases, it's important not to repeat yourself over and over. Instead, try the following:

- Avoid shouting or saying the same thing louder. Again, this can actually make it harder to understand what you're saying even if you increase the volume.
- Give them an opportunity to ask questions or clarify your ideas before moving on. Sometimes they'll have an idea of what you were trying to say but might miss specific details.
- Don't be insulted if they miss something and ask you to repeat yourself.

Communicating with someone with hearing problems doesn't have to be difficult. Along with the above strategies, you can also encourage your loved one to seek help at a qualified audiology clinic such as our own. At Audio Recovery we've helped thousands of people improve their hearing and enjoy life more. Call us today at 405-949-1906 to schedule an appointment or visit our Facebook page for more hearing tips and advice.

