

Centre for Hearing and Balance Disorders (Audiology)

Self-Help Tips for Hearing Problems

There are a number of things which you and your family and friends can do to help you hear well. This leaflet is designed to give you hints and tips to help with communication.

Recognising the limitations of a hearing aid

There are two types of hearing problems; one of loudness and one of clarity. A hearing aid can make things louder, however it is limited by your hearing loss as to how clear the sound is. You should notice an improvement with a hearing aid from it increasing the volume of speech but it won't return your hearing to normal.

The hearing aid will amplify sounds within its range. These will include any background noises which are around you. The hearing aid cannot identify what sounds you do and do not want to hear, it amplifies everything.

Even if you have severe problems discriminating different sounds you may gain some benefit from having a hearing aid to use in various situations.

Communication strategies: being assertive with your hearing loss

These are methods of coping with difficult listening situations:

- Planning ahead



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- Manipulating the environment
- Repairing conversations

Planning ahead

This is anticipating and trying to minimise any hearing difficulties you might have. For example if you were attending a lecture, try to turn up early to get a good seat, also ask the speakers to use a microphone and to keep their faces visible to you.

Manipulating the environment

These are steps such as asking the speaker to move into the light or into a spot with less background noise, or asking them to take their hand away from their mouth.

It is important to be assertive with people when they talk to you. Let people know you are having difficulty hearing them and advise them how they can help you. Hearing loss is an invisible disability so you may need to ask people to slow down and face you if you are struggling to hear them.

Sometimes by making small changes to your listening environment it can ease communication for you; for example, turning the TV down before you answer the phone.

To improve other situations you might want to consider some of the following tips:

- Remember to speak to someone only when you are in the same room;
- Try to remove as much background noise as possible – turn the taps off, don't talk when the kettle is boiling, turn the TV down;
- Good room acoustics help; having curtains, carpets, table cloths and sound-insulated walls reduce reverberation that can interfere with speech clarity;

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- Make sure that there is good lighting and that you can see the person's face you are speaking to; if they are silhouetted in front of a bright window, ask if you can swap seats.

Repair techniques

These are ways of getting information repeated or confirmed to maximise understanding. This can be done by asking someone to repeat what they have said, or by repeating back what someone has said by saying "Did you say....?" or getting people to write things down.

Involvement of family and friends

Communication is a two way process and family and friends play a critical part in helping you to hear as well as possible. It is important that they understand how background noise, lighting, acoustics and mumbled speech can cause problems when having a conversation.

It may also help to identify home situations that create special hearing difficulties so family members can act together to reduce problems. By the whole family adjusting to the limitations of amplification they can act as a mutual support system for each other.

Lip-reading

Only 30% of the English language is 'lip-readable', however hearing conversation is significantly easier when you get visual clues from the speaker. In Coventry and Rugby there are lip-reading classes which are free to attend. If you want more information please call 01926 318161.

Assistive listening devices

The hearing aid is only the first step to help your hearing. There are other devices which could help you with the telephone, the television and the doorbell. In Coventry the Visual and Hearing impairment Team is available to help assess whether any of these items would be of benefit to you. If you call 024 7683 3003 they will arrange an appointment for an assessment. In

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Warwickshire you can contact the Countywide Services to Deaf People on 01926 413043 for further information.

Further information:

Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID)

RNID offers a wide range of information on many aspects of deafness and hearing loss:

Telephone: 0808 808 0123 (information line)

Text message: 0780 000 0360

Text phone: 0808 808 9000

Fax: 020 7296 8199

Email: information@rnid.org.uk

We hope you find this information useful however if you have any further questions about or comments about this information, please telephone Ann-Marie Hawkins or Bernadette Parker on 024 7696 6444.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6444 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk

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