

Communicating with the Hard of Hearing

Successful communication requires the efforts of everyone in the conversation. Even when a person with hearing loss utilizes hearing aids and active listening strategies, it is crucial that others involved in the communication process consistently use good communication strategies, including the following:

- ▶ Get their attention by calling their name or tapping them on their shoulder. This gives the listener a chance to focus attention and reduces the chance of missing words at the beginning of the conversation.
- ▶ Face the hard of hearing person directly, on the same level and in good light whenever possible. Position yourself so that the light is shining on the speaker's face, not in the eyes of the listener.
- ▶ Do not cover your mouth when speaking. Invest in clear masks to facilitate speechreading. Beards and moustaches can also interfere with the ability to speech read.
- ▶ Speak clearly, slowly, distinctly, but naturally, without shouting or exaggerating mouth movements. Shouting distorts the sound of speech and may make speech reading more difficult. Add more pauses into your conversation to allow for time to process what is being said.
- ▶ Do not look down, at your computer, turn away or speak from another room.
- ▶ Rephrase rather than continuing to repeat what was not understood.
- ▶ Identify and be aware of the background noise in the areas you choose to converse in. Eliminate or reduce as much noise as possible. Computers, printers, televisions, and other conversations are also amplified by hearing aids making it challenging for the listener to hear your voice.
- ▶ Use gestures and visual aids such as signs or written notes to augment communication. Do not oversimplify, abbreviate, or dilute the information.
- ▶ If you are giving specific information – such as time, place, or phone numbers – have them repeat the specifics back to you. Many numbers and words sound alike. Whenever possible, provide pertinent information in writing.
- ▶ Use technology if possible. Smartphones, iPads and tablets with email, text, and speech to text apps will facilitate communication and reduce the potential for miscommunication.
- ▶ Provide captioning or live transcription during video or other digital health appointments.

For more information on how to make your working environment hearing accessible contact the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association-MB Chapter at chha-mb.ca or call 204-975-3037.



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