

Building Confidence

If you remember to do and say the following your confidence will continue to increase in communication situations.

- It's ok to get the message wrong
- When I don't get the message, I ask people to repeat it or say it another way
- I tell people I have a hearing loss
- When it's impossible to hear names, numbers and other information, I can ask the speaker to write it down for me
- I feel free to disagree with what others say or do
- I can say NO and not feel guilty
- I feel comfortable wearing my hearing aids in public
- If someone shouts at me, I ask them politely to speak normally
- When the music is too loud in the restaurant or pub, I ask someone to turn it down
- When I go out for a meal, I ask for a quiet place in the restaurant
- I don't apologise for asking others to help me at times.



Communication Tips for the Hard of Hearing and their Family and Friends

Cork Deaf Association

Contents

Adjusting to Hearing Loss	2
Communication Tips for Family and Friends	3
Communicating with a Hard of Hearing Person	4
The Best Environmental Conditions for Listening	5
How to Help Your Hard of Hearing Partner	6
What It Means for Your Partner to Have a Hearing Loss	7
Getting Out and About: Some Useful Tips	8
Going to a Restaurant or Pub	9
Going to a Cinema or Theatre	10
Building Confidence	11



Cork Deaf Association
5 MacCurtain Street
Cork
Tel: 021 4505944
Fax: 021 4506190
Email: mail@corkdeaf.ie
www.corkdeaf.ie
www.facebook.com/corkdeaf

Going to a Cinema or Theatre

- Check to see if there is a loop system in the cinema/theatre before booking tickets
- Make sure that you book seats near the stage or book seats which have the best coverage from the loop system
- Ask the theatre about captioned performances. These are performances that have the text of the play visible on screen for the theatre audience. The Abbey Theatre, Dublin regularly captions its performances
- Some cinemas provide subtitled versions of newly released films for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people so it is a good idea to contact your local cinema and ask when the next subtitled film will be screened. Foreign films are regularly screened in the Triskel Arts Centre or The Cork Cine Club, Crawford Art Gallery and these are always subtitled so this is a good option for somebody with a hearing loss
- The Reel Picture, Blackpool regularly screens subtitled recent releases so contact them or the Cork Deaf Association for further details.

The Reel Picture	Triskel Arts Centre
Blackpool,	Tobin Street
Cork	Cork
Tel: 021-4211415	Tel: 021-4272022
www.thereelpicture.com	www.triskelartscentre.ie

Going to a Restaurant or Pub

Going out socially can be very daunting for a Hard of Hearing person. Crowded situations are particularly distressing and many Hard of Hearing people stop socialising to avoid these frustrating situations. However there are a number of small things you can do which could make these social occasions more bearable.

- Ask the pub or restaurant manager to turn down background music. Staff can be very accommodating; you just need to ask!
- When booking a table in a restaurant ask to be seated in a quiet area away from any loud music or large parties of people. Also, do not sit near the entrance, pay desk or toilets as these can be very noisy areas
- If you are going out with a group of people ask to be seated at a round table as you will be able to see everybody's face enabling you to lip-read: you also will feel part of the group
- Do encourage your friends to speak a bit more loudly and ask them to face you directly when speaking
- Choose a brightly lit restaurant or pub as this is a more suitable setting for lip-reading
- Try to avoid places with a lot of wood interior as sound will just bounce making it extremely difficult to hear.

Adjusting to Hearing Loss

When it comes to dealing with hearing loss some people think that getting hearing aids or other listening devices is all that is required to fix the situation. There is much more to consider when trying to adjust to hearing loss. Adjustment programmes can help people to regain their independence and rebuild their self esteem. This can be achieved by:

- Learning about your hearing loss
- Learning how hearing loss affects speech
- Learning skills in speech-reading (lip-reading, facial expression, gestures, body language)
- Building confidence in handling communication situations
- Learning what to do when you don't get the message
- Learning how to use your hearing aids or cochlear implant
- Learning about different assistive technologies
- Learning how to advocate for yourself
- Promoting awareness amongst your friends and family
- Learning how you can make it easier for your family to communicate with you
- Realizing that it is okay for you to feel angry or depressed about your hearing loss
- Accepting that you can learn to manage and cope with your loss.

Communication Tips for Family and Friends

I am hard of hearing so please remember the following:

- Face me when you are speaking to me
- Attract my attention before you speak
- Speak a little slower but not too slowly
- Speak a little louder but don't shout
- Don't cover your mouth with a hand/cigarette/newspaper/beard
- Be prepared to write down important facts
- Don't speak to me from another room
- Don't speak to me with your head in a book or newspaper
- Cut down the background noise
- Try to make the subject of the conversation as clear as possible
- Full sentences are easier to understand than phrases
- Repeat the sentence and rephrase if necessary – some words are particularly hard to lip-read

But above all, please be patient!

Getting Out and About: Some Useful Tips

Getting out and about whether it be for professional, medical or social reasons need not be as stressful as it can be. The following are some helpful reminders of what you can do to make life that be easier.

Visits to the doctor or hospital

- First of all don't be afraid to tell staff that you have a hearing loss
- Inform the receptionist that he/she will either need to make eye contact with you when calling you or he/she will have to come and get you as you will not hear your name being called
- Ask if there a loop system in the reception area and if it is possible to see the doctor in a room fitted with a loop system
- If you are able to lip-read then don't be afraid to ask the doctor to sit in a chair that will make it easier for you to lip-read
- Explain to your doctor that you are unable to lip-read if he/she is looking at a notepad or computer screen while speaking to you
- Get your doctor to write down important details such as dates of future appointments, prescriptions and medication
- You might like to bring someone with you as this might make the visit less stressful.

What It Means for Your Partner to Have a Hearing Loss

If your partner has a hearing loss it may affect many areas of their life.

- Chatting is hard work and tiring
- Your partner will have less time to relax because he or she will be concentrating more on communication
- Your partner may become isolated and start to miss social events because communication is too much of a strain
- Your partner may find that they cannot hear their own voice so they are unable to judge how clear or loud their speech is for others. Some hard of hearing people may slur some of their speech sounds because they are unable to hear their own voice and therefore cannot correct themselves
- If your partner's hearing loss means that everyone's speech seems quiet then they will most probably start to speak more softly as well
- Your partner may experience 'loudness recruitment'. Loudness recruitment is when a person finds it difficult to cope with loud noises such as the sound of the vacuum cleaner. If your partner has loudness recruitment you may find that your partner will complain that they can't hear you while at other times they may complain that you are shouting
- Your partner may have tinnitus: this is experienced as noises in the ear such as buzzing, ringing, whistling, hissing and other sounds. Please visit www.corktinnitus.com for more information.

Communicating with a Hard of Hearing Person

DO

- Make sure you have a person's attention before you begin to speak
- Switch off background noise such as radios or televisions and move to a quieter place
- Face the person at all times on the same level
- Use a firm clear voice and come to the point quickly
- Make sure the hard of hearing person knows what you are talking about—this will help them to anticipate likely vocabulary. Let them know if you change the topic of conversation
- Ensure your face is in good light
- Speak slightly more slowly than usual
- Use expression and body language to help get your message across
- Check the person has understood before continuing; they could be bluffing
- Remember lip-reading is tiring. Have patience if communication takes a little bit longer than usual

DON'T

- Shout— this can distort your face
- Over-exaggerate your lip movements
- Slow your speech too much
- Cover your face or mouth with your hands or smoke or eat when speaking
- Turn away while speaking
- Say 'It doesn't matter, I'll tell you later'.

The Best Environmental Conditions for Listening

- Make sure the room is well lit
- A room with soft furnishings, such as carpets, curtains and cushions is best. These absorb sound and reduce the echo effect
- Background noise can be reduced in various ways e.g. a tablecloth may lessen the noise of plates clattering
- It is worth remembering that the kitchen can be a particularly noisy place for conversation with many background noises e.g. the food mixer, washing machine, dishwasher. These noises can make conversation difficult
- If you are in the living room and engaged in conversation the TV/radio should be switched off or you should move your conversation to another room
- Close windows and doors if traffic intrudes
- It may be necessary to switch on the lights during the day when it gets dull and overcast outside. Alternatively there can be too much light on the speaker's face or on a surface within the gaze of the person who is lipreading. In this case, it may be necessary to draw the curtains or close the blinds
- If you have a hearing loss and you are outdoors, you shouldn't face the sun or glare. If you are having a conversation at night, you shouldn't face the streetlight. If lighting conditions are impossible it is best to try to wait until it improves
- As well as the traffic noise outside, the noise of wind through a hearing aid can be very intrusive. A hat or scarf may help to block out this noise.

How to Help Your Hard of Hearing Partner

It is very important for you and your partner to talk about what life is like for someone with a hearing loss *and* what life is like for someone living with a person who has a hearing loss. Your partner and you *both* need to accept the hearing loss and be positive about it. There are many ways you can help:

- Be supportive and patient
- Don't try to do everything for your partner e.g. if the doorbell rings encourage your partner to go and answer it
- Try not to speak for your partner or leave them out of the conversation
- Encourage your partner to explain their hearing loss to friends and family
- Carry on socialising: don't feel that you have to give up your normal social activities
- Try not to let your partner apologise for being hard of hearing. It is no one's fault so there is no need for your partner to apologise for their hearing loss
- Set a good example for others to follow. Speak clearly and a little more slowly so that your partner can understand you and other people can see how to communicate with your partner effectively
- Encourage your partner to visit their GP to have their ears examined. The GP may refer your partner to a specialist at an ear, nose and throat unit in the hospital. There may be a long waiting list so encourage your partner to start the process as soon as possible.