



## Good Communication Involves Action!

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There are many things that individuals with hearing loss can do to take the best advantage of their hearing instruments. Actions by their communication partners can also go a long way in reducing the communication and interpersonal challenges that generally go along with hearing loss. Wearing hearing instruments is not the only behavior people must demonstrate if they are to make the best use of their remaining hearing. The following is a list of suggested behaviors for listeners & talkers, which can be duplicated and distributed for use by clients and their families:



### The Listeners with hearing loss can...

- **Provide feedback:** If you can tell your partner what you heard, both of you will know right away if you understood correctly.
- **Pay attention:** Concentration is very important.
- **Develop good listening skills:** Concentrate on what is said.
- **Observe the talker:** What you see supplements what you hear.
- **Plan ahead:** Think about possible challenges and try to anticipate what you may face. Plan what you can do if hearing/listening obstacles occur.
- **Take breaks if needed:** Listening with a hearing loss can be tiring. You can concentrate better if you are rested.
- **Make specific suggestions about how to talk to you:** For example is it better to ask a person to rephrase or slow down than just to say "What?"
- **Double check details:** Repeating what you understood someone say can prevent confusion later on-especially dates and times.
- **Set realistic expectations:** Some situations are too noisy to expect to understand speech-even with the best hearing instruments.
- **Not bluff!** Pretending you understand when you don't helps no one.

### The Talker can help by...

- **Getting the listener's attention:** If you wait until he/she is ready to listen before you begin talking, you may not have to repeat yourself.
- **Not shouting:** Talking louder usually makes matters worse.
- **Slowing down:** Talking a little slower than usual often makes your voice easier to understand.
- **Getting closer:** It is best to move close to the listener before talking. This saves your voice from shouting and makes you easier to understand.
- **Speaking clearly:** Don't exaggerate pronunciation, but do finish all the sounds of one word prior to beginning the next.
- **Rephrasing:** If repeating one time does not help, it is better to use different words to express the same idea.
- **Stating the topic:** Tell the listener what topic you are about to discuss. Tell him/her when the topic changes.
- **Using gestures:** these can help with understanding.
- **Noticing background noise:** Turn down TVs/radios or move to a more quiet place, if possible. Be extra careful in a noisy place since it interferes with understanding.
- **Confirming details:** Politely double-check that key details of a message (i.e., meeting times and places) have been understood accurately.



## **Additional Hints for Persons with Hearing Loss**

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And for the persons talking to them

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### Rules for the Speaker...

- Speak at a moderate pace and in a clear normal voice.
- Do not speak with objects in your mouth (food, cigarettes, etc.) or in front of your mouth (hands, microphone).
- If you are angry, tired or distracted, you will often be harder to understand; so try to be positive, patient, and relaxed.
- Talk to a hard of hearing person, not about him or her.

### Rules for the listener...

- Pick the best spot to communicate by avoiding poorly lit or noisy areas.
- Anticipate difficult situations and plan how to minimize problems.
- Ask for written clues, key words or description, if needed.
- Provide feedback that you understood, or if not, what you thought they said.
- Arrange for frequent breaks if discussions or meetings are long.
- Provide feedback to the speaker by saying how well he or she is doing.

### Rules for the environment...

- Get closer to the speaker, and away from competing noise.
- Use assistive listening devices, if available.
- Find quiet corners or times to use the room, or go to a different area.
- Explain to people that some spaces make listening harder, while others make it easier, and ask for their help in finding good places. A good place usually has absorptive surfaces (drapes, rugs, less blank walls and floors), good light without a glare, and less background activity or noise.