



# TIPS FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED: UNDERSTANDING CONVERSATION BETTER

When someone else speaks, clues are gained from what we hear and what we see. YOU may be able to create a situation so that as many clues as possible are available.

## BEST CONDITIONS FOR LISTENING:

- A room with soft furnishings (such as carpets, curtains and cushions) absorbs sound and therefore reduces the echo effect.
- Try to reduce background noise (for example: a tablecloth may lessen the noise of plates clattering). Remember that noisy places such as busy streets, large shops, hospitals and railway stations will be rather more difficult to communicate in because of the very loud background noise.
- Ask other people to face you and to speak clearly and loudly (mumbling and shouting actually make it more difficult for you to pick out the words of the speaker).

## THE BEST WAY TO UNDERSTAND CONVERSATION IS TO:

- Don't be afraid to tell people that you have difficulty hearing.
- Make sure the room is well lit.
- Have your back to the light source (e.g. the window) so that the light falls on the speaker's face.
- Position yourself three to six feet away from the person speaking, as lip reading is difficult if the speaker is too near or too far away.
- Make sure your eyesight has been recently checked, as you don't want to strain your eyes.
- Try to watch the speaker's lips (you may be surprised at the number of clues you pick up without realizing it).
- Do not let yourself get too tired or tense, as you will be able to lip read better if you are relaxed.
- Do not be afraid to let people know that you have to rely a bit on lip reading, and give them an idea of how they can help you:
  - By facing you and keeping their heads fairly still.
  - By keeping their mouth visible and not hiding the lip movements behind their hands, a cigarette or other object.
  - By not shouting but speaking clearly and not too fast (shouting alters the lip pattern and speaking too slowly may destroy the natural rhythm of speech).
  - By attracting your attention before speaking so that you can catch the beginning of what is being said, not just the ending.
  - By not distracting your attention with unnecessary hand movements.
  - By removing their eyeglasses before they speak to you, as frequently a lot of understanding of speech is through the eyes, and dark glasses make it very difficult to observe an expression in a person's eyes.
  - By making the subject of conversation as clear as possible.
  - By repeating something you haven't grasped and then perhaps rephrasing what they want to say, as some words are more difficult to lip read than others.

*Information adapted from: Minnesota Chapter #1 SHHH, 831 – 2nd Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55403*

# TIPS FOR LOVED ONES OF THE HEARING IMPAIRED: HELPING UNDERSTAND CONVERSATION BETTER

Speech information is gained not only from what is heard, but also what is seen. These clues complement and supplement each other, helping an individual with hearing impairment to piece together the conversation.

For a hearing impaired person, the visual clues of speech become very important. Simple actions on your part may determine the ease with which these visual clues can be followed. The following tips can help:

- Attract the observers' attention before you start talking to him/her so that he/she can catch the beginning of what is said and not just the ending.
- Avoid speaking from another room or with your head in the cupboard.
- Keep your face visible and ensure it is well lit.
- Try to avoid conversation in the kitchen where there are background noises from food mixers, washing machines, dishwashers, etc.
- Do not hide your lip movements behind your hands, cigarettes, paper, etc.
- Do not speak while looking into a newspaper or book.
- Keep your head fairly still when speaking.
- Use natural hand gestures but do not exaggerate.
- Do not shout; speak clearly and not too fast. Shouting and over-mouthing will alter the lip pattern, and speaking too slowly may destroy the natural rhythm of speech.
- Try to make the subject of conversation as clear as possible.
- Try to use full sentences rather than just short phrases, as they are easier to understand.
- When you are speaking, do not distract the observers' attention with unnecessary hand movements.
- For a hearing impaired person, it is important to see the speakers' eyes to gauge how they are feeling. Therefore, if you are wearing sunglasses, remove them while speaking.
- Repeat the sentence again if necessary, and then perhaps rephrase what you want to say. You may not be aware of this, but some words are more difficult to lip read than others. For example, the month of March is easier to lip read than August. In the word March, the shapes making the 'M' and 'CH' are visible on the lips, but the components in August are made inside the mouth so there is nothing to see.
- Write down any important facts.
- Be patient!
- A hearing aid amplifies some background noise as well as speech, so try to avoid conversation in places where there is excessive background noise.