

Helpful Tips for Managing Hearing Loss

Life can be challenging at the best of times. These tips should help make life a little easier if you are having some difficulties with your hearing.

Visiting Restaurants and Cafes

- Trial a few different cafes to see which are less noisy or ask friends for recommendations.
- Avoid cafes with live music or are poorly lit.
- Avoid peak times as this is when it will be most noisy.
- Request to sit in a quiet area of the restaurant
 - Best to sit along the wall or perimeter with your back toward the wall; avoid the middle of the café.
 - Don't sit close to the kitchen or coffee machine
 - Outside tables can be less noisy
- Sit close to the person you want to hear the most.
- Select a small table particularly if there are only two of you.

Business Meetings

- Avoid having meetings in cafes. It is better to choose a quiet well-lit room in your workspace.
- Sit close to or opposite the person you want to hear the most.
- Read the agenda prior to the meeting.
- Try not to ask 'Pardon' too often. Use other strategies such as confirming or clarifying what you think you heard or asking the speaker to explain something in a different way.
- Suggest that attendees speak one at a time and not over each other (this will help everyone!)
- Install a table mic for large meetings.
- Suggest greater use of power-points and other visuals (everyone will benefit)
- Clarify anything you missed with the chair or a colleague after the meeting.
- If comfortable let the chair know you have hearing difficulties prior to the meeting and suggest how they can assist.

Family gatherings

- Avoid cafes and restaurants. But if this is the only option refer to section on restaurants and cafes.
- Reduce background noise. For example: Close the doors and windows, turn off the TV.
- Explain to small children that if they want you to hear them they need to look at your face and speak in a nice clear voice.
- Suggest to a family member that you move outside or away from the group to chat.
- Sit next to the person you most want to talk to.
- Try not to ask 'Pardon' too often. Use other strategies such as confirming or clarifying what you think you heard or asking the speaker to explain something in a different way.

- Be kind to yourself – remind everyone that you will not hear well when everyone they are all talking at once.
- Prior to the gathering, let others know how they can assist you. For example “It will help me if you get my attention, face me and speak in a clear voice at a normal volume level.” Family members will appreciate this. Alternatively a partner or son/daughter can let others know.

Phone calls

Phone calls can be difficult because you have no facial cues and/or gestures and the signal is not always clear. Many people also have an accent, particularly those in call centres. In addition, it can be difficult to identify who is calling and there may be background noise present (eg. A TV on in the background or a person calling whilst walking in traffic)

What can be done to improve the situation?

- Use video calls (such as face-time or Skype) with friends and family so you can get visual cues.
- Try using the phone on loud speaker.
- Use headphones as the signal will go to both ears rather than one. Special headsets can be purchased from NSU where the incoming signal is configured to match your hearing loss, resulting in a personalised and much clearer signal.
- Mobiles tend to have a clearer signal than many landlines. Cordless landline phones have the worse signal.
- Use text and messaging when possible.
- Move away from or turn off sources of background noise such as the TV.
- Let the speaker know you have a hearing loss and say it would be helpful if they spoke slowly and clearly at a normal volume level.
- Ask to speak to the supervisor at a call centre if you can't understand the person (supervisors tend to speak more clearly)

Watching TV

Movies can be particularly difficult due to accents, background music and soft speech.

- Use a wireless headset. Special headsets can be purchased from NSU where the incoming signal is configured to match your hearing loss, resulting in a personalised and much clearer signal.
- Install high quality speakers or a sound bar to improve the signal.
- Turn off sources of background noise, when possible. e.g. dishwasher
- Set up your TV in a quiet room.
- Turn on the subtitles
- Ask others in the room to talk during the advertisements rather than during the show.

Around the House

- Turn off sources of background noise such as the TV.
- Close doors and windows if there is noise outside.
- Move into a quiet room.
- Remind family members to gain your attention, face you, and speak clearly at a normal volume level and not to talk from another room.

If you continue to have difficulty hearing and communicating with others you might like to consider trialing hearing aids. At Neurosensory we offer free hearing aid trials where you can wear the devices for 1 to 2 weeks. There is no obligation to purchase hearing aids after the trial period.