

HELPING YOUR PATIENTS MANAGE HEARING DIFFICULTY

If your patients experience hearing loss, the following active listening strategies will enhance their communication with other people to create a more positive communication environment.

1. BE REALISTIC

- Patients need to maintain realistic expectations about what they will be able to hear in various situations and environments. There will be some situations where listening will always be difficult.

2. POSITIONING AND PREPARATION IS KEY

- **Reduce the distance between you and the person you are listening to.** The closer they are, the easier it will be to hear what is being said.
- **Position yourself to hear better.** Our ears naturally enhance sound coming from the front, so your patient should try to position themselves in front of the person speaking and ensure any background noise is behind them. If they hear better in one ear, they should position the better ear closer to the speaker.
- **Arrive early.** When attending events, they should sit near the front. They can request an assistive listening device or additionally request the speaker to use the microphone system if available. It is also helpful to read event summaries beforehand so they have an idea of what to expect.

3. MANAGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

- **The less noise there is while trying to communicate the better.** In a social setting or restaurant, advise them to find a quieter corner away from the noise.
- **They should choose rooms with soft furnishings** as these rooms will provide a better acoustic environment than rooms with hard surfaces.

4. LOOK AT THE PERSON WHO IS SPEAKING

- Ensure they can get a full, well-lit view of the face. A lot of information can be gleaned from facial expressions, body language and lip movements.
- Advise them to concentrate on the general idea of what the person is expressing rather than trying to focus on every word. Speech is normally predictable, and they will be surprised at how well their brain will “fill in the gaps”.

5. BE CONFIDENT AND LET PEOPLE KNOW YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY HEARING

- Often the best thing they can do is tell people to face them, and to speak clearly and slowly.
- Shouting often makes understanding more difficult and unpleasant.

6. CLARIFY ANYTHING YOU HAVE MISSED

- They need to be as specific as possible so that the person doesn't have to repeat themselves.
- They should also ask closed questions to clarify understanding.
- Request any important material to be provided in writing.

7. RELAX

- Studies have shown that people's ability to listen and attend to speech at the end of the day when they are tired is much more difficult.
- They should try to relax and keep their sense of humour. Tension interferes significantly with the ability to read speech and drains energy.

The listening strategies outlined above will work best when paired with an amplification (i.e. hearing aids, assistive listening devices). If this is something your patient would like to know more about, please advise them to contact Dilworth Hearing on **0800 345 967** and we can recommend the best solution.