

Tips for living with a hard of hearing person

Being hard of hearing is frustrating and there's no doubt that people with hearing loss have to put in extra effort to keep up with what's going on. Living with someone who is hard of hearing is equally as frustrating. Small changes can make a huge difference. Communication is two way and it takes practise and patience on both sides.

Communication at home

- Switch off or turn down background noise.
- Make sure the room is well lit and any sunlight is on your face (sunshine behind you causes your face to be in the silhouette.)
- Get the persons attention e.g. A light tap on the arm or say the persons name and wait for them to look up.
- Set the context/topic and this will take some guesswork out of the conversation.
- Now the person is looking at you and they know the likely vocabulary you're ready to converse.
- Think visual:
 - Keep facing the person
 - Use gestures to reinforce what you're saying
 - Use props e.g. pick up a mug if you are asking if the person wants a coffee.
 - Use more facial expression as this replaces your tone of voice which the hard of hearing person may not pick up on as well.

Equipment to keep you in contact with the world and safe too!

- Invest in a new telephone which has a louder ringer and an option to increase the volume of the in coming callers voice.
- Check you can hear your own doorbell and if not look into purchasing one with a louder ring, multiple ringers dotted around the house or a portable one where the ringer can be taken from room to room.
- If the TV is too loud for other people in the house (or your neighbours) then use subtitles or look into the range of TV listening aids that are for sale. Try www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk
- Check you can hear your smoke alarm without your hearing aids in. If you can't contact your local fire service who will source a vibrating alerter to keep you safe at night.

Emotional impact and behaviours

Ignoring hearing loss and not making changes that are needed may result in the hard of hearing person becoming withdrawn. They may experience feelings of uselessness, low self esteem and lack of interest in others. They will often be tired with the extra effort of communicating. Some people stop trying to join in altogether as they are embarrassed at making mistakes in what they think they have heard. Other hard of hearing people cope with hearing difficulties by talking lots and not listening at all.

Living life with hearing loss

Tell friends and family what's best for you. No one can do the right thing if they don't know what it is. Examples might include: please can we turn the TV off so I can hear better, can you look at me as I am lip reading a bit.

If you are employed, be upfront with your employer and arrange an Access to Work assessment to get the equipment and support you need.

Don't stop hobbies and interests but be prepared to be flexible if your hearing loss is stopping you enjoying what you did before.

Have fun and start something new e.g. learning sign language with your family or friends can be hugely rewarding and a useful skill too.

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