



## COMMUNICATION

### What should I know when I communicate with a hard of hearing person?

- Speak clearly and at a normal pace without shouting or elaborating words.
- Speak face to face and get their attention before beginning to speak.
- Refrain from covering my face with my hands or eating/chewing gum as I speak. Many hard of hearing people rely on speech-reading (lip-reading).
- Lighting is very important. Make sure that my face is not in a shadow and that the light is shining on my face, not in the eyes of the hard of hearing person.
- Rephrase my message rather than repeating it when the hard of hearing person has difficulty understanding.
- Use facial and body expressions, as the tone of my voice may not always be heard.
- Reduce background noise from a television/radio, or move to a quieter place. The following create communication challenges for the hard of hearing person:
  - a moving car
  - large group
  - multiple speakers
  - whispering
  - alarm signals
  - walking outdoors
  - family get-togethers
  - telephone communication
  - television and radio voices

- Give key words or phrases to set the topic of my conversation, and avoid sudden changes of topic.
- If I am giving specific information, such as time or place, be sure the hard of hearing person repeats it back to me.
- Remember that everyone, particularly the hard of hearing person, hears and understands less well when tired or ill.

**As a hard of hearing person, what should I know about communicating with others?**

- Inform others about my hearing loss. Don't be apologetic and avoid expressing anger or frustration.
- Tell others how to talk to me so that I can hear them
- Anticipate difficult situations and plan how to minimize problems.
- Look for the speaker's visual cues to help me understand them.
- Ask for clarification when I do not understand. Don't Bluff.
- Arrange for frequent breaks if discussions are long.
- If someone says something that doesn't make sense, ask them to repeat/rephrase their message. Don't assume that what I hear is what is said.
- Wear my hearing aids and carry extra batteries.
- Be aware of all the assistive listening devices that are available for hard of hearing people, and be prepared to use those that work well for me and others when I am communicating.

Modified by C. Graves 2005, based on several educational handouts written by the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, British Columbia.