

TechSAge Tips

Hearing Loss Self-advocacy and Disclosure of Communication Needs/Preferences

Overview

Aging Concerns, Challenges, and Everyday Solution Strategies (ACCESS) is a mixed-method study that explores everyday challenges among older adults with long-term disabilities, including a subsample of late-deafened older adults. During the interview, we asked participants a variety of open-ended questions about their strategies and solutions to navigate the challenges faced because of hearing loss. A common strategy was advocating for yourself and disclosing communication needs and preferences. This tip sheet highlights key recommendations mentioned in the interviews to improve communication for and with people who have hearing loss.



General Communication Needs

- Be upfront and disclose to others “I have hearing loss; I wear a cochlear implant and/or hearing aid and I need you to...” to prevent communication breakdown.
- Ways others can help facilitate conversation:
 - Face each other so lip reading could be used.
 - Slow down and enunciate
 - Speake clearly. Volume is usually not the issue.
 - Speak one at a time if in a group setting.

- Repeat what they just said, regardless of if “not important,” as it excludes a person with hearing loss from the conversation.
- Paraphrase/highlight important aspects of the conversation.

Technology

- Engage others with your assistive listening devices
 - Ask the communication partner to speak into their mini mic/Roger pen or passing it around in a group setting.
 - Request a speaker/lecturer wear the mini mic/Roger pen to receive direct input to hearing aid/cochlear implant.
 - Ask the communication partner to speak into their phone so that a captioning app can transcribe the message. If needed, request that they spell words out or repeat if the app makes an error.

Emergencies

- Take advance steps to prepare for emergency situations.
 - Provide clear mouth masks to responders or doctors to facilitate lip reading
 - Have a sign on windshield that says, “hearing impaired”.
 - Have a sign on phone that says “I wear cochlear implants; I cannot receive an MRI.
 - Carry card in wallet that says, “I have cochlear implants...I might need CART reporting, I might need pen and paper, but that I can speak.”
 - Have a sign for hospital door that says, “hearing impaired, I’d like you to look at me directly or use transcription on phone.”
 - Notify fire department and living complex about not being able to hear alarms
 - Ask living complexes for accessible fire alarms (e.g., strobe lights, bed shakers).

Public Spaces

- Have a plan for communicating in public space.
 - Doctor’s Offices: CART captioning; writing down important information; asking staff to motion for them when it is your turn; have medical chart say ‘hard of hearing’ visibly.

- Workspaces: ask for meetings to be on Zoom/hybrid for captioning; have a sign on desk that says, “It’s not that I’m ignoring you, I can’t hear you.”
- Stores: request to follow worker to location of desired item.
- Restaurants: ask for seating away from background noise; restaurants could brighten lights for improved lipreading or reduce volume of music.
- Entertainment venues: Request seating closer for clearer lip reading, copies of script, open captioning, assistive listening devices.
- Airports: ask gate agent to personally notify them of any important announcements, pre-board to sit where you can better hear announcements and speak to flight attendants.

Legal Advocacy

- Advocate your legal rights protected under the Americans with Disability Act (ADA):
 - Ask businesses and corporations to install loop systems, display accurate captions, and provide functioning assistive listening devices.
 - File a complaint to ADA when businesses/workplaces are in violation of the law.

Additional Resources

- [TechSAge User Needs Project](#)
- [The Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)



www.TechSAgeRERC.org

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