



When someone you  
know has a hearing loss

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## ② Take the first step

The effects of hearing loss are not limited to the hearing impaired person alone. Hearing loss also has a significant impact on family, friends and co-workers. Difficult communication, misunderstandings and the frequent need to repeat what is said can be frustrating for everyone involved. Fortunately, there are several things you can do to help make communication easier. The first step is to be aware of the difficulties the hearing impaired person faces.



## **②** Facts about hearing loss

- 1** Most people with hearing loss experience both a decrease in the volume of sounds and a decrease in the clarity of speech, even when it is loud enough. Though a person may “hear” what you say, they may not always understand all the words or may confuse some sounds with others.
- 2** Background noise makes understanding extremely difficult. Even people with normal hearing have difficulty communicating when there is a lot of background noise. For those with hearing loss, the problem is even worse.
- 3** Many people feel embarrassed about their hearing loss and may nod their head and pretend to understand when they actually don't.



- 4** Although hearing aids can help, they do not restore hearing to normal the way that eyeglasses correct vision. A person wearing a hearing aid will still have trouble understanding in some situations.
  
- 5** It takes time to get used to a hearing aid, especially for those who have had a hearing loss for a long time. Sounds that have been forgotten need to be relearned. The world can seem very noisy and even overwhelming at first. If you know someone who has tried hearing aids but has stuffed them into a drawer, encourage them to go back to their dispenser to have the aids readjusted. It can take several visits to achieve a comfortable fit and comfortable sound quality. Your patience and encouragement can be a big help.
  
- 6** Hearing loss can be mistaken for senility in older people. Make sure that a thorough hearing test is part of any health evaluation.



## ② Good communication habits

### 1 **Get the attention of the hearing impaired person before you start speaking.**

If they are “ready” to communicate, they are less likely to miss anything.

### 2 **Don't shout.** Speak in a clear, projected voice but not too loud. Enunciate clearly but do not overemphasize your words.

### 3 **Don't talk too fast or too slow.**

Many people with hearing loss understand better when speech is just slightly slower than normal, but not too slow!

### 4 **Make sure your face can be clearly seen.**

Lighting should be adequate and there should be nothing covering your mouth or face. Many sounds of speech are visible on the lips and can provide important extra clues.



**5 Don't talk when the water is running.**

Background noises can make understanding very difficult. Turn off sources of noise before having a conversation or move to a quieter area, if possible.

**6 Don't talk to someone from the next room.**

Distance from the listener is important. The further away you are, the less of a chance that you will be heard. Make sure you are in the same room and close enough to be easily heard and seen.

**7 Rephrase rather than repeat.**

When someone asks you to repeat, it may be more helpful if you rephrase what you said. Sometimes different words will be easier to understand.



**8 Be on the lookout for misunderstandings.**

Ask questions from time to time to make sure that the person has understood what you have said.

**9 Relax and be patient.**

People with hearing loss often feel a great amount of stress as they concentrate to understand every word that is said. A kind facial expression and an accepting attitude can help a hearing impaired person relax and enjoy the conversation.

**10 Encourage the person to try a hearing instrument.**



Hearing and understanding are basic human needs. Hearing problems and the resulting social consequences represent a challenge for society. We believe in a world in which people with restricted hearing can communicate again without limitation thanks to advanced technology.

For more information about hearing and hearing loss [www.bernafon.com](http://www.bernafon.com)

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