

**Helpful Hints for people living with hearing loss; as found in LACE –
Listening and Communication Enhancement – Product of Neurotone**
www.neurotone.com

An ideal distance between you and the person you are talking with is about 3 to 5 feet. The loudness of sound fades rapidly as it travels, so the farther away you are from a speaker, the harder it is to hear what is said.

Avoid carrying on conversations from another room. It is tempting, but unproductive!

Look at the person who is speaking. Position yourself to get a full view of the face, not just a profile.

Sit with your better ear (if one is better than the other) toward the speaker. If you wear only one hearing aid, try to situate yourself so that the ear with the hearing aid is directed toward the sounds you are listening to.

Concentrate on the main ideas that the speaker is expressing rather than straining to understand every word that is said. Many times speech is redundant and predictable.

Have someone take notes for you in meetings. This will let you concentrate on the speaker and make sure you haven't missed anything.

Adjusting to a new hearing aid, or new hearing aid program, takes time. You are used to hearing a certain way, and new sounds can be frustrating and distracting.

Don't get discouraged.

Try to become familiar with the way different people express themselves in group meetings, ask speakers to raise their hand or otherwise identify themselves, so that you can focus on the person who is speaking.

Staying up-to-date with current events in the world and in your community may help you follow discussions or conversations more readily.

LACE training may seem difficult at first. If you're frustrated, remember that LACE will adjust the difficulty of training, based on your results. If you need encouragement, or have any questions, feel free to call our customer support line at (800) 409-LACE."

Supplement your hearing aid with assistive devices, if necessary.

Don't bluff and nod as if you understand when you don't. It is better to ask questions than to continue along the wrong path.

Ask the speaker to rephrase or simplify what was said, rather than to repeat the whole message. This can help by replacing words you have difficulty hearing with those that are easier to hear, and reduces frustration on both ends of the conversation.

Telling the speaker what part of the message you did not understand provides better information to the speaker. This can help correct the problem, saving time and energy.

Don't be afraid to tell the speaker if they are speaking too softly or too quickly. Ask him/her to speak clearly and naturally, but not to shout or exaggerate movements.

Don't be afraid to tell the speaker if a hand or another obstruction is in front of his or her mouth, or to ask him/her to not eat or smoke while talking.

Work at listening; do not get into the habit of allowing someone else (spouse, family, or friend) to listen for you.

Conversation is a two-way interaction; do not monopolize it in an attempt to direct and control it.

Be willing to acknowledge your hearing loss and ask for help. Most reasonable people will be glad to help if your request is specific and if they know what to do.

Whenever possible, ask for specifics in writing (such as directions or key medical information) to ensure accuracy and understanding. This may be used later for reference.

Maximize the use of lighting. Have the light behind you so the speaker's face is well illuminated.

Minimize interfering background noise by turning off the television, radio, running water, or fan when conversing; or find a quieter corner away from noise.

Rearrange the room in your home in which you spend the most time talking with others. Arrange the furniture and lighting so that you can see everyone's face clearly.

Close open doors or windows facing a noisy or busy area. Keep the car window closed or lower the volume of the hearing aid, which is closest to the window. (Hearing aids that adjust automatically may do this for you.)

Improve the acoustics of a room with carpeting, draperies and other soft surfaces to help absorb sound and reduce echoing or reverberation, which can distort speech.

When going to a restaurant, try to make plans in advance. Look up noise ratings in the newspaper, go during off peak hours, reserve a table in a quiet corner, and sit with your back against the wall.

When attending a play, concert, church service or lecture, try to call ahead or arrive early to get a seat as close to the front as possible. Where provided, request an assistive listening device or that the speaker uses a microphone.

When going to a movie or play, you can read the reviews in advance to learn about the plot.

Did you know that movie theaters, concert halls and stadiums must have assistive listening devices made available to patrons?

Have realistic expectations about what you will be able to hear in various situations and environments. There will be some situations where listening will be difficult and will require more effort and strategies to understand conversation.

Check the situation in public places before entirely blaming your hearing loss. It may be the case that others are having difficulty as well, because of a bad P.A. system, poor speaker, or background noise.

"85% of LACE users see real-life listening improvement. Most of these people don't notice results during the early stages of LACE training. Stick with it!" Dr. Robert Sweetow, University of California, San Francisco

Pay particular attention to your own speech. A long-standing hearing loss, or even a sudden loss, may cause a deterioration of voice and enunciation.

Recognize that illness and fatigue will make listening more difficult. Allow yourself to withdraw and relax at times.

Tension interferes with the ability to understand in difficult situations and drains energy. Try to relax and keep your sense of humor. The ability to laugh at yourself is a great help in adjusting to any situation or condition.

Occasional confusions will certainly arise. Be patient and keep a sense of humor so both you and your conversation partner(s) can laugh at the confusions instead of being frustrated by them.

It is not possible for even the best of listeners to hear everything.

Repeat or restate key points or specific information (such as a time or place) to be sure you understood it correctly.

Listen for main/central themes rather than the facts or details. Then ask for clarifications if necessary.

Exercise your mind with difficult material and experiences rather than resisting them or tuning them out.

Use the tone of speech and other speaker qualities to help give you cues about the content.

Acknowledge that some voices or accents are going to cause problems no matter what you do.

Difficulty hearing the TV is common and often remediated with assistive listening devices.

At social gatherings, arrive early before the party becomes too large or noisy.

Find some of the quieter areas in which to converse.

If it is not possible to reduce background noise, sitting or standing with your back towards a wall may help diminish some of the noise.

Leave a message on your telephone answering service for the person calling to leave a slow, clear, short message and to repeat the number twice.

When entering a group in the middle of a conversation, ask one person to sum up the gist of the conversation.

In an extremely noisy situation, where the noise may come and go, limit conversation to before the noise starts or after it ends.

Do not try to only hear, or to only speech read (lip read). A combination of hearing and seeing enables you to understand most speakers better.

Remember that the education of others is your responsibility. Many people do not know how to talk with the wearer of a hearing aid or with someone who is a speech reader.

At times of relaxation, a person often does not listen. Allow yourself the luxury of withdrawing sometimes, but do not confuse this with your hearing loss.

Communication is both auditory and visual. Consider having your eyes examined as well as your hearing. Use corrective lenses if needed when conversing.

Realize that beards and mustaches can interfere with the ability to speech read.

Tell your communication partner to get your attention before speaking to you (with a touch on the shoulder or some other signal) if your attention is elsewhere.

"Many of the best things for us are the hardest to maintain. Exercise, diet and LACE training all require diligence." Dr. Robert Sweetow, University of California, San Francisco

Learn to anticipate and understand the topic of conversation by using situational and contextual cues.

Be aware of the topic of conversation, the situation at hand, the person speaking and environmental cues that may help you to make educated guesses on what you may have missed.

Make sure others are aware of the possible distortion of sound that may occur with hearing loss. You may hear the speaker, but still have difficulty understanding some words.

It is not uncommon for some hearing-impaired persons to be very sensitive to loud sounds, even though they do not hear soft sounds.

Communication is the way we interact with others and the world around us. We receive, process, and send information to exchange thoughts, feelings, wants, and ideas.

Communication takes place constantly. Even during sleep we are listening (e.g., our hearing alerts us to fire alarms, telephones ringing, etc.).

We communicate in many different ways – through touch, sight, hearing, speech, writing, gesturing, and reading. Speaking and listening are the most common ways we communicate.

Language is the systems and rules we use to assess and express communication information.

The effects of communication disabilities are different for each individual.

Devices can be used to enhance or amplify sound in addition to, or instead of, hearing aids. These include: assistive listening devices for groups or individuals, hearing aid compatible telephones, amplified telephone handsets

Devices can be used to provide visual and/or tactile information in addition to, or instead of, hearing aids. These include: telecommunications device (TDD) or text telephone (TTY), flashing or strobe alarm lights, vibrotactile (sense of touch) alerting

Devices and services can be used to translate or facilitate communication information in addition to, or instead of, hearing aids. These include: text telephone (TTY or TDD), augmentative communication devices (e.g. word boards, speech output devices)

At a meeting or lecture, ask the presenter to use the blackboard or projector as much as possible. Ask for lecture notes or written material in advance, and obtain a copy of the agenda.

Arrange for someone to take notes for you at a meeting or lecture to free yourself to concentrate on listening and speech reading.

When you leave a dark place for a well lit one, your eyes need a few minutes to adjust. Don't try to speech read during that time.

Sometimes the noise in a room stops and starts, rather than continuing all the time (e.g. airplane noise near an airport). It is a good idea to pause the conversation until the noise stops.

Remember that experience can help improve communication. Sometimes it is possible to become familiar with a particular pattern of speech. The more you talk with a person, the easier it becomes to understand, even if that person has poor speech habits.

If several people are talking at one time, tell the group that you can understand only one person at a time. Many people with normal hearing have the same problem.

In order to see the maximum number of people in a group, seat yourself appropriately. The best position will vary with the situation. At a table, sit at the head or foot rather than at the side to see more people without having to move your body. In a living room, sit on a chair rather than a sofa to avoid having to speech read from a side view.

It's not about hearing. It's about listening.

Reading improves context and linguistic skills and may help you better predict missing information in difficult listening situations.

"Many people begin to notice significant real life improvement during the second half of their LACE training. Hang in there!" Dr. Robert Sweetow, University of California, San Francisco

Using your comfort level as a guide, begin using your hearing aids at home where you have more control over the sounds in your environment. Take the devices off if/when you need to, and put them back on after your ears and brain have rested a bit. Wear your hearing aids longer and longer each day.

All sounds are amplified with hearing aids, not just speech. Listening to and recognizing background sounds will help you relearn how to tune them out.

Begin listening with your new hearing aids by talking about familiar topics with one person in a quiet setting. Later, you may add background noise such as a quiet television or radio while conversing to see how you are progressing

Practice discriminating speech sounds by familiarizing yourself with the visual aspects such as lip movements. This can be done by watching someone read a list of words that differ by only one sound (i.e. bat/cat, kite/bite, wish/fish) while focusing on differences between the two. Be aware that some sounds look the same (i.e. pan/man, bite/might, sew/toe). Try these sounds without watching, discriminating only using your hearing.

Gradually expand the diversity of listening environments and variety of people with whom you communicate as you become more experienced with your hearing aids.

Hearing aids may not help in every situation, however, there are devices designed specifically for a variety of difficult situations.

Get a listener's attention by saying their name, knocking on the door, and/or tapping them on the shoulder before speaking to them. Make sure others know to do this with you when they want to speak with you.

In difficult situations, speak clearly and use a slightly slower than normal speech rate to allow the listener to catch up, or try pausing between sentences. You can also use this as a suggestion to someone speaking to you, if you are having difficulty listening.

Shouting can distort the speech signal.

Understanding can be increased by as much as 20% when you use visual cues, even if you have not been taught to speech read.

Remain patient, positive and relaxed. Becoming impatient, negative and tense will only make communication more difficult.

Try not to interrupt too often, and be unobtrusive when it is necessary. It may help to pre-arrange hand signals to slow down the speech rate, speak up or remove an obstruction.

Ask your more frequent communication partners to avoid wordiness: use simple, concise sentences.

Provide positive feedback to the speaker by letting them know when their voice level or rate is just right for you.

Bluffing robs you of opportunities to practice good communication skills and leads to misinterpretations.

Even the most expensive hearing aids have limitations.

Assistive listening devices can sometimes turn an impossible listening situation into one that is possible.

Developing a habit of speaking in a distinct and clear manner has been shown to increase the amount of speech understood by those with hearing loss by as much as 15-25%, even in background noise.

Clear speech is a precise production of each individual speech sound within every word, produced at a slightly louder than normal level and at a slightly slower rate than occurs naturally.

Clear speech should not replace important communication strategies, but may be used in combination with these.

Excessively slow speech, or very loud speech is often more difficult to understand, and is frequently considered condescending.

"Clinical studies showed that people continue to improve all the way through the 20th session of LACE training. Don't give up if you aren't noticing immediate effects." - Dr. Robert Sweetow, University of California, San Francisco

Choose restaurants that are designed to absorb noise with more widely spaced tables, carpeting, softer fabric-covered furniture, and curtains. This decreases the distortion of sound.

Avoid dining out at peak times when restaurants are full.

Inform the hostess that you have difficulty hearing and request a table in a quiet area of the restaurant, away from exits and high traffic areas.

When entering the restaurant, check for a written list of specials for the evening.

Avoid dining out at peak times when the noise level is high.

When making reservations politely mention that you have difficulty hearing and request a table in a quiet area of the restaurant.

When entering the restaurant, check the posted list of specials for the evening or ask the hostess for a written description before your order is taken.

Dining with smaller, more intimate groups will make it easier to follow dinner conversations.

When dining with a large group, try to concentrate on conversations with people next to or across from you at the table.

Knowing your limitations can help you avoid the frustration of trying to overcome the impossible.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment settings, state and local government agencies and public services, public accommodations, and telecommunications.

The ADA defines a disability as a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities (walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, etc.); a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment.

According to the ADA, a communication barrier is anything that does not allow a hearing-impaired person to both give and receive communicated information efficiently, such as noisy air conditioners, non-acoustic rooms, incompatible phones, etc.

State and local government departments and agencies are prohibited from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in such a way that they are excluded from participation in services, programs, or activities. This applies to public transportation services such as buses and trains, but does not include airplanes, or commuter railway services.

Because of the ADA, movie theaters should be equipped with assistive listening devices for use at no charge. Although a refundable deposit is sometime required.

Individuals are protected from discrimination at any public accommodation, such as: restaurants, retail stores, stadiums, libraries, hotels/motels, museums, theaters, parks, daycare centers, private schools, amusement parks, doctors' offices, privately-run transportation services, etc.

Discrimination includes: , imposing eligibility criteria that screens an applicant out because of hearing loss (unless hearing is an essential function of the job), failure to make reasonable accommodations, failure to remove communication barriers if readily achievable, failure to provide auxiliary aids and services -- unless to do so would result in undue hardship.

Avoid ambiguity in conversations by using precise terminology and commonly used words.

Factors that may influence the listener's understanding in communication include; level of hearing loss, type of hearing loss, use of hearing aids and/or assistive devices, attention level, motivation to hear, expectations, emotional state, fatigue, distracting thoughts, speech reading skills, tinnitus, tension level, manual communication (gestures and sign language)

Factors that may influence the speaker being understood in communication include; voice intensity, voice projection, rate of speech, clarity of speech, facial expression, body language, foreign accent, visibility of listener, monotonous tone, emotionality, objects at mouth, interest in message, relationship to listener

Factors in the environment that may influence understanding in communication include; background noise, lighting conditions, room acoustics, distance from source of sound, assistive devices, distractions, use of visual aids, obstructions

"You're more than halfway through your training! Keep up the good work. Your commitment will pay off." - Dr. Robert Sweetow, University of California, San Francisco

Make a habit to watch the speaker even if listening is not difficult. It is good to get in the habit of paying attention.

Don't interrupt the speaker before he/she finishes a sentence. You may not understand the beginning, but may catch the end.

Keep alert for key words in sentences in order to follow ideas.

Use clues from the situation to help get meanings. You may be able to anticipate words or phrases that will probably be used.

Keep informed of your friends' interests. Knowing about the conversational topic makes understanding easier.

If someone is speaking at a distance, move closer.

Pick the best spot to communicate by avoiding areas that are poorly lit, very noisy or reverberant.

Anticipate difficult situations and plan how to minimize problems.

If possible, arrange for frequent breaks if appointments or meetings are long.

Set realistic goals about what you can expect to understand.

Encourage friends and family to ask you for suggestions to improve communications.

Provide feedback to the speaker that you understand or fail to understand.

Speak to others, as you want others to speak to you.

Be creative and assertive in solving communication problems.

Take responsibility for communicating effectively.

Watch the speaker carefully so that you can see his/her total expression; it will give you a clue to what the speaker is saying. Don't concentrate on the speaker's lips alone; be aware of gestures, facial expressions, and body movements.

Tell your friends and family you are hard of hearing and are studying speech reading. Encourage them to help.

Pay attention to your speech. Since you might not always hear correctly, you might have a tendency to drop the ends of your words or pronounce some sounds differently. Ask family and friends to help you monitor your speech.

Remember that it takes time to become a good speech reader. Each individual will learn at his/her own rate. Plan to refresh your skills as needed.

Don't be afraid of speech reading. It takes a lot of practice, but once you begin using it, you will find that it is very helpful.

A key to effective listening: Find areas of interest.

"Twenty one half hour sessions of LACE will give you listening tools to use for the rest of your life. Commit to 10 hours of training and stick to it. It will pay off!" - Dr. Robert Sweetow, University of California, San Francisco

A key to effective listening: Don't get hung up on grammatical errors.

A key to effective listening: Listen for ideas or central themes.

A key to effective listening: Be flexible.

A key to effective listening, Work at listening.

A key to effective listening: Resist distractions and enhance your concentration.

A key to effective listening: Keep an open mind.

A key to effective listening: Capitalize on the fact that thought can be faster than speech.

A key to effective listening: Listen to the tone of voice.

A key to effective listening: Challenge yourself with difficult listening material.

Characteristic of a bad listener: Tunes out boring subjects.

Characteristic of a bad listener: Tunes out if the delivery of the message is poor or difficult to understand.

Characteristic of a bad listener: Enters into arguments easily.

Characteristic of a bad listener: Listens for individual words or facts, instead of the main idea.

Characteristic of a bad listener: Takes intensive notes.

Characteristic of a bad listener: Shows no interest in the conversation, or bluffs through it.

Characteristic of a bad listener: Distracted easily.

Characteristic of a bad listener: Resists difficult listening material, seeks only easy situations.

Characteristic of a bad listener: Reacts to emotional, or loaded, words and misses what comes next.

Characteristic of a bad listener: Tends to daydream or tune out slow or soft speakers.

At informal gatherings, try to limit the number of people you speak with at one time. One-to-one conversations are easier than group conversations.

Hearing in noisy places is a problem for all listeners. At parties, meetings, theater, movies, and church, practice may help you learn to separate speech from background noise.

"Consistency is very important to the success of your training. For best results, train with LACE five days a week." - Dr. Robert Sweetow, University of California, San Francisco

When listening over the telephone, use the T-switch (if applicable) and place the receiver close to the microphone of your hearing aid.

Passivity in difficult communication situations results in poor communication.

Don't withdraw from conversation to avoid misunderstandings or conflicts, and don't pretend to understand by smiling or nodding your head.

Aggressiveness in difficult communication situations results in poor communication. Never react hostilely to a speaker, dominate conversations or refuse to admit even partial responsibility for the communication breakdown.

Assertiveness in difficult communication situations result in good communication.

Attempt to admit problems, ask for assistance, and take initiative for improving the communication situation.

Our vocabulary and language skills increase as we age. Use your experience and knowledge to help you navigate difficult situations and fill-in what you may miss.

High-frequency hearing losses make speech sound like it is being mumbled.

Visual assistive alerting devices include; visual call alerting, phone flash/strobe, clock radio alerter, baby cry indicator, knock/bell light

The phone company can help you find a phone with loud ringer and other helpful features.

Tactile assistive alerting devices can help you when hearing aids can't. Examples of these types of devices include a pillow vibrator or a wrist vibrator.

There are telephone amplification systems and other telephone aids to help you on the telephone. These types of devices include a portable or handset amplifier or the use of a relay system.

Television amplification and aids may help if you can't hear the TV, or if you like the volume louder than those who watch TV with you. These devices include: , amplified speaker, personal listening system, using closed captioning, infrared systems

Personal one-to-one communication aids include: the PocketTalker, or an FM system.

Large area listening assistive devices include: infrared systems, induction loops, and FM systems.

Saying Pardon Me will result in a repetition of the statement. Try to be specific about what you would like to hear, or ask the speaker to rephrase the statement.

Confirmation that you heard correctly may be done with a question such as, "did you say _____?"

If you have new hearing aids, you will be hearing sounds you haven't heard in a long time. Your world had become quieter, and now you must readjust to the normally noisy world in which we all live. Training and practice will help you acquire new listening habits.

Many pay phones have volume controls. When you see a telephone with the a blue button (showing a telephone handset with sound waves coming from it), press the button to increase the telephone level.

When you need to use a pay phone, look for a phone with a blue grommet between the cord and the headset, this phone is compatible with hearing aid telecoil switches.

Hearing aids can benefit from simple maintenance. Clean your hearing aids daily, store them properly and see your hearing health care provider periodically, or when you notice problems.

Acoustic feedback is the term used for the squealing of hearing aids. This is caused by amplified sound escaping from the receiver and getting reamplified by the microphone.

Where appropriate, directional microphones can help you improve your ability to hear in noise.

"A half an hour a day is a small price to pay for better communication skills. Don't give up if you're feeling frustrated or bored. Your quality of life is worth the effort!" - Dr. Robert Sweetow, University of California, San Francisco

Two people may have the exact same results on a hearing test, but have very different abilities to understand speech.

The audiogram (hearing test) you received indicates your minimum hearing levels for each pitch on a graph.

Hearing loss can be a source of depression. Talking with others about your difficulties may help ease the burden. Don't hesitate to contact a professional.

Try different conversation repair strategies, and find the ones that work best for you.

Do your family and friends understand what it is like to have a hearing loss? A simulation will help them realize what you are experiencing.

Remember you are not alone. One in ten people have some hearing loss. One in three people over the age of 65 have hearing loss.

The most common type of hearing loss is due to a loss of sensory cells in the inner ear. Do you know what type of hearing loss you have?

Encourage your frequent communication partners to learn more about hearing loss and communication strategies.

Daily logs can be helpful to determine where you have problems. You can prepare for these situations and try and rectify them.
We hear with our brains, not with our ears.

0 dB is the softest sound that the average ear can hear.

100 dB is the sound level of a chainsaw when you are holding it.

High frequency sounds like f and s are also very soft, low frequency sounds like ah, and oo are louder.

The high frequency sounds are the sounds that give speech clarity, and are the first to be lost with a high frequency hearing loss. This can be why people sound like they are mumbling.

Hearing aids only make things louder. They do not automatically improve your listening or communication skills.

The three parts of the ear are the outer ear, the middle ear and the inner ear. All hearing aids have four main parts: a microphone, amplifier, receiver, and battery.

The hearing aid is a small unit packed with electronic circuits; therefore, moisture, debris, or rough care of the unit can affect its ability to function properly.

A hearing aid should be removed when taking a shower, because steam and moisture may corrode the unit.

A hearing aid should be removed when working in a hot or dirty environment because perspiration and dirt can harm the unit.

If you wear a hearing aid and are caught in the rain, remove the hearing aid and place it into a container until you are indoors, to prevent exposure to moisture.

Never spray hairspray around a hearing aid. The hairspray will clog the microphone.

A dry-aid kit can remove any moisture the hearing aid may have accumulated during the day and keep the aid in working order.

If a hearing aid is whistling: turn down the volume; check for wax buildup in the ear and hearing aid; be sure the aid has a proper fit.

Refreshing your memory about names and places, or learning some background information relevant to an upcoming situation, can really help you keep up in a difficult conversation.

Acknowledging to your communication partner that you have a hearing loss can be difficult, but in the end can make things easier for everyone involved.

You don't have to be fluent in sign language to benefit from gestures. Try learning the sign for the letters you miss most frequently in speech and teach them to your frequent communication partners. A quick sign will help you distinguish between the names Pat and Matt.

Try using a text telephone relay call if you have to make an important call in a noisy place like an airport.

Before an interview or meeting do a little research, so that you will be comfortable with names and references the first time they are introduced.

When managing your listening environment: maximize visibility and audibility.

When managing your listening environment: minimize noise, reverberation and distance.

Communication involves much more than hearing: it involves listening to and correctly comprehending the message.