



Living with hearing loss

Impact of hearing loss

Hearing and quality of life are closely linked. Poor hearing affects both the person with the loss and those they communicate with. A comprehensive study conducted in the USA on the effects of untreated hearing loss on adults as well as their families found that *hearing loss impacts on our social, emotional, psychological and physical well being.*

People with hearing impairment can experience:

- Embarrassment
- Loss of confidence
- Irritability and anger
- Depression
- Feeling of being ignored
- Dependence on others
- Withdrawal, isolation and loneliness
- Exclusion from family and social activities
- Tiredness

Other people, such as family members and close friends, may find themselves:

- Talking for the other person
- Continually having to explain or interpret
- Sacrificing some activities (eg. theatre, parties)
- Making assumptions about what hard of hearing person thinks or needs
- Frustrated
- Embarrassed in company
- Tired

These effects mean hearing loss can place very real strains on relationships.

Hearing aids can make a big difference

The study mentioned above on the impact of hearing loss particularly investigated the

difference a hearing aid made to the user's quality of life.

Because impaired hearing results in a distorted or incomplete communication, this can lead to greater isolation and withdrawal and the individual's social life becomes restricted.

This study shows that use of hearing aids resulted in improvements in many quality-of-life areas, in particular:

- Improved interpersonal relationships
- Improved health
- Enhanced social activity
- Reduction in discrimination against the person with the hearing loss
- Reduction in anger and frustration
- Greater earning power (especially the more severe hearing losses) and
- A lower incidence of depression.

Good communication takes two

Take steps to reduce the tension in as many ways as you can, including making allowances and compromises for each other. And learn to listen – which involves much more than hearing!

A good listener:

- Allows people to finish what they are saying without interrupting
- Physically shows an interest in other people's conversations
- Asks questions when they don't understand the point that's being made
- Tunes out distractions when they are listening
- Looks for non-verbal messages (like body language, facial expression and tone of voice)

- Avoids getting upset if the speaker's views are different from theirs
- Shows empathy

How good are your listening skills?

Communication breakdown and repair

Communication takes two. Effective communication happens when the sender of the message **and** the receiver of the message take responsibility for its success.

If you are hard of hearing (or even normal hearing!) and not understanding what is said, there are more effective ways of finding out what was said besides "Pardon?" or "What did you say?" or just looking blank. Here are some ideas...

REPETITION: For example, "Can you repeat that for me please? I didn't quite catch what you said."

CLARIFICATION or CONFIRMATION: For example, "Did you say Thursday at 10 o'clock or 12 o'clock?"

REPHRASING: For example, "I'm sorry, I don't understand what you are saying. Could you say that in a different way please?"

KEY WORDS: Repeat the words that you heard. For example, "I didn't catch all that you said. Were you talking about a picnic?"

SPELLING AND CODE WORDS: For example, "Could you please spell the name of the street? Is that B for Baker, E for Edgar, A for Alpha and D for Delta? BEAD Street?"

NUMBERS: Instead of saying whole numbers repeat the digits. For example, for two hundred and thirty nine, "Did you say that was number 2 – 3 – 9 Bead Street?"

COUNTING: For example, "I did not get the time we are to meet. Can you please count from zero and stop at the correct number?" (Excellent technique for using on the phone.)

WRITING: For example, "Please write down the name of the street." Or at a meeting, ask a friend to sit next to you and write down key words as the topic changes.



If you would like advice or more information, call 131 797 to be connected to your local Australian Hearing centre.

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