

Communicating with persons with hearing loss

NID Training Disability Diary

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Introduction

In Communication theory 'noise' refers to anything that can cause a barrier to communication. Such 'noise' can come from real sounds, from someone not being attentive, or from some internal factors like not being able to hear or understand the language of the other person. Lack of information about the culture and language of each other can also create barriers to communication (Malaspina, 2018). When deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) and hearing people interact, missed communication and miscommunication can cause misunderstanding and friction. Such misunderstanding can be avoided by hearing people making simple accommodations (Hall, Hall & Caselli, 2019).

Discussion

The following are some simple accommodations that can be made:

- Attract the attention of a DHH person by saying his or her name or attract attention in some way. A light touch on the arm is often quite adequate.
- Face the DHH person directly, on the same level and in good light. Make sure that there is not a bright light behind you so that your face can be seen clearly.
- Be as close to the person with whom you are speaking as possible. Allow the person to see your mouth if possible.
- Many DHH people can lip read, so, speak clearly, slowly and distinctly, but do not shout or over pronounce your words, rather move your mouth in a natural way.
- Use body language that supports what you are saying.
- Keep your hands away from your face while you talk.
- Do not chew or smoke while you are talking.
- Beards and moustaches can prevent successful speech (lip) reading.
- If a DHH person has better hearing in one ear, stay near to the 'good' ear.
- If the DHH person cannot understanding a certain phrase, say it in a different way instead of repeating the original.
- In work settings use graphics, pictures, or posters to support important information. Posters must be visible to everyone.
- Take turns to speak and avoid interruptions.

- Always have pen and paper available to write notes to assist communication.

(Adapted from Scott & Dostal, 2019; Winn & Teece, 2020; Malaspina, 2018)

Conclusion

Communication 'noise' and eventual breakdown can be avoided if everyone makes small differences to their environments and attitudes because DHH people use their hands and bodies to communicate and use eyes to 'listen'. Wearing masks during the COVID pandemic has added to communication difficulties, thus, those who need to communicate with DHH people need to consider how they behave.

References

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