



Dear

As you know, my hearing loss often makes it difficult for me to communicate effectively with you when we get together. You are an important part of my life, and I need to chat with you now more than ever since my hearing loss tends to isolate me.

However, effective communication is a two-way street. I can't do it by myself. I need you to help me. Here are seven things you can do that will go a long ways towards making our conversations both effective and enjoyable.

- 1. Please face me when you are talking to me.** It is almost impossible for me to understand you if I cannot see your lips, facial expressions and gestures. Therefore, I seldom, if ever, understand you if you are talking to me from another room, if you have your head buried in the newspaper or in the fridge, or if you are walking away from me.
- 2. Make sure the light falls on your face, not behind you.** If your face is in the shadow, I cannot see you clearly enough to speechread. In addition, if the light source is behind you, it shines in my eyes and eventually gives me both eyestrain and a headache.
- 3. Do not cover or distort your facial movements when talking to me.** If you are eating, chewing, smoking, etc. while talking to me, your speech will be difficult for me to understand. Keep your hands away from your face, especially your mouth. Also, realize that I have difficulty understanding you if you wear a mustache or beard.
- 4. Reduce or eliminate background noise before you talk to me.** I

cannot hear you above the noise of running water, rustling papers, other people talking, the TV, radio or stereo, a vacuum cleaner or similar sounds. Your words are buried in the noise because neither my ears nor my hearing aids can discriminate between sounds like your ears can.

5. **Treat me as an intelligent human being.** If you say something and I don't get it the first time, don't say, "Forget it!" or "Never mind!" Repeat it again (and again; rephrase if necessary). This tells me that you think I am worth it. Remember, I feel even more frustrated than you do if I cannot understand you. Also, if I don't understand you the first or second time you speak to me, do not think I am stupid. I am a normal intelligent person who just has trouble hearing you.
6. **Talk to me slowly and clearly.** Do not shout at me or over-articulate your words. This just makes speechreading you almost impossible. Speaking more slowly gives my brain enough time to translate your lip movements into the words you are saying.
7. **Converse with me one-to-one as much as possible.** Because of my hearing loss, my ears cannot separate people's voices like your ears can. That is why in most group situations, I hear people talking, but cannot understand much of what they say. Also, in a group, I find it difficult to follow several people at once. By the time I have figured out who is speaking next, I have lost most of what was said. It is much easier for me to understand you face-to-face in a quiet corner of the room than as a member of a group.

Thank you so much for your understanding and for being patient with me. I value our time spent conversing together. Let's do it more often.

Sincerely,