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## **HEARING LOSS AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS**

Even in the best of times human relationships can experience communication breakdowns. These can be exacerbated if incorrect or disparaging assumptions about the other party's motivations arise. Now, add to that equation, the misinterpretations that may occur when one of the partners' experiences hearing loss and the other is in denial!



To facilitate communication repair, Audiologists encourage both partners to attend the hearing assessment and to later join together in the subsequent hearing rehabilitation program.

Together the specific communicative difficulties can be determined so work on the solutions can commence.

Firstly it is important that partners understand that for a hearing impaired person the presence of background noise corrupts the communicative process. We know that most hearing impaired individuals require the speech to be ten decibels louder than the surrounding noise. Those with normal hearing can usually cope quite well with speech being 5dB softer than the noise. What this means is that the kettle or dishwasher being turned on will reduce the intelligibility of speech dramatically. Secondly, the loudness of speech diminishes rapidly with distance, so, talking from room to room will no longer be effective. Importantly those sounds that can't be heard are usually visible on the lips so allowing the hearing impaired person to see your face is particularly important in noisy environments. Sitting opposite each other rather than besides in restaurants provides immediate benefit.

Once these simple concepts are understood it is not difficult to work out why you were understood yesterday but not today. Look carefully at what noise and distances were involved. Re-engineering the acoustics improves communication extraordinarily well. The hearing impaired person must also assume responsibility by seeking clarification by reflecting what was perceived back to the speaker. Expressing interest in what was just said also diminishes the frustration of the speaker who may otherwise assume that the listener is disinterested or disrespectful to their communicative efforts.

Partners can help the process by being frank about the problems they are experiencing in their lives. It is not necessary to rehash who was right or wrong. Shift gears by learning new skills and strategies to make a better life together. The knowledge gained from participating in hearing rehabilitation can go a long way toward improving the broad spectrum of life's experiences.

ACE Audiology, as well as providing hearing assessment and hearing aid dispensing services, provides customized hearing rehabilitation programs to enhance the benefits of personal amplification.