

Sharing the UHL experience

Classroom activities – listening with only one ear

Unilateral hearing loss (UHL) is a type of hearing impairment where there is normal hearing in one ear and any degree of hearing loss in the other ear. UHL presents many listening challenges, including difficulties understanding speech in the presence of noise and determining where sounds and speech are coming from (localizing sound). If you are a teacher and have a child in your class with UHL, or if you have UHL and want others to experience what it is like to listen with a unilateral hearing loss, here are some quick demonstrations you can do.

Things that you need:

1. Regular soft earplugs – these can often be picked up at pharmacy or other general store. You will need one ear plug per person participating in the activity.
2. Mobile device and some type of Bluetooth speaker to play noise or music (e.g. <http://soundbible.com/2163-Party-Crowd.html>)
3. A book or short story to read aloud
4. A blindfold that can be used to cover the eyes while listening (for activity 2b)



Activity 1 – Listening in noise

Have each participant put in one earplug. Have them face the front of the classroom or all in the same direction. Read a few paragraphs of a story, first standing in front and then while walking around the room. Ask the group how easy it was to hear and understand the story. Repeat this exercise with music or noise playing from the mobile device and speaker. Lastly, repeat this exercise without the earplugs. Ask the group to describe the differences they noticed and what was easy or difficult to hear.

Activity 2 – Where is the voice coming from

- a. This activity should be done in a safe, open, outdoor space like a soccer field. All participants should have an earplug available and stand in a circle with one person in the middle. The person in the middle is "It" and must insert the earplug in one ear and keep his/her eyes closed while trying to tag someone else. The other participants move around the circle and take turns saying the 'It' person's name until they are tagged. Once tagged he/she becomes 'It' and must use the earplug and try to tag someone. Remember the goal is for 'It' to keep his/her eyes closed and follow the sounds of others listening with only one ear. It's also important to establish where is 'out of bounds' so the person with his/her eyes closed doesn't go wandering off.

- b. A similar activity can be done inside. Blindfold one person at a time and have him/her sit in the middle of the class. Ask him/her to use an earplug in one ear. Have the other participants form a large circle around the blindfolded person. Taking turns, point to people (one at a time) in the circle and ask them to say the name of the person in the middle. The seated person must then try to point in the direction of the voice and identify the name of the person who said his or her name. Try this activity with the seated person using with the earplug and then again without using the earplug. At the end of the activity, ask the participants to describe the differences they noticed.

Questions to promote discussion

1. How was it to listen with only one ear when it was quiet compared to noisy?
2. How easily could you locate the voice saying your name?
3. How will this experience influence how you communicate with someone who has UHL?

Reference: Neuroscience for Kids - Hearing Experiments. University of Washington. Retrieved from <https://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/chhearing.html>