

Activities: Scenarios

The activities in this section will provide some interesting information and practical assistance.

For fun, and to stimulate thinking, there are twenty one different scenarios portraying common situations that are encountered by teens and young adults who are deaf or hard of hearing. Think about each situation and what you might do to address the problem.

The School Bus

Riding on a big yellow bus may not be an exciting event for anyone. However, when you have a hearing loss, it may be a dreadful event. The school bus puts you in a compromised listening environment and there is not a lot that can be done about it. A school bus is known for being loud and noisy. There are big, tall seats which makes it nearly impossible to see the person in front or behind you. If you try to sit on your knees or lean into the aisle, the bus driver usually scolds you. If you are riding the bus for a sporting event, after the game it is usually dark out, which takes away any extra help that you might get from lipreading and facial expressions.

Riding the bus for sporting event was usually a difficult time. I wanted to fit in and hear my friends, but I always had a difficult time. What are some possible solutions for this difficult situation?

1. Trying to sit by a friend that understands your hearing loss and that would help fill you in on the "gossip".
2. Sit by the window, bring your pillow, and catch up on the much needed sleep
3. Use the time to catch up on your homework that you won't want to do once you get home

The Doctor's Office Waiting Room

Who dreads going to the doctor's office by themselves? The waiting room is usually set up for privacy for all patients when they check in or their name is called. Many times the receptionist is out of view. If you go to a doctor's office that has many doctors, then there may be different doors that the nurse will be calling you from. It is embarrassing to have your name called 5 times before you realize your name is being called. It is equally embarrassing when someone else's name is called and you stand up to go into the exam room.

It is important to be able to hear at the doctor's office. What are some possible solutions?

1. When you check in, tell the receptionist that you have a hearing loss and have difficulty hearing your name called at times.
2. Ask for someone to visually get your attention by coming over to you or pointing to you
3. Survey the waiting room and sit in a chair where you have a good view of the entrance doors
4. If someone comes with you, ask that person to listen for your name for you

The Doctor's Office Exam Room

Going to the doctor can be a stressful event, especially when you have medical concerns. The names of different conditions and medications are difficult to understand and usually have complicated spelling. Your health and wellness are important, therefore you want to be sure that you are getting the best care for yourself and getting all of your questions answered. Doctors and Nurses may also ask questions while looking at your chart or when you are changing into a hospital gown. This can make it difficult to answer the questions that the doctor is asking.

What are some possible solutions to getting the best medical care at the doctor's office?

1. Remind your doctor and nurse that you have a hearing loss. Explain that it is sometimes difficult to understand.
2. Bring paper and pen with you. Write down questions that you have about your health and wellness.
3. If the doctor has a diagnosis and treatment plan for you, have the doctor write it down for you.
4. If you do not understand the doctor, ask questions until you understand. Your health and wellness is important.
5. If a follow up appointment is needed, ask the scheduling department to write down the date and time for you.

Listening to words to music

Have you ever felt left-out with your friends when they are all talking about the latest music and artists?? Do you have difficulty hearing the words to songs? Do you find yourself singing the wrong words to songs? You are not alone. It is difficult for most people who have a hearing loss to pick out the words to songs when there is background noise (drums, guitars, back-up singers). This can be an embarrassing situation and it can also make you feel that you don't belong.

What are some possible solutions?

1. Look up your favorite lyrics to songs on the internet
2. When you hear a song that you like, ask a friend to write down the name of the artist and the song so that you can look up the lyrics
3. Be humorous and make up some words to songs

Foreign Professor or Teacher is teaching a class

Have you ever had a teacher or a professor that was from another country and had a strong accent. Many times the professor is speaking English as a second or third language and may be difficult to understand. This may be especially difficult at the beginning of the semester or grading period when you are trying to get used to his/her voice. In addition, the teacher or the professor is probably teaching a class that you may be unfamiliar with the vocabulary or

terminology that is being used. This can be frustrating for you as a person with a hearing loss and it can also be dangerous to your grades.

What are some possible solutions?

1. If you are in middle school or high school, your IEP team or teacher team could meet and you and your advocates could explain why it is difficult and what accommodations could be made
2. If you are in college, you could meet with the Office of Accessibility and your Disability Coordinator about your concerns and accommodations that could be made.
3. You could find out if there is another teacher/professor who teaches the class at a different time who may be easier to understand and transfer to that class
4. You could ask for a notetaker or captioning services

Getting Teased

As a teen-ager or a young adult, there are many social situations when teasing happens. Teasing may happen with one another as a sign of friendship or it can occur in a bullying way. When a person has a hearing loss and wears hearing aids or a cochlear implant, that person may be at a greater target for getting teased. It may be because of the equipment itself or it may be because you mishear and misunderstand a conversation. The way in which you deal with your emotions in this situation will either help or hinder your self esteem.

What are some ways that you can deal with teasing?

1. You can stand up for yourself and offer a humorous comment. For example, if someone says _____ ...
2. You can offer a matter of fact reply showing that you are comfortable with your hearing loss
3. The more you feel OK with who you are and your hearing loss, the more others will be comfortable with you

Playing Sports

Playing sports with a hearing loss can be a challenge. Team sports are great in the respect that you connect with a group of people that have a common interest, and hopefully meet some great friends. The challenge is that you are typically going to be playing in a loud gym or on a large field where it is difficult to hear. Another challenge may be that you do not wear your hearing aids or cochlear implant because of sweat and moisture, helmets, or fear of breaking the unit because of a contact sport.

How do you overcome the challenges of trying to hear your coach shout out plays, hear your teammates when they try to pass a ball, and hear the whistle to stop a play? What are some ways to compensate for your hearing loss and be a team player?

1. Inform your coach at the beginning of the season about your hearing loss and the difficulties you may face.
2. With your coach, come up with hand signals for different plays or moves.
3. Ask your coach to use a dry erase play board to write down different plays.
4. Ask your coach for a copy of the different plays that will be used and study them at home.

Job Interview

From the age of 16 until adulthood, most individuals will have a job in order to make a living. Unless you are a lucky individual who knows someone who can give you a job, you will most likely need to interview for a job. The job interview process can make anyone nervous and having a hearing loss can heighten that level of nervousness. You may be thinking, "What if I have trouble understanding the person interviewing me?" "Do I tell the person interviewing me right away that I have a hearing loss?" "Will I be able to do all my job responsibilities or will I need assistance because of my hearing loss?" These are all important questions to consider before walking into an interview.

How do you prepare ahead of time to make a difference in your education plan?

1. Prepare ahead of time for the meeting. If a draft IEP has been developed, ask if you can read it ahead of time. Sit down with your parents and go over it and ask questions if you do not understand something.
2. This is your plan! Share your goals and concerns. If you are having difficulty hearing and understanding in any situation, you need to share this information with your team.
3. Know what your responsibilities are and know who you can talk to if you have difficulty.
4. Write down important information that you want to share with the team. You can use your personal profile page to explain your hearing loss, technology, communication mode, and any other accommodations that are needed to have access to your academics.

Your Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

You are invited to attend your own IEP meeting. This can be an overwhelming experience if you are not prepared for it. There will be many adults sitting around the table, all talking about you, your goals, and your transition plan. These adults may include your parents, teachers, principal, special education director, audiologist, speech-language pathologist, and any other team member that helps at school. The team will ask you about your vision and goals for the future. They will also discuss your present level of performance, which may be difficult to listen to. They may be making decisions on how you will use your FM system and other accommodations that you need. As the most important member of the team, it is important that you have input into your IEP.

How do you prepare ahead of time to make a difference in your education plan?

1. Prepare ahead of time for the meeting. If a draft IEP has been developed, ask if you can read it ahead of time. Sit down with your parents and go over it and ask questions if you do not understand something.
2. This is your plan! Share your goals and concerns. If you are having difficulty hearing and understanding in any situation, you need to share this information with your team.
3. Know what your responsibilities are and know who you can talk to if you have difficulty.
4. Write down important information that you want to share with the team. You can use your personal profile page to explain your hearing loss, technology, communication mode, and any other accommodations that are needed to have access to your academics.

Driving a Car

One of the highlights of turning 16 is being able to drive a car. Finally a freedom to go somewhere without having your parents drop you off. In order to get your license you need to go through driver's education and take a driver's test. This can be a challenging new experience for anyone, however, when you have a hearing loss, there are many other challenges that you face. First, the car is a difficult environment to hear. When you are driving, especially when taking your driver's test, it is best to keep your eyes on the road. If you depend on some lipreading cues or sign language to follow directions, this can make the whole experience a traumatic one if the correct steps are not taken. In addition, it is a good idea to keep a Hearing Loss Notification Card in your car in case you are stopped by police or other authorities.

What can you do ahead of time in order to successfully pass the driving test?

1. Know what your hearing limitations are before you take a driver's test
2. Be prepared to explain your hearing loss and limitations to the individual giving you the driving test
3. If you use a personal FM system at home or at school, plan to use the personal FM during the driving test. Ask your audiologist to write down or explain to you how the system works and how it is beneficial in the car so that you can explain the FM system to the driving instructor
4. Ask a friend who has already taken the driver's test what kinds of instructions are given. Having an idea of driving instructions ahead of time may help you during the test (e.g. "Turn right at the light")
5. Contact your State School for the Deaf to inquire if they offer a driver's training for Deaf or Hard of Hearing students

College curriculum

Going to college can be both an exciting and overwhelming experience. You are absolutely thrilled about the freedom that is associated with being on a campus setting with lots of available activities. In order for you to declare a major and determine what area you want to

focus your studies in, you will need to take a number of courses with a variety of professors, learn new material and vocabulary for every class, and for each class, there may be a different presentation style, accent, and flexibility in how information is portrayed. This is a difficult and challenging learning environment for everyone. However, with a hearing loss, there are other challenges you must face in order to obtain the same information as everyone else. For example, if your classes are large and held in an auditorium style setting, you may find that the echoing and distance the professor is standing on the stage from the first row of chairs may make it impossible for you to hear. You may also take courses where 90% or more of the classroom material is presented via streaming video, DVD, or tapes in a darkened room where there is almost no chance for you to use visual cues. In smaller classroom situations, there may be a lot of discussion that bounces from one end of the room to another making it extremely difficult for you to follow who and what topics are being discussed.

Knowing that these situations can be difficult for anyone, what are some things you can do to be prepared and more comfortable?

1. You can call ahead to the restaurant and let them know that you have a hearing loss and would prefer to be seated in a quieter part of the restaurant if it is available.
2. You can ask the restaurant if they may have a printed copy of their specials so that it will be easy for everyone to know what they are and make their choices
3. If you have a personal FM system, you can bring it with you and get it up to either be used in a pass around fashion or in an omni-directional mode. However, be aware that as the noise level increases, there are limitations to the effectiveness of any assistive device since it can no longer keep the speakers voice above the noise level.
4. If you have directional microphones in your amplification, try and keep the noise behind you to maximize your ability to hear the people at your table
5. Have someone that is easy for you to understand either sit across the table for you to see them well and use speech reading cues and/or next to you so that you are able to ask them to repeat when you miss what is being said.
6. Have a system with those that you are comfortable around where people can give you a cue so that when they are speaking. This will allow you to be able to follow one person at a time and not feel like you are in a tennis match of trying to follow the moving target.
7. If you find the lighting is not good or really low, ask the staff if they can either move you or turn up the lights to make it easier to see everyone.

Going out to a restaurant/dinner

Going out with your friends or family can be a great source of enjoyment. You get to eat good food and have lots of interaction. For most, this can be a very enjoyable situation. However, as a person with hearing loss, there are often concerns as to how you are going to communicate effectively. You may be thinking, "Will I understand the specials that the waitress presents? How can I hear my friends or family when there is so much noise in the background?"

Knowing that these situations can be difficult for anyone, what are some things you can do to be prepared and more comfortable?

1. You can call ahead to the restaurant and let them know that you have a hearing loss and would prefer to be seated in a quieter part of the restaurant if it is available.
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Check out counter in retail situations

One of the most common things we do every day is communicate with folks in retail situations. This can be for example, at the local Post Office, the food store, your local pizza parlor, or other places that require you to communicate across a counter. In these environments, the majority of them are very difficult to hear in because they are in large, open, and very reverberant spaces with lots of background noise. As a person with hearing loss, these situations can be extremely difficult making it hard to communicate effectively. There is also of fear of misunderstanding the person as well as being misunderstood as well.

Knowing these situations can be difficult, what are some strategies you can use in order to feel more comfortable and communicate more effectively?

1. If you tend to go to a local pizza place that you like, see if you can either get their menu online or pick up one the next time you are there...that way, if you want to be sure you are getting what you ordered, you can verify it on paper
2. Most places like the Post Office will have a list of options that are available, if you misunderstand the person behind the counter, you can always limit your responses to two different options and ask if either of those are what they just asked you
3. In some situations, if you feel comfortable, you can use a personal FM system and kindly ask the speaker to use the microphone so that you can more effectively follow what is being said

4. In the food store, if you cannot find a good solution for communicating with the person checking you out, you can use the automated check out kiosks

At the airport

One of the fun and exciting things is taking a trip for a vacation or visiting family or friends. You arrive at the airport and have to stop at the check in gate where the person tells you that you need to go through security and move to your respective gate. The place is noisy and it is really difficult to understand anything. This can be a stressful and intimidating situation for anyone. However, as a person with a hearing loss, it can seem overwhelming and be causing anxiety. "Did you understand that she needs you to go to gate 7 or 11 after security? What do I do if I have to remove hearing aids or a cochlear implant to go through the detectors and the security officers ask me to do something? How will I know if they change gates? How will I know when it is time to board? Once I am on the plane, will I be able to understand the stewardess or follow directions?"

Knowing this can be an overwhelming experience for anyone, how do you prepare yourself ahead of time to make sure the experience goes as smoothly as possible?

1. Look up on line whether your flight is on time or delayed...this will eliminate any confusion when you arrive
2. Find out the rules and regulations for safe air travel such allowing for 3 oz or less of liquids in carry on bags, removing shoes, etc so that you know what general things security may ask you as you approach the gate
3. Most airlines have written policies so that if you identify yourself as needing assistance, they are often willing to work with you-especially when it is time to board or need instructions in order to comply by safety standards.
4. When there are announcements overhead and you have no idea what is being said, go to a nearby information board to make sure you have not missed an announcement of a gate change and/or walk up to the person at the desk at the gate and ask them to assist you with the information that was just presented-in some cases, there are now a number of airports that have visual alert systems that will scroll the information presented overhead

The work environment

Once you have secured a job, there are still questions that come to mind when entering a new environment for everyone. "Will I get along with everyone? Do I fully understand my role and what is expected of me? Can I handle these new responsibilities? Will I like my job?" As a person with a hearing loss, there are also a number of other concerns that may arise when considering your role and how you manage yourself in the work environment. You may be thinking "How will I manage things if I misunderstand a customer or my supervisor? Do I tell the person/customer/co-worker on the phone that I have a hearing loss? Will I have to attend weekly meetings with a large group? Will I be accepted by my peers?" These are all important things to consider when starting new job.

What are some things you can do to make this process go as smoothly as possible?

1. Know your strengths and limitations...if you are comfortable, share what things make it easier and harder for you to be able to communicate
2. Depending upon the responsibilities you may have, there are a variety of options. For example, if you have difficulties on the phone, work closely with your supervisor to

find a solution such as using an amplified phone, using your FM in conjunction with the phone, having a co-worker handle calls while you do the face to face interactions.

3. Look for and present solutions when possible to make this transition easier for everyone. For example, if your job requires you attend meetings, investigate how and in what context material is being presented. If they use a speaker phone and that is an area of difficulty, work with your supervisor to see if material cannot be presented via video conference with the audio. If the meetings take place at a large conference table, consider using an FM system with multiple microphones or offer training for staff on how to pass around a microphone so you can participate.
4. Know your rights and discuss your needs with your supervisor in order to be able to fully participate and fulfill your job responsibilities
5. If you are comfortable, work with a disability counselor through vocational rehabilitation to determine and help you obtain the tools you will need to be successful in the work place

Emergency situations

Emergency situations are a source of high stress and anxiety where lots of information can be passed along quickly in very difficult listening situations. As a deaf or hard of hearing person, there are potential consequences and challenges that can make these already stressful situations more difficult. If you are responsible for giving out medical information about a family member or about yourself and there is a misunderstanding, such as giving them the wrong name of a medication or not being sure of what is being asked of you, this can cause a number of serious consequences.

Knowing there is the potential for misunderstandings and/or the inability to follow specific directions in a quick, rapid response type situation, what can you do to make this situation go more smoothly and avoid the potential pitfalls?

1. Remind any new person to the situation that you have a hearing loss and may need things repeated. You might also consider keeping a Hearing Loss Notification Card handy to describe how you best communicate.
2. If you have a personal FM system, ask that the primary person responsible for giving you information use it
3. Make sure to have a list readily available of all medications and dosages listed for each medical condition you or a family member may have
4. In some circumstances, there are medical alert bracelets or alert identification tags that can let medical personnel know that you are hearing impaired and will need assistance
5. Ask medical personnel for a list of common questions in printed form so that you can make sure you are responding appropriately
6. Ask for all directions and new medications and/or changes to you or your family's health to be documented in writing
7. If you use another method of communication such as sign language, ask for an interpreter if one is available—there are also voice to text options that are now available that can be extremely useful for just making sure you are following what is going on

Communicating on the phone

Talking on the phone whether it is on a land line at home, via the internet, or on a cell phone can allow you to be spontaneous, share ideas, make plans, etc. Most of your friends can do it with ease. They have the latest technology with all the cool features like ring tones, streaming video, etc. Although there are technological advances today in how phones function and their capabilities, there are still a number of difficulties people with hearing loss must deal with. "Will my amplification work with this cell phone? Will I be able to understand what the person is saying on the other end? What happens if I need to make an important call and cannot tell if the phone is ringing? Can I use technology like Bluetooth to avoid buzzing and humming from the t-coil in hearing aids and cochlear implants? What does it mean that a phone is hearing aid compatible?" These are all good questions and often are a source of anxiety especially when you are concerned that you may not be able to understand what someone is saying during social calls. However, this becomes even more important when the phone is also your lifeline to getting help when needed.

When thinking about a cell phone, the best thing you can do is go to a local store and try everything out there. What works for some people may not be effective for you.

4. Make sure to talk with your audiologist to see if there are any settings in your amplification that can make it easier to use with some phones
5. Check to see if there are other options like CapTel that will allow you to listen and have captions on the phone at the same time
6. See if there are good amplified phones that can provide you with enough clarity to be able to hear the speaker on the other end.
7. If you prefer to use the internet for your primary source of interaction, voice or video IP can be an easy way for you to keep in touch with your friends and family.
8. Check out the ratings on phones today and see what they mean....does a rating of M2 mean it is t-coil compatible?

Attending family events

Attending family events such as weddings or graduations, etc can be a great way to interact with everyone. During these times, there are lots of people around different situations for you to interact in. For anyone, this can be both a lot of fun and also a difficult listening situation.

As a person with hearing loss, being in a situation where it is constantly changing and there are so many people to interact with at one time can be very overwhelming. What are some things you can do to make this event more pleasurable and fun?

1. Remind those that are familiar Remind those that are familiar with you that your hearing loss does impact your ability to follow so many conversations at a time.
2. Try and see if you can't get a family member to engage in a one on one conversation and/or move to a quieter environment
3. See if you can place yourself in a strategic place so that family has to come to you to interact-often this will lead to more one on one rather than large groups

4. If you are attending an event where there are announcements like at Graduation, call the university to see if you can't get preferential seating so that you are closer to the event allowing you to follow things more easily
5. Run off and hang out with friends so that you don't have to talk to your family

Going to the Movies

One of the social highlights outside of school is going to see the popular movies that are released because everyone is talking about them. You have heard that there are a few that are a "must see," but having a hearing loss has you wondering if you will be able to follow the dialog. You want to participate in the action, but there is a nagging feeling that you might not laugh at the appropriate times or misunderstand what someone is saying because the music is drowning out the voices. If you depend on lipreading to supplement when you misunderstand something, the camera angle and moving dialog may not allow you to "fill in those gaps".

Because you want to participate and not feel left out, what can you do ahead of time to make this experience more fun rather than a source of anxiety?

1. Know your communication abilities and whether this is a situation in which you want to participate in. If this is an extremely difficult listening situation for you, understand your limitations and seek alternative methods for obtaining the info such as attending an open captioned movie or waiting until it is released on DVD
2. Be prepared...call the theatre ahead of time to see if they have assistive devices available and what kind do they offer. You may want to see if they have a neckloop option vs. headphones to access things via your t-coil.
3. Bring along a personal FM system if you happen to own one so that you can use the FM transmitter mic to help clarify what you are hearing. Ask your audiologist if they may know of other devices such as an infrared module that can be attached to your FM system so that you can pick up the signal the theatre is sending out without needing to use their headphones.
4. If the movie is based upon a book, comic strip, or other printed material, read a short version of it to get an understanding of what to expect in the movie...you could also read several critiques of the film to also get an idea of what the movie is about

Going to the Prom

Your Junior and Senior Prom can be an exciting and memorable time in your high school life. There is much anticipation about who you will ask or who will ask you, will you go as a group of friends or just as a couple, what prom dress or suit/tuxedo to wear, where to go out to eat, how will you get to prom, and many other questions. Prom can also be stressful when you have a hearing loss. Maybe you feel embarrassed when you are out at a loud restaurant because you have trouble hearing. Will you be able to talk to your date or friends at the prom with the loud music? If you are a girl and wear your hair in an updo, are you confident with your hearing aids and don't care if they show or are you self-conscious and choose not to wear the hearing aids and feel left out of conversations.

What are some possible solutions for having fun at Prom with a hearing loss?

1. Plan to go with a group of friends that you feel comfortable with.
2. Suggest a restaurant that is quieter and volunteer to make the reservations. When you call for the reservations, explain your hearing loss and ask if you can be seated in a quieter area of the restaurant.
3. Explain to your date ahead of time that loud music makes it hard to hear and you may not be able to understand what he/she is saying at the prom.
4. Enjoy dancing to every song, then you won't have to carry on a conversation!
5. If you are self-conscious about your hearing aids/cochlear implant....ask yourself "Will I want to remember the night because I could interact with my friends by hearing them with amplification, or do you want to remember the night as not being able to hear because you didn't wear amplification what and have a horrible time?"

Talking to your college professor

Your professor or instructor asks you questions about your deafness/hearing loss and your accommodations. You need to decide how much information to share.

What a great opportunity to share with your professor/instructor about accommodations and your deafness/hearing loss. The fact that your professor/instructor asked about your hearing loss shows that he/she is concerned about how you will perform in the class. By preparing ahead of time, you can explain your deafness/hearing loss and accommodations in a clear, effective, and confident manner. This will give your professor/instructor confidence in your abilities as a student. Depending on your level of difficulty in a given situation, you may want to share more or less about your deafness/hearing loss. However, it is important that a professor/instructor is aware of your communication needs at the beginning of the semester in case difficulties arise throughout the semester.

Here are some suggestions to help prepare for this situation:

1. Make sure that you have met with the college disability/accessibility office. Staff in this office will help you identify the accommodations are available to you.
2. Complete the Personal Profile and Accommodations Letter. You can give this to your professor/instructor after you have explained in person what is helpful for you.
3. Complete the MyGAP Self Assessment. One area to pay careful attention to is "identify communication problems that occur as a result of your deafness/hearing loss". Write down these problems and solutions that have been helpful.
4. Identify your areas of strengths.
5. Prepare a "speech" that will help explain confidently your hearing loss and accommodations. Use your letter as a brainstorming tool for your "speech"
 1. Envision yourself as confident.
 2. Practice your "speech" in front of the mirror or friend.

3. Get to the Point!

1. Explain your main difficulty.
2. Explain what has helped in the past
3. Explain solutions that are necessary.
4. Show gratitude to the professor about being in the class and learning.

4. Example

1. Dr. College, I have a hearing loss in both ears, I use hearing aids in order to help me hear better, however, in a large lecture classroom it is difficult for me to understand all of the information.
2. In order to help me hear and understand in difficult listening situations, I use a personal FM system, which reduces background noise and lets me hear at a distance.
3. To help me achieve in your class it would be helpful if you wear this microphone during lecture.
4. I am looking forward to learning more about _____(insert course topic) during this semester.

If your professor/instructor believes he/she cannot provide the specific accommodations on your letter that have been requested, what should you do? As a student, you may feel intimidated by a professor/instructor on campus. However, if you are prepared for this situation ahead of time, the problem may be resolved effectively. If at all possible, it is helpful to try to remedy the situation in a calm and informative conversation. If the problem persists, it is important to know what supports are in place to advocate for your rights.