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Environmental Management

The Listening Environment

Room Size: The acoustics are better in a small room. In large rooms, it is usually easier to hear near a wall, especially in a corner.

Wall and floor covering: Highly reflective surfaces, like tile or wood floors, glass windows, and hard walls cause sound to bounce back and forth in the room (reverberation). Carpeting, drapes, acoustic tiles on the ceiling, etc. will help to break up the sound and make it easier for persons with hearing loss to hear.

Background noise: Noise interferes in several ways. It is a distraction. It is often louder than some of the speech sounds that you have difficulty hearing, which makes speech more difficult to understand. Hearing aids pick up the noise as well as the speech. Background noise usually continues to be a problem for most hearing aid users.

Noise Sources: Air conditioners, TV's, radios, street noise, etc. all interfere with understanding. Reduce the noise level in the room as much as possible before trying to communicate or move as far away as possible from the source before communicating.

Lighting: Looking into a glare can interfere with speech reading, viewing facial expressions, and concentration. Choose positions with light to you back. Be aware that speech recognition ability may drop during the visual adjustment time moving from light to dark or vice versa.

Distance:

Hearing: Loudness is closely related to distance. Doubling distance will halve the volume of sound. Getting closer is usually more pleasant and effective than getting louder, especially if there is background noise.

Vision: The mouth movements involved in speech reading are too small to be seen from great distances. The best distance is from three to six feet.