Communication Strategies:
Tips for Communication with Hearing Loss

1. Look directly at people when they are speaking with you.
   a. Expressions, gestures, and lipreading cues will all help to supplement what you are able to hear.
   b. Keep your hands away from your face while talking. You may be difficult to understand if you are eating, smoking, or chewing gum or candy.
   c. Get the person’s attention before you begin speaking.

2. Reduce background and competing noises.
   a. At home, turn off music or the TV (or at least turn them down). Turn off the dishwasher and/or other loud appliances or move to a quiet area.
   b. In restaurants, ask to be seated in a quiet corner away from the kitchen, front door, bar area, or anywhere there is heavy traffic or noise.
   c. Never attempt to speak to a person who is hearing impaired from another room or from a distance. Reduce the distance of conversation in order to increase understanding.

3. Inform the person speaking to you when you are having trouble understanding.
   a. Ask the speaker to repeat when needed. After listening to an additional 2 or 3 sentences, a misunderstood message may become clearer, but don’t wait too long into the conversation if you are still “lost.”
   b. Ask the person speaking to rephrase what they have said. Using different words adds additional information and can increase understanding.

4. Speak a little slower; pronounce your words distinctly, but naturally.
   a. Do not over-exaggerate your words; they will appear unnatural on your lips and make lip reading difficult.
   b. Do not shout, scream, or yell as your speech will sound distorted and less clear.

5. Try to remain patient and sympathetic.
   a. Remember, the difficulties with communication caused by hearing loss are frustrating for everyone involved.
   b. Listening is sometimes a difficult and tiring task as it requires concentration. It is important to understand that exhaustion and stress have negative impacts on communication.

6. Educate others on how to best communicate with individuals with hearing impairment. You must take responsibility to teach them.