



7 tips for communicating with a hearing-impaired elder

When you get together with an older friend or family member, chances are you'll find it a challenge to communicate if they are hard of hearing. According to a recent study led by Johns Hopkins and National Institute on Aging researchers, nearly two-thirds of Americans age 70 and older have hearing loss. The cause is most often attributed to a condition known as presbycusis (prez-buh-KYOO-sis). Doctors don't know why presbycusis happens, but it seems to run in families.

In order to be heard by someone with a hearing impairment, we have a tendency to want to shout louder. However, that's not always the best strategy. Here are some tips for communicating with a person who's hard of hearing:

- **Position yourself so the elder can see your face** -- your expression and lip movement will aid them in understanding your words.
- **Speak a bit more slowly and only slightly louder.** Avoid shouting, which can raise the pitch of your voice and may be harder to hear or distorted if speaking over the phone.
- **Whenever possible, minimize background noise.**
- **Keep your hands away from your face as you speak,** and don't speak while you're chewing food.
- **Use simple, short sentences;** if the elder has difficulty understanding you, use different words rather than repeating over and over.
- **If the elder wears a hearing aid and has difficulty hearing, check that the hearing aid is in the ear,** is turned on and has a working battery. If these things are fine, find out when he or she last had a hearing evaluation.
- **Most importantly, be patient** and allow ample time for a pleasant and unhurried conversation.



Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly has provided one-on-one companionship services, advocacy and social activities for isolated and lonely older adults in the Twin Cities since 1972. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, LBFE has been recognized by the Charities Review Council for meeting its 27 Accountability Standards. More information about LBFE can be found at littlebrothersmn.org.

Copyright © 2015 Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly, Minneapolis/St. Paul Chapter

Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly

1845 East Lake St. | Minneapolis, MN 55407 | 612.721.6215 | littlebrothersmn.org