



Research Brief

Importance of Effective Communication Between Deaf and Hearing Individuals

Why are effective communication strategies so important?

Communication strategies can affect one's ability to engage and initiate peer interaction and cope with social conflict.¹ Communication is a two-way, interactive process: deaf and hearing individuals need clear and accessible communication for successful learning and working relationships. Effective communication can facilitate the following outcomes:

- ⊗ Positive relationships with peers, strengthened identity, and increased overall well-being.^{1,2,9}
- ⊗ Increased ability to recognize different thoughts and emotions.^{1,3,4}
- ⊗ Development of complex linguistic and social skills.^{5,6,4,7,8}
- ⊗ Meaningful participation in education and workplace environments.

“Successful communication requires the efforts of all people in a conversation to consistently use good communication strategies”¹³

What are some strategies to support effective communication?

Communication breakdown occurs when individuals have difficulty conveying or understanding the intended message.¹⁴ Preferred communication choices may vary depending on the individual and context, including availability of technology and accommodation options. Some effective strategies to reduce the impact of communication breakdowns include:

- ⊗ Ask individuals for their preferred communication strategies in the specific context.
- ⊗ Prepare for upcoming interactions by thinking of likely vocabulary and phrases the partner will use and practice that terminology ahead of time.¹⁵
- ⊗ Avoid changing topics abruptly, focusing instead on smooth topic shifts and use of visual cues.¹⁶
- ⊗ Provide opportunities for each individual to make original contributions to a conversation.¹⁷
- ⊗ Check for understanding during communication. Ask your conversation partner to identify if aspects of the conversation are unclear.^{18,19}
- ⊗ When asked for clarification, revise the wording of the original statement.²⁰

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