

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH LISTENING PROBLEMS

- 1.** A child with auditory problems seems to hear inconsistently. A child may seem to hear some things, but not others. It is important not to assume that he or she is ignoring you.
- 2.** It is easier to communicate with your child if there are no other noisy activities (other people talking or laughing, television or radio playing, washing machine or vacuum cleaner noise) competing with you.
- 3.** When talking with the child learn to control the environment by providing a quiet setting. Take the child to a quiet room, turn off the television, ask others to be quiet for a moment, etc.
- 4.** Delay important conversations until a quiet time can be found but make a point of having "quiet conversation periods" on a regular basis during the course of every day.
- 5.** Simplify your language level if your child does not seem to understand. Try slowing down your rate of speech if your child continues to have trouble understanding. One way to accomplish this is to pause between sentences, especially after your child has finished talking and before you respond.
- 6.** If you have to repeat something for your child try saying it in a different way (different words, different type sentence).
- 7.** Do not try to have a conversation when you and your child are in different rooms.
- 8.** When talking allow the child enough time to respond.
- 9.** A child with listening difficulties is working harder to hear and understand speech all through the day. He or she may well be very tired after school. He or she may need time to rest and recuperate after school. Allow time for relaxation before asking him or her to do homework or chores
- 10.** Read aloud to your child and discuss what you have read.
- 11.** Many children with listening difficulties are not able to block out background noise and they may find that some sounds are painful or unpleasant. Observe your child's behaviour to see if there are any situations where they pull back from group involvement or become irritable or even aggressive. If there are situations that they are not comfortable in, look at ways of improving the situation or developing coping strategies for the child.
- 12.** Praise any accomplishment (academic or otherwise) that represents even small improvements over previous levels. Find something that your child is good at or enjoys and encourage them to develop in it. It is not helpful to compare his/her achievements compared to brothers or sisters and classmates and it is important therefore to emphasise their strengths

SUGGESTIONS FOR HELPING A CHILD WITH LISTENING DIFFICULTIES

IN THE HOME

1. REDUCE BACKGROUND NOISE

Children with listening problems are less good at selecting out or ignoring background noise. This means that they are constantly bombarded by sound and can make it difficult for them to hear and retain spoken information.

- a) During homework or reading times; provide a quiet place, turn off the television and radio and limit visual distractions.
- b) It will be easier to communicate if there are not other activities going on (other children/adults talking, television, radio, vacuum cleaner, washing machine). Electrical noise can seriously interfere with your message even if the child is trying hard to listen. Noisy situations are much more difficult for a child with listening problems than for others.
- c) Consider how you can quieten the listening environment at home by any means available (taking the child to a quiet room, giving different times for different tasks, closing windows). If it is not possible to control the listening environment it may be better to delay conversation.
- d) It is important to find regular quiet periods in the day for family conversation. Family mealtime is very useful because it provides a good lip-reading situation as well as listening time (and you have to wait for the slowest eater!). Make sure the child with listening difficulties is included in the conversation and is given sufficient time to give an opinion.
- e) Don't attempt to talk from another room or when your child is busy doing something else. Wait until you can get their full attention both looking and listening.

2. PUT STRUCTURE IN YOUR CHILD'S LIFE.

If they know what to expect, the child is more able to anticipate the speech content for the context

- a) Set controls on daily activities. Structure activities so that your child is less likely to be confused by what may happen next.
- b) Have daily routines, a timetable. Your child will perform better if they know what to expect. Sometimes it is helpful to explain what is happening, other times a familiar routine can be established without verbal explanation.
- c) When telling your child off, make it clear what specific behaviour is being punished and why.
- d) Be certain to avoid punishing behaviour which the child could not help, especially if prompted by sound avoidance or mishearing. It is important to have consistent rules and management strategies, applied by all family members.
- e) When correcting behaviour, choose a time when you have your child's full attention and preferably do it in private so that you don't embarrass your child and damage their self-esteem. It may already be fragile

3. OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- a) Use simple language, shorter words and sentences, and state one idea at a time. Get your child's attention first, either by saying his/her name or by touching him/her.
- b) Children may also attend better if from time to time they repeat back the instructions. In this way, the adult can also monitor where the message may have broken down. If it has, repeat the part that was missed, kindly. If the child ask "what?" ask them what they think you said so that you can monitor what they have heard before repeating the whole thing.
- c) Move on to areas of new learning gradually so that your child knows what is expected of him or her and what is coming next. Review the things that your child does know.
- d) Complicated directions and instructions should be broken down into one part at a time with a pause between each item (long enough for the adult to mentally repeat each part back to themselves) to allow time to receive the message and understand it.
- e) Ideally the speaker should either be in front of the child or on the side of the stronger ear.
- f) It may be helpful to write important messages and reminders on a blackboard. Visual cues may be very helpful for the child with listening difficulties and can be used to supplement auditory information in many ways.
- g) Have realistic expectations for success and praise any accomplishments that the child makes.
- h) Be aware that there may be sounds that your child does not like or tries to get away from. Or there may be some situations that he or she is not feeling comfortable in. If you find that there are such situations try to identify what the difficulty is and improve it if possible. It is important to be aware that exposure to unpleasant sounds can make people irritable and even aggressive.