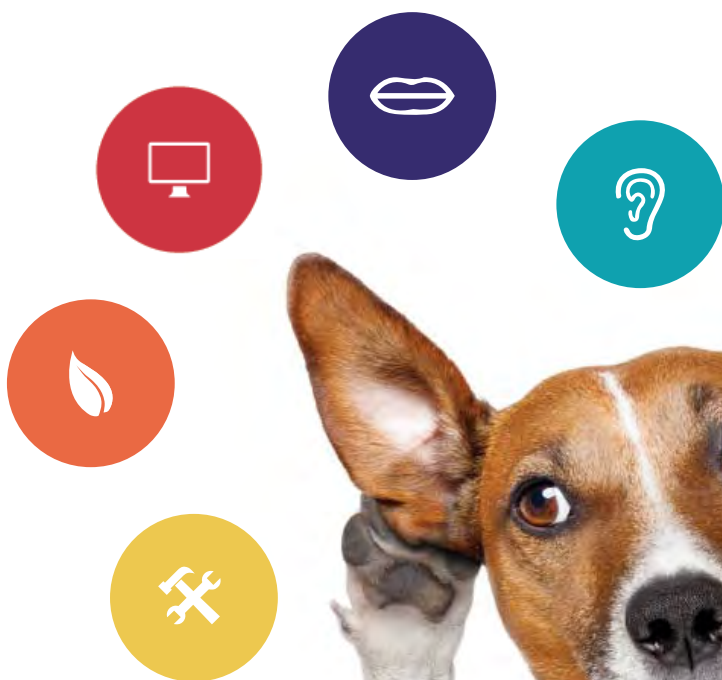


Frustrated by **HEARING LOSS?**

5 Keys to Communication Success



A Helpful
Handbook
of Real-Life
Solutions

Dusty Ann Jessen, Au.D.



ENDORSEMENTS

“I am a 67-year-old male, and have had hearing loss for over 60 years. Had this book been available, it would have saved my wife and I 34 years of unanswered questions and frustrations. *The Five Keys To Communication Success* is an imperative read for anyone considering hearing aids and those who are early in their hearing aid experience.”

Kenneth John Walsh

Retired Christian Schools Superintendent

“The information in this book reinforces communication tools that we, as audiologists, strive to provide our patients throughout the entire evaluation and rehabilitative process. I am excited to provide this book to my patients and their family members. It will help facilitate awareness, knowledge, and realistic expectations about hearing loss for all parties involved, which will then lead to a more effective communication process. Thank you for your amazing contribution to our profession.”

Jayne L. Rinn, M.A., CCC-A

Audiologist, Owner of Arvada Hearing Center, Inc.

“As an ENT doctor, I feel Dr. Dusty Jessen’s book is a wonderful addition to the world of listening, hearing, and communicating. Dr. Jessen’s book will help people to maximize these skills as they enter the world of hearing aids. I also love the clever little dog and bright colors. It was an easy and informative read.”

Janice L. Birney, M.D.

Owner, Janice L. Birney, M.D., P.C.

“My husband and I have been married for 34 years, and he has had hearing loss since he was a child. This book taught me things that I never knew. It is equally important for the spouse to understand the *The Five Keys To Communication Success* to help ensure a better quality of life for both partners. I highly recommend this book.”

Dr. Pamela Day Walsh

“At last, a book that truly tells it like it is. Too often consumer books and self-help books written by professionals extol the virtues of modern technology while minimizing the adverse effects of human behavior. While it is true that modern technology has progressed significantly, good communication requires more than simply placing hearing aids on your ears. In this easy-to-read guide to better communication, Dr. Jessen places responsibility right where it belongs; on both the listener and those who communicate with the listener, without assigning blame or ‘sugar-coating’ the situation. She carefully contrasts hearing loss from communication breakdowns and offers constructive, realistic solutions discussed in an environment-specific format. If the reader combines new technology with the words of experienced wisdom contained in this book, optimizing communication despite having a hearing loss can actually be achieved.”

Robert W. Sweetow, Ph.D.
Professor of Otolaryngology and Audiology
University of California, San Francisco

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HEARING LOSS?

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Dusty Ann Jessen, Au.D.

SAMPLE



Cut to the Chase
Communication

**Frustrated by Hearing Loss?
5 Keys to Communication Success**

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www.5keys.info

This book is dedicated
to my wonderful patients
who give me daily insight
into the frustrations,
adaptations, and finally the
celebrations that occur when
practicing the Five Keys to
Communication Success.



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I'd like to thank my colleagues who have dedicated their lives to helping people with hearing loss. You are much more than hearing care providers. You give the gift of communication, self-confidence, and strengthened relationships to those you serve.

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INTRODUCTION

If you find yourself reading this now, chances are that you or someone in your life suffers from hearing loss. Hearing loss is an invisible disability that can cause incredible frustration between family members, friends, and colleagues. It can wreak havoc in the home, in the car, at work, in restaurants, and in many other social situations. In most cases, people lose their hearing gradually, so the signs and symptoms are hard to detect in the beginning. It may begin with a gradual boost of the TV volume, or a mild struggle to catch all parts of a conversation in a noisy restaurant. As hearing loss progresses, people find themselves avoiding certain social situations, struggling to communicate in the workplace or on the phone, and withdrawing from the world in general. What may be surprising is that the detrimental effects of hearing loss are often more disturbing to family, friends, and co-workers than they are to the person with hearing loss. Why is this?

A no-nonsense guide to help you conquer communication breakdowns caused by hearing loss.



Check out this very common scenario:

Meet Mr. and Mrs. Jones. Mr. Jones has slowly lost his hearing over the past several years and finds himself saying “What?” more and more often. His wife is tired of repeating herself and sick of trying to talk over the blaring TV. This loving couple finds themselves increasingly frustrated with each other, all because of...Mr. Jones’s hearing loss, right? WRONG!

The frustration is caused by a breakdown in communication. Now don’t get me wrong, hearing loss is frustrating for all parties involved. However, there are always at least TWO people involved in any communication exchange, and thus in any communication breakdown. The goal of this handbook is to arm BOTH parties with common sense tools that will make communication easier and more enjoyable in all areas of life.

Get ready to learn the Five Keys to Communication Success:



ENVIRONMENT

It is much easier to communicate in a calm and quiet environment. Both the speaker and listener are responsible for modifying their surroundings to ensure a successful communication exchange.



SPEAKER

If a speaker truly wants to get a message across to the listener, he or she must use effective speaking strategies. It is the speaker's responsibility to learn these strategies and use them in every situation.



LISTENER

There is a big difference between hearing and listening. The listener must learn and use effective listening strategies to receive a message successfully. These strategies apply to listeners with normal hearing as well as those with hearing loss.



TECHNOLOGY

There are many technological options for people who are experiencing communication breakdowns. Hearing aids, cochlear implants, and assistive listening devices will help significantly when they are programmed and used appropriately.



PRACTICE

New habits are not formed overnight. Most people have developed bad communication habits over many years. The keys listed above and described in this handbook will only result in successful communication when they are practiced in every situation.

The following pages will help you to apply these five techniques in several different situations that are notorious for creating communication challenges. After each environment, there is a Successful Communication Plan worksheet to help identify where and with whom the communication breakdown is occurring. The plan will provide guidance for both the speaker and the listener as they apply the keys and create good communication habits. Simply cut out the completed plans from the handbook and post them where they will serve as a constant reminder to practice the following strategies. You can download additional blank Communication Plans from www.5keys.info.

IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO

The following information, when put to use by BOTH communication partners, has the very powerful ability to save relationships, save jobs, and save sanity! It cannot be stressed enough that both parties must read this handbook, and both parties must implement the communication tips. It simply does not work for Mr. Jones to go home and tell Mrs. Jones, “The audiologist says you need to look at me when you speak.” In fact, this has the potential to cause more trouble than the communication breakdown itself. It is imperative that the person with hearing loss and ANYONE who wishes to communicate more effectively with that person read this handbook personally.

This handbook is less about hearing loss, and more about COMMUNICATION. The *American Heritage College Dictionary* defines communication as:

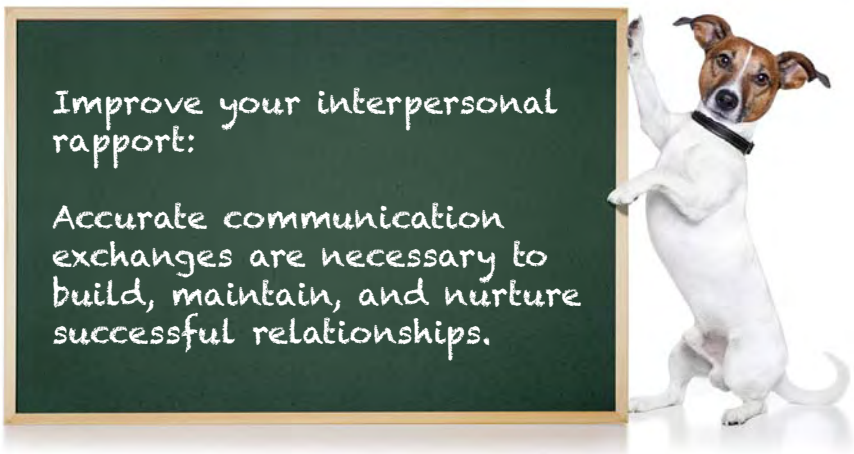
- The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information.
- Interpersonal rapport.
- The art and technique of using words effectively in imparting one’s ideas.

The second definition really stands out. “Interpersonal rapport” is another way of saying *quality relationships*. Most hearing care providers have been through countless appointments with patients and their spouses discussing this very topic. These sessions can be very emotional and slightly uncomfortable. At times it may feel more like marriage counseling than hearing care, but when both partners implement the following strategies, their interpersonal rapport improves and their relationship strengthens.

The key word in the third definition of communication is “effectively.” Communication simply will not occur if the words are not effective in getting the meaning across. If Mr. Jones

hears “I need a loaf of bread” when Mrs. Jones tells him “I need to go to bed” then those words were not used effectively and a communication breakdown has occurred.

The workplace is often a difficult situation for people with hearing loss, so it is critical to share this information with co-workers. Meetings and conference calls present unique challenges, as participants are often distracted by their phone or computer and do not put the necessary effort into communicating clearly. In today’s fast-paced and technology-driven world, we all need to take a step back and remember to practice the simple yet effective communication strategies discussed throughout this handbook.



Note: For the sake of simplicity, we refer to hearing aids throughout this handbook. However, the helpful expectations and technology tips provided in the following pages are just as applicable to those with cochlear implants and other hearing devices.

I JUST SPENT THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS ON NEW HEARING AIDS... DO I NEED TO KEEP READING?

Absolutely! First, congratulations on your commitment to improving your communication with new hearing aids. Today's hearing aids provide better quality hearing than ever before. Technology has come a long way in recent years, and the more advanced hearing aids now allow people with hearing loss to return to activities they may have previously avoided.

Hearing aids can help you reclaim much of the speech and other sounds you have been missing. However, even the most advanced hearing aids will not restore your hearing to normal.

The key to realizing the wonderful benefits of hearing aids is to keep your expectations realistic and know that they are only one piece of the puzzle.

Hearing aids will do their part, but much of the success you receive from them must come from you and the people speaking to you.



Hearing aids will do their part, but much of the success you receive from them must come from you and the people speaking to you.

Many people mistakenly believe that hearing aids only amplify speech and nothing else. However, there are many environmental sounds you need to be able to hear for your enjoyment as well as safety. If hearing aids only amplified speech, you would not hear your telephone ring, birds singing, your smoke alarm, or a car coming down the street. Today's circuitry can analyze speech differently than noise. It can help you hear through noise, but it is not possible nor desirable to eliminate all background noises. When all of these sounds are suddenly restored with your hearing aids, your brain, which may have "forgotten" many sounds, will at first be distracted by each new sound you hear. It takes time to become re-accustomed to the world of sound.

When you first start to wear your hearing aids, the world around you may seem very noisy. In addition to the soft sounds of speech you have been missing, many other sounds will reappear such as paper shuffling, leaves rustling, water dripping, and your microwave running. These are sounds you may not have heard for several years. Over time, as your brain learns to identify important from unimportant sounds, they will become less distracting.

If only worn occasionally, your brain will never get accustomed to hearing with hearing aids, and they will likely end up in your dresser drawer. Remember, people with normal hearing can hear all of the background noise too, but they have learned to push it out of conscious awareness. You will relearn to do this as well with continual and regular use of your hearing aids.



Hearing aids are NOT a part of your special occasion attire. To attain maximum benefit from them, you must wear them on a regular and consistent basis. Put them in first thing in the morning and leave them in until you go to bed. Just remember to remove them for swimming, showering, or bathing.

Some people have trouble understanding speech clearly even when it is made loud enough. Hearing care providers call this “poor word recognition” and will test for it during your initial evaluation. Poor word recognition is common, especially as we get older and our processing abilities begin to slow down a bit. Those with poor word recognition scores can still benefit from hearing aids. However, it is important to know that hearing aids cannot address this challenge alone. It is critical for those with poor word recognition to implement the strategies in this handbook. There are also special auditory training programs designed to improve speech understanding. Ask your hearing care provider if this additional training might be helpful for you.

Helpful Hearing Aid Expectations

- Hearing aids are only one piece of the communication puzzle.
- It will take time to adjust to hearing aids and to realize their full potential.
- Some sounds may be strange initially, including your voice, footsteps, birds, and newspapers.
- Hearing in quiet and mild to moderate background noise should be improved, but hearing in noise will not be as good as hearing in quiet.
- Soft speech should be audible, conversational speech comfortable, and loud speech not uncomfortable.
- No whistling should occur if the hearing aids are seated properly.
- Your own voice may sound different when you are wearing hearing aids.
- Talking on the phone may feel awkward at first as you experiment with proper phone placement and different technology options.
- It is absolutely necessary to return to your hearing care provider for follow up visits and fine-tuning adjustments to the hearing aids.
- Treat yourself to easy listening situations (one-on-one conversations in quiet environments) during the first few days or weeks with the hearing aids as your brain adjusts to hearing again.
- You will benefit most from hearing aids if you use the strategies in this handbook and share them with everyone who communicates with you.

NO-NONSENSE AND COMMON SENSE

It is amazing how often hearing aids are fit on patients, and immediately their family members will go to the opposite side of the office, turn their backs toward the patient, and WHISPER a question. WHAT???. If hearing care providers with normal hearing cannot hear what is whispered, how in the world is the person with hearing loss supposed to hear it? Hearing aids do not give people “super human” hearing, but often this is what is expected of them.

This handbook is going to squash any unrealistic expectations. We are talking about no-nonsense and common sense communication. Interestingly, common sense often flies out the door when we are communicating with people we love.

Let us return to Mr. and Mrs. Jones. Remember, Mr. Jones has a hearing loss, and is really struggling to hear Mrs. Jones around the house. However, when Mrs. Jones is talking to a friend on the telephone, he can hear every word she says, even when he is in another room. Why is this?

This is actually quite common. Mrs. Jones puts more effort into speaking clearly and loudly for her friend to hear. She really wants to get her message across to her friend (building that “interpersonal rapport” or nurturing that friendship) and therefore she does what is needed to achieve that goal. This is wonderful, effective communication on Mrs. Jones’ part. However, when she hangs up the phone and starts telling Mr. Jones about her conversation, she drops her volume and talks faster. It also does not help that Mr. Jones is on the other side of the room, next to a TV with the volume blaring so he can hear it.

Sound familiar? Common sense tells us that Mr. Jones will not understand what Mrs. Jones is telling him, but this scenario is repeated multiple times a day in thousands of households around the world.

We tend to communicate least effectively with those we spend time with the most. We get into years and years of bad habits. We get lazy. We each expect the other person to fix the problem. It happens over and over again with very loving (yet frustrated) relationships. Let's change that!

.....

“My husband and I have been married for 34 years, and he has had hearing loss since he was a child. This book taught me things that I never knew. It is equally important for the spouse to understand the Five Keys to Communication Success to help ensure a better quality of life for both partners.”

— PAMELA W.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION BY ENVIRONMENT

It is most often the environment, or situation, that dictates the communication difficulty. Therefore, the remainder of this handbook is divided into different environments to make it a quick-and-easy reference guide for you. If you find yourself in a situation where you are experiencing a communication breakdown, you can quickly flip to that particular environment in this handbook. For example, if you are dining out with your family tonight, you can quickly review the “Dining Out” chapter, and within a couple of minutes you will have environmental, speaker, listener, and technology tips at your fingertips. You will be ready to conquer those potential communication breakdowns that commonly happen in noisy restaurants, and enjoy a pleasant evening with your family.

Obviously it will be more useful for you to read about that particular situation ahead of time so that you can make the necessary preparations, but there will always be tips that you can use in a last-minute communication emergency. This information will equip and empower you to have an effective communication exchange and nurture your most important relationships.

SAMPLE

Out &

The following environments will be addressed:

- Around the House
- In the Car
- Dining Out
- On the Phone
- Public Events:
Churches
Concerts
Plays
Large Meetings



SAMPLE

About

AROUND THE *House*

SAMPLE

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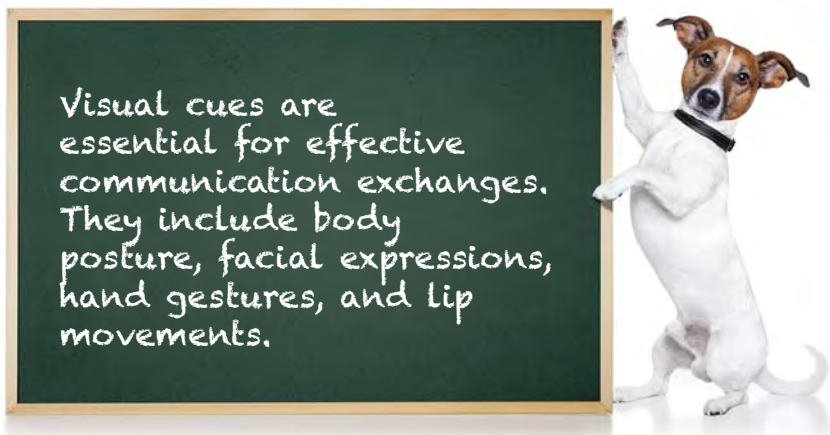
ENVIRONMENT

The most common communication breakdowns happen between family members in their own home. The good news is that this is the easiest environment to manipulate. It may not always be convenient, but it is easy. Don't try to compete with other sounds. If you want to have a meaningful conversation, turn off the television, turn off the radio, turn off the dishwasher, and turn off the washing machine. Do you want to nurture a relationship with your TV or with your spouse? It is entirely possible (and easy) to get rid of the background noise in your own home when effective communication is a priority. This is the responsibility of both communication partners.



SPEAKER

The most common speaker error in the home is talking from another room. This generally does not work, even for people with normal hearing. Your listener has hearing loss, which means it is imperative that you are face-to-face before you start speaking. A large part of your message is being received through visual cues, so they must see your face when you speak.



Listeners cannot see these important cues from another room. Your job is to go to your listener or to (nicely) request that he or she comes to you...before you begin talking. If your listener does not understand what you have said, rephrase what you said rather than repeating the same words over again. This gives your listener more information to better understand your message.



LISTENER

If you want to nurture your relationship with the people you live with, you must make an effort to actively listen to them around the house. You must **MAKE THEIR MESSAGE A PRIORITY**, and minimize the “selective hearing loss” that so many patients admit to suffering from. If your spouse begins speaking to you while you are watching TV, then grab the remote and mute the volume for a moment. If you are in another room and hear your spouse talking to you, then go to that room, or (nicely) request that he or she comes to you. You are equally responsible for making sure you can see the speaker’s face.



TECHNOLOGY

If you have hearing aids, wear them around the house. So often patients will take their hearing aids out when they get home to “give their ears a rest.” While this is OK when you are first getting used to new hearing aids, it is absolutely unacceptable after that. People who do this are essentially saying that their “away-from-home” relationships are more important than their “in-home” relationships. WEAR YOUR HEARING AIDS AT HOME.

If watching TV is a challenge in your home, there are several great technology options. People without hearing aids can find relatively inexpensive wireless devices that send the TV signal directly from the TV to a receiver unit with headphones attached. People with hearing aids can use these devices with a neckloop and the telecoil program in their hearing aids (see “On the Phone...Technology” for more details).

The new wireless hearing aids have special accessories that deliver clear TV or stereo sound directly into the hearing aids. They also have companion microphones that can be worn by the speaker to make his or her voice loud and clear to the listener with hearing aids, even in background noise or at a distance. Be sure to ask your hearing care provider about these amazing wireless options.



PRACTICE

Most people have spent many years developing bad communication habits around the home. They've gotten used to talking over the TV and trying to have conversations while washing the dishes. Practice and repetition of the environmental, speaker, listener, and technology tips presented here are essential to creating new habits. Experts say it takes 30 days to create a new habit. This means that for 30 days, you must be very conscious of reducing the background noise and facing each other when you talk. It may seem tedious and troublesome at first, but **STICK WITH IT!** Your efforts will pay off in reduced frustration and improved relationships.

It may seem tedious
and troublesome at
first, but **STICK WITH IT!**

Your efforts will pay off.



SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION PLAN

Challenging Situation:

Communication Partners Involved:



ENVIRONMENT



SPEAKER



LISTENER



TECHNOLOGY



PRACTICE

We hope you have enjoyed this sample of our patient guidebook.

The remainder of the book applies the 5 Keys to the following environments:

- In the Car
- Dining Out
- On the Phone
- Public Events

Then we end with these final thoughts...

FINAL THOUGHTS

Yes, hearing loss can certainly present a communication challenge. However, it should not prevent you from enjoying all that life has to offer! You can significantly reduce communication breakdowns by making a few common sense modifications to your environment, implementing effective speaking and listening strategies, and investing in the amazing technology that is available today.

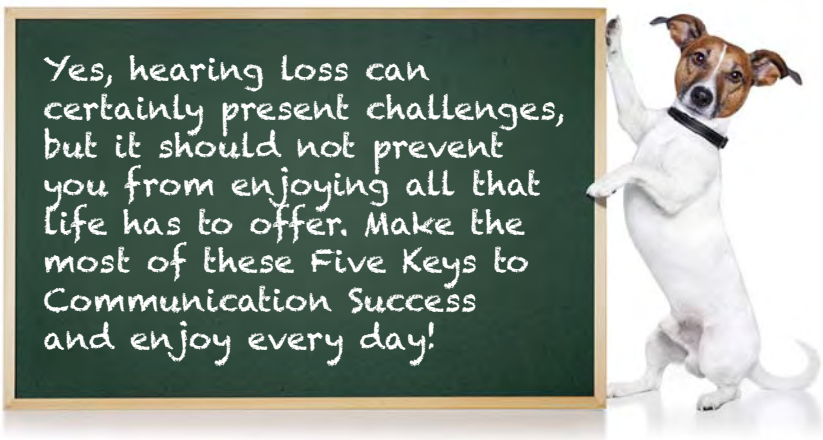
It should now be perfectly clear that the responsibility for improving communication does not fall solely on the shoulders of the person with hearing loss. The people who talk to that person on a regular basis are just as responsible for learning and practicing the keys discussed in this handbook.

Create a Successful Communication Plan that lists where and with whom your personal communication breakdowns most often occur. Once you've identified the most challenging situations, you can apply what you've learned in this handbook by writing out the Environmental, Speaker, Listener, Technology, and Practice strategies you'll use to ensure a successful communication exchange. Then post your plan where you'll see it every single day. Make sure all parties involved have a copy as well. You'll be amazed how much this little exercise helps to break bad habits and improve your communication. You can use the plans included in this handbook, or download blank Successful Communication Plans at www.5keys.info.

The choice is yours. Will you let hearing loss keep you from going to restaurants with your family? Will you stop talking on the phone with your mother or father because they can't hear you? Will you try to hide your hearing loss and fake your way through conversations at home and at work? Will you use your hearing loss as an excuse to withdraw from the world?

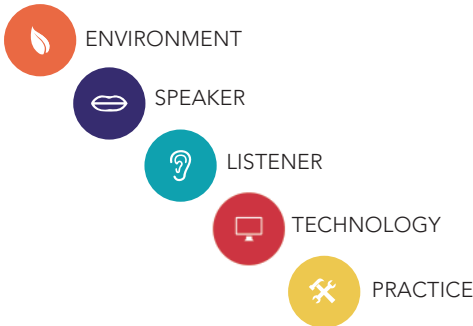
Alternatively, will you choose to take control of your hearing loss? Will you make those reservations in the quiet section of your favorite restaurant ahead of time so that you can enjoy a conversation with your family? Will you help your hearing impaired parents to hear you on the phone by speaking clearly, or even buying them a nice amplified telephone for their birthday? Will you kindly remind your coworkers, friends, and family about your hearing loss and educate them about ways to communicate more effectively with you? Will you use the strategies and technology suggestions in this handbook to jump back into the world of sound, knowing that you are empowered and prepared to tackle any difficult listening situation?

At Cut to the Chase Communication, we are confident that you will make the right choice. We believe that you want to continue to build and nurture the relationships that are most important in your life. We trust that you and your loved ones will implement and practice what you have learned in this handbook. You are now equipped with the Five Keys to Communication Success!



Frustrated by HEARING LOSS?

Hearing loss is the third most common age-related health condition. While millions of people suffer from hearing loss, billions of people are frustrated by the communication breakdowns that often result from this silent disability. Hearing aids can help, but they are only one piece of the communication puzzle. Conquer those communication breakdowns with **The Five Keys to Communication Success**:



www.5keys.info

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\$14.95

You should read this book if you...

- Have hearing loss
- Wear hearing aids
- Are avoiding hearing aids
- Have a friend or family member with hearing loss
- Work with someone with hearing loss
- Are a professional who works with older adults

"This book is outstanding. I wish I had received a copy from my audiologist when I got my first pair of hearing aids eight years ago. It would have made such a difference as I adapted to life with hearing aids."

Sarah, Speak-Up Librarian blogger

"...helped me to understand my father's hearing difficulties, and to better support him through the hearing aid process."

Jill M., Marshall, MO

"At last, a book that truly tells it like it is...offers constructive, realistic solutions discussed in an environment-specific format."

Robert W. Sweetow, PhD
University of California