

HEARING MATTERS

By Cyril Peach

Speechreading - The Modern Term for Lipreading

Most of you are familiar with the term "lipreading". This term conveys the idea that one can understand speech by focusing only on the movements of the lips. While some understanding of speech is possible just by focusing on lip movements, most lip readers observe more than just that. It might be conscious or it might be unconscious, but most lipreaders observe other aspects of communication such as facial expressions, body movements, situational clues, and auditory clues.

Because hearing impaired people, as well as those who are not hearing impaired, observe more than just the lips of a speaker, the term "speech - reading" has been developed. Everyone, hearing impaired or not, prefers to face a speaker and can hear better when doing so.

Speechreading enhances communication in noisy situations when a message cannot be understood without seeing the speaker's face. This is especially true for people with hearing loss, making the development of speechreading skills very important. Now this doesn't mean that one can discard one's hearing aid, but, it allows the user to combine hearing and seeing. Listening and speechreading can work together to help the hard of hearing person hear and communicate better.

How does one practice the art of speechreading? Well, you are practising each time you engage in a conversation - as long as you can see the speaker's lips and you focus on the meaning of the message. This takes plenty of attention and energy but it is worth it.

As stated before, speechreading practice does not require you to discard your hearing aids. Auditory information can and should be included in the total communication exchange. The speaker should talk as he would normally talk - with sound and this is the way you should listen. By hearing and seeing, you are going to understand much better than if you just used one or the other.

Some people have found it useful to engage in formal speechreading classes. The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association - NL Chapter is sponsoring a speechreading course this coming October in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. If you are hearing impaired or work and/or live with someone who is hearing

impaired, you might find this course very beneficial. The details are given below:

Speechreading and Coping Skills Level 1

October 20-25 (Monday – Saturday)

9:30 am – noon each day

Cost: FREE (includes course materials)

Location: Labrador Friendship Centre board room

Anyone who is interested in signing up for this course, or looking for more information may contact Alison Day, Coordinator of Outreach Services toll free 1-888-753-3224 or by e-mail a.day@nf.aibn.com

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