



Communication Tips for **Festive Fun** and Special Occasions



Introducing the
BrainHearing™ approach

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People often find themselves in environments that can be busy, noisy and distracting at Christmas and on other special Occasions. For some, these situations may be uncommon throughout the rest of the year and may be quite overwhelming particularly if they have a hearing loss.

We hope that you find these simple yet effective tips helpful for these situations and occasions.

Set the stage to suit everyone

The sound environment has a big effect on people with hearing loss. So ensuring a successful dinner begins with careful design of the 'stage' to minimize the noise they experience. When you decide where people should sit, you can use place cards or reserve a chair with a special cushion.

- Place people with hearing problems away from the kitchen or food preparation area
- Sit people with hearing loss where they can see as many faces as possible, like the end of the table
- If people have a 'good side' on which they hear better, place most other people on that side
- Designate rooms or zones: a playroom for kids, a TV room, or a quiet area for calm conversations



Reduce the volume and improve the sound quality



Background noise makes it hard to hear, especially as there may already be plenty of excited chatter, galloping cutlery, and clattering plates and pans. As background noise increases, people tend to speak louder. The noise can quickly escalate, which is bad news for anyone with hearing difficulties

- Turn the music down to set the general sound level fairly low
- Close the curtains to improve sound damping, and also reduce glare and reflections
- Wait until your guests have left the table before clearing the dishes
- Turn the TV off while you eat, or select subtitles or closed captioning so people can follow it silently

Help the eyes to help the ears

Looking at people's faces makes it easier to see when someone begins speaking and then to read their lips, facial expressions, and other types of body language. Most hearing aids are directional, so people have difficulty hearing things they are not looking at. For example, if someone begins making a speech, a person with hearing loss may be unaware unless they see it happening and then turn to listen to it.

- Make sure the dining room is well lit and people can see each other's faces clearly

- Balance mood lighting with the needs of those who need to see clearly to follow the conversation
- Remove any large objects from the table so people can see easily along it
- Place candles at the sides of the room rather than in the middle of the table



Help others to help you

If you suffer from hearing loss, you know that people are not always aware of your needs. So it is important that you tell them (politely!). Otherwise, how can they know? If you are in doubt, think of whoever is cooking and arranging everything; they want the meal to be a success. That means making sure that you and all the other guests enjoy the meal.

- Tell your hosts what makes it easier for you. Maybe ask to sit where most guests are on your 'good side', or farthest from the kitchen or TV
- Ask your neighbour at the table to help you catch conversation or nudge you if someone is trying to get your attention
- If you find yourself struggling, tell people to face you when they speak to you
- If you find background noise distracting, politely let someone know you are having trouble hearing



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