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Introduction To Deafness

Breaking Down Barriers:

- Only 30% of what we say in spoken language shows up on our lips
- 90% of children who are deaf are born to hearing parents
- One out of every ten Americans has a hearing loss

Hearing Impairment? ASL? Cochlear Implants? Hard of Hearing? Deaf culture? HUH??

As you come across individuals with hearing impairments, you may hear some of the above terms. The Oxford dictionary defines “deafness” as wholly or partially without hearing. Yet this doesn’t describe the whole picture.

Some individuals don’t identify themselves on their ability to hear but on their cultural norms and beliefs. A person may experience a loss in hearing, but still remain actively functional within the hearing community. This person may prefer to be called hearing impaired or hard of hearing. On the other hand, the same individual may lose their ability to hear and choose to be an active participant of the Deaf community. This person would prefer to be called Deaf.

Now you may be wondering why the “D” is capitalized in deaf. The reason being is members within the Deaf community do not perceive themselves to be impaired, disabled, nor handicapped.

These individuals are fully functional, except for hearing, members of society. The use of the term Deaf is as a noun that describes this group of individuals as adhering to a common system of beliefs and values. This usage is very unlike the adjective of deaf that is used to describe a medical condition.

Some accommodations for students with hearing impairments include, but are not limited to, interpreters, transcribers, FM audio systems, hearing aids, cochlear implants, speechreading and pen & paper.

Some basic tips to remember when talking to someone who is hard of hearing or Deaf are:

Do not over enunciate words or shout. This only inhibits the communication process. If the person is speechreading, he will have a difficult time deciphering the syllables on your mouth if you are not speaking normally.

Maintain eye contact with the

person. This applies for a person who is speechreading or using an interpreter/transcriber. Again, if the person is reading your lips, if you look away while speaking, that person has missed what you said. As far as using an interpreter or transcriber, it is good etiquette to look at the person and not his interpreter.

Do not cover your mouth when speaking. This is a habit that many of us do without realizing. When you are speaking you may place your hand over your mouth, or have an object obstructing the view of your mouth. Either way, the ability to read your lips is inhibited.

Act naturally. This is the best advice. Remember that the individual with a hearing impairment is a person. It is normal for you or the person with a hearing impairment to repeat comments several times. You may need to ask the person for advice on how to best communicate (pen & paper, speechreading, or an interpreter). The goal for both of you is to be able to communicate.

Campus Improvements

I would like to take this time to welcome the newest addition to the Office for Students with Disabilities. Leslie Harms joined us as the Student Services Coordinator in August of this year. In her first three months, she has already made some tremendous changes for our campus. Leslie has a strong background in deafness and hearing impairments, she is a Sign Language interpreter and TypeWell transcriber. She has come to us from UT Knoxville where she worked in the Disabilities Office for a number of years.

Shortly after Leslie’s arrival, she initiated a program on campus to make lectures more accessible for students with hearing impairments. She advocated for the purchase of TypeWell. This program is

a wireless laptop to laptop transcribing program in which the transcriber types the lecture meaning for meaning. The transcriber uses a form of shorthand to type the lecture and the software translates it immediately for the student with the other laptop. This has been a wonderful addition to the services provided through our office.

In addition to providing services to our students with hearing impairments, Leslie also manages our test proctoring program. She is the main contact person for anything that deals with tests in this office. She starts with reviewing the code of conduct with students, reviews the guidelines of testing in our office, provides the proctor forms and training on how to manage the process, administers the tests and protects the academic integrity of each test until it is delivered to and signed by the professors.

We are very excited about the expertise Leslie brings to our office. I am sure she will feel welcomed by the campus community and will share in many experiences with everyone at UTC.

If you have any questions about sign language, TypeWell, TTY Systems, Testing etc., please feel free to contact Leslie di-



The Myths Of Deafness



The best way to learn about disabilities is to look into the myths we have about them. As with any population, we formulate myths and assumptions and act upon them. This article is to help you to recognize and dispel some of these myths. A good resource to use is **For Hearing People Only**. Moore and Levitan provide an easy-to-read book designed for readers with no prior background in deafness. This book provides answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about Deaf community and culture. Here are some excerpts from the book.

Myth: There is a similarity between Braille and ASL.

Fact: None whatever, but you'd be surprised how many folks apparently think they're the same thing. Some hearing people have told us that when they first saw Deaf people signing to each other, they immediately thought, "Oh, they're using Braille. They must be blind." Another common mistake is when Deaf people walk into a restaurant, the servers hand them Braille copies of the menu. For the record, Braille is not a language like ASL.

It's a code, a way of translating "flat copy" –written and printed media—into a tactile form.

Myth: Can't all deaf people read lips?

Fact: No. One of the most common "Hearing" misconceptions is that all deaf people have this magic ability to 'read lips'. Lip-reading involves a high proportion of guesswork and "instant mental replay". Only 30% of all spoken sounds are visible on the lips. Many sounds like "b", "p", and "m," are virtually impossible to distinguish by watching the mouth. And what about homonyms (homophones)- "blue" and "blew"? They look and sound identical!

Fact: "Lip-reading" is a misnomer. A more accurate term is *speechreading*. Speechreaders don't just look at the mouth; they read the entire face: the eyes, the way the eyebrows tilt or the brows knot when certain words are emphasized. They note changes in expression, shoulder shrugs, posture, and gestures. This requires a high degree of attention. It can be exhausting.

Myth: American Sign Language

isn't a real language.

Fact: False. ASL is a real language that is widely used and preserved amongst the Deaf community. William C. Stokoe published **Sign Language Structure** and co-authored **A Dictionary of American Sign Language on Linguistic Principles**. Stokoe helped change the perspective that ASL is broken simplified English to that of ASL being a complex natural language with syntax and grammar. ASL has syntactical flexibility you won't find in English. The word order varies according to the emphasis- and the nuances of expression. ASL can expand the expression of each sign according to the signer's mood, feelings, or attitude.

If you would like to learn more about deafness, please contact the Partnership for Families, Children, & Adults: Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (423) 697-3842 or the local chapter for SHHH-Self-Help for Hard of Hearing People (423) 894-3138.



AT Corner

Hello everyone! We have had a busy semester integrating our new assistive technology on campus. Our AT lab in Frist Hall is being utilized by our students every day, and we are working on installing more programs in Lupton Library and the University Center microcomputer lab.

We are offering a new service to our students this semester, thanks to our new Student Services Coordinator, Leslie Harms. TypeWell Educational Transcription System is a transcription system that provides communication access and note-taking services for students who are deaf or

hard of hearing. This program affords the student direct access to the classroom through real-time captioning. The transcriber uses a laptop to transcribe meaning-for-meaning what is said in class lectures and discussions. The student reads the transcription in real-time from a second laptop. Students can also type questions and comments to the transcriber during class, and even take their own notes on the reader computer. This allows the student to become an active participant in class. If you have any questions about TypeWell, please go to www.TypeWell.com or contact Leslie Harms at 2202.

Another piece of adaptive technology used regularly by deaf individuals is the TTY (Teletypewriter), also known as a TDD (Telecommunications for the Deaf). Consisting of a keyboard and a telephone receiver cradle, these devices are used to place or receive phone calls. The conversation is simply typed across the screen, not unlike instant messaging. Here at UTC, we have several locations where people who are deaf or hard of hearing can use a TTY/TDD. Locations on campus where TTYs can be located include the Office for Students with Disabilities, 110 Frist Hall, UTC Campus Police Department, and the University Center.

Living with a Hearing Impairment

The following interview was conducted with a student at UTC that is registered with the Office for Students with Disabilities. This student was born as a typical hearing child, but as a result of an explosion has lost his hearing. He is currently a sophomore majoring in Accounting. We would like to thank this student for being so open and candid throughout this interview. His goal for this interview was for people to gain an understanding of what living with a disability is like. The interview was conducted on November 20, 2005.

What type of disability do you have?

I have an acquired Hearing Impairment. I really don't perceive myself as different than others. It does become evident when I miss hearing something completely. People don't see my disability because it is invisible. Also, my speech is so good that people don't think I am deaf.

How long have you been living with Hearing Impairment?

There was an accident when I was in the Navy 22 years ago. I was on the USS Nemitz off the coast of Lybia during the Cold War conflict when an air craft crash landed aboard our ship. The crash ignited a fire which exploded a missile on board the ship. The explosion threw me overboard which caused a severe head trauma, broken ribs, fractured pelvis and compound fracture of my left leg. I never got my hearing back. That all happened when I was 23 years old.

What negativity have you had to over-

come?

I had to train myself to speech read, but even as skilled as I am at it, I still miss a lot. Especially with words that sound alike. For example the words 'I love you' sound like 'elephant shoes'. I usually look for context information to figure out the words I miss, so it might take me longer to process what has been said. The most frustrating thing though is having to explain things every semester to faculty. Most really want to understand and I have to be patient, but it would be nice if there was one big training in the beginning of a school year where all faculty could learn about FM systems or not talking with their hands in front of their mouths as well as other disabilities. I find myself explaining the same thing every semester to every teacher and it wears on my patience.

What did you have to work through to get to where you are now?

I was in the hospital for several months after the explosion. My head was swollen like a watermelon and when the swelling went down and my broken bones healed, I had to start therapy. I had to learn to do everything again. My hearing never came back so I had to start speech therapy to learn to speech read. I was able to pick up on this easily because I didn't lose my hearing until I was 23 years old and grew up hearing language. Recently, I had a surgery to get a Cochlear Implant which helps filter out background noise, but I am still learning to distinguish the sounds of words.

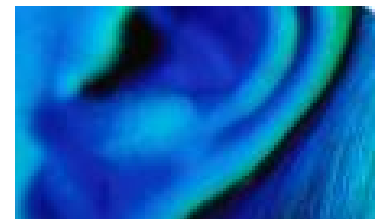
What has helped you overcome the impact of your disability?

Personally, I have a hearing dog that helps alert me to sounds and takes me to where the sound originate. If the phone rings, he will take me to the phone. If a fire alarm sounds, he will take me out of the building. Academically, I use the FM system which helps clarify the sound of the professor's voice. Recently, I started using TypeWell, which is a program in which a staff member from the Office for Students with Disabilities comes into my class and types everything going on in the class and loops it to my laptop in real time. Afterwards, I get the transcription to keep as notes. I am able to be more active in participating in class, and now I am the one everyone is asking to clarify what the professor said in the lectures.

What advice do you have for other students?

I really encourage student with hearing impairments to use the services offered at OSD like TypeWell. I also think it would be really helpful if faculty and staff were trained on working with students with disabilities so everyone is aware of what services students need to have equal access.

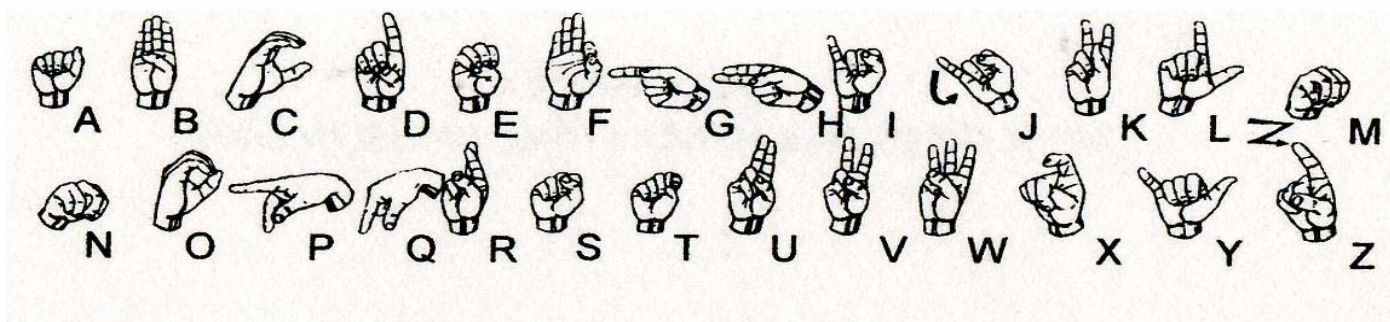
*If you have questions regarding hearing impairments or services available, please contact the Disabilities Office at 425-4008.



Just For Fun

Use the sign alphabet below and the following ASL browser to create your own holiday sign language message.

Visit <http://commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb/browser.htm>



615 McCallie Avenue
Dept 2953
Chattanooga, TN 37403

Phone: 423-425-4008 (Voice)
423-425-4006 (Voice/TTY)
Fax: 423-425-2288

For any questions regarding hearing impairments or to schedule a training to help your department become more embracing of individual's differences, please call 425-4008 to schedule a meeting time.



Learning Opportunities

*For further information regarding these conferences, please feel free to call OSD at 425-4008 to get details.

ATIA Conference	Orlando, FL	Jan. 18-21
Mid-Level Management Institute	Bloomington, IN	Jan. 21-25
AT From A to Z	Las Vegas, NV	Feb. 6-8
ACPA Conference	Indianapolis, IN	March 18-22
PEPNet 2006	Louisville, KY	April 5-8
RID Region II	Arlington, VA	June 30-July 2

Legal Corner

Deaf students say USU doesn't provide interpreters for them

By Shinika A. Sykes

The Salt Lake Tribune

Twelve hearing-impaired students at Utah State University have filed a claim alleging the school's failure to provide them with interpreters violates the Americans With Disabilities Act.

In a notice of intent to sue, the students further allege that rather than address a lack of sign-language interpreters, USU administrators actions further isolate, segregate and exclude students who are deaf.

The students want the same access to education provided hearing students, said Dale Boam, an attorney with Amknrecht & Cowdell P.C., a Sandy law firm representing the students.

"They want their success or failure to depend on their own [academic] abilities, not whether they're able to get effective communication services for their classes," he said.

If USU fails to respond with specific plans to solve the problem within 60 days, the students are prepared to move forward with a lawsuit, Boam said. "We un-

derstand their frustration," said Diane Baum, director of the USU Disability Resource Center. "It's a systemic problem. . . . There's a shortage of certified interpreters not only in Utah but across the nation."

Baum says USU has 15 hearing-impaired students, five interpreters and six note takers. It needs three more certified full-time and at least five part-time interpreters, but she has the money to hire just one.

The 12 students' claim alleges that rather than hire more interpreters, USU relies on the note takers or urges students to register only for the limited number of classes in which the school can provide interpreters.

These classes aren't necessarily classes they need for their majors, Boam said.

"Some of the students have said their graduation was postponed because they were not able to take the classes they needed within the proper time frame."

Former USU President Kermit Hall acknowledged in a Sept. 17, 2004, letter to Kelli Fletcher - one of the 12 students who

filed the claim - that he shares her "frustration and concerns" about the shortage of interpreters at USU. Hall noted that he had made direct appeals to the Legislature for more funding for sign-language interpreters.

*This case will potentially be based on two fundamental pieces of the ADA. 1) 'Undue hardship' on the University as a whole and 2) the provision of 'reasonable accommodations' based on the students' request.

If a University is unable to provide a reasonable accommodation as requested by the student, it is the university's duty to find an equally effective accommodation that will insure equal access to real time communication. Unfortunately, class room note takers and scheduling around interpreter schedules do not do that.

In addition, very few cases have ever been settled due to 'undue hardship' because this is based on the budget of the University system as a whole. It will be interesting to see how this case develops.

