

## Diversities in communication



The world of people with deafness is unique. While their hearing ability is directly affected, their speaking ability is indirectly affected as well. When this happens, we say that hearing loss negatively impacts both receptive and expressive speech of a person. This is why it is very important to do a Speech is learned by mimicking, and babies speak what they hear, all around them.

When hearing impairment or deafness is undiagnosed, babies lose this valuable first lesson in learning to speak. While their speech

organs might be perfectly fine, they find speaking difficult because they can't hear. If identified early and supported with best technology and parental cooperation, children with deafness can actually "speak" like typically developing non-hearing impaired children. But that does not happen in most of the cases in India.

So how do deaf people communicate? There are 2 parts to communication- listening and speaking. Both are affected by deafness. Here are a few solutions to the listening part- sign language, speech reading (lip reading) and hearing technology like the cochlear implant.

Deaf people, as well as most hearing people, get clues by watching lips. Have you ever felt it is harder to understand people when they speak with their mouth closed? Does your elderly grandfather hear better when you face him when speaking? Some people prefer face-to-face conversations to a telephone conversation. Why is that? Because of lip reading. However, it is quite a skill to master as a sole communication system. And we must remember that speech reading cannot take the place of hearing- it

However, if children know sign language then they use it effectively for common and educational communication. In that case they don't have to depend on as weak a support as lip reading

 *Try this lip reading activity: This is a variation of the "Telephone" game.*

*Sit with your friends in a circle. Pick a starter. The starter relays a voiceless silent message to his or her neighbor holding a shield against the face. The neighbor 'hears' it by reading the starter's lips only. This process of silent lip reading relay continues till the message comes back to the starter. Remember to shield your faces from others while relaying the message.*

*Was the message that came back the same one that was set out? Was it incomprehensible? How hard is it to read lips in the absence of spoken language? Welcome to the world of deaf communication.*