

QUICK START GUIDE: SESSION FOUR TOPICS

Now that you have addressed communication strategies, you can build on this foundation and introduce clear speech methods. During the fourth session, it is also a good time to start addressing the social stigmas and feelings associated with hearing loss.

Stigma Association with Hearing Loss

Feelings regarding stigma are often perceived by those with hearing loss, which potentially can compromise their overall confidence, self-efficacy, and overall quality of life. An article published in 2010 by Margaret Wallhagen (The Stigma of Hearing Loss, *Gerontologist*. 2010 February; 50(1): 66-75) explored different dimensions of stigma experienced by older adults with hearing loss. Wallhagen found that perceived stigma influenced the patient at multiple points on the patient journey. This included the initial acceptance of hearing loss, making the decision to be tested, selecting the type of hearing aid, and deciding when and where hearing aids are worn.

It is important to put the topic of stigma on the table, followed by a group conversation regarding the groups experiences, perceptions, etc.

Two sources to help you prepare for this discussion are:

Gagné J-P, Southall K, Jennings MB. Stigma and Self-stigma Associated with Acquired Hearing Loss in Adults, Hearing Review. 2011;18(8):16-22.

Trychin, S. Living With Hearing Loss: Workbook (Revised), 2008.

Clear Speech: Instruction and Practice

Clear speech is a method where the speaker talks slightly slower and louder, uses frequent pauses, and enunciates speech sounds more clearly. It is not exaggerated speech, but rather a style of speaking that is adopted naturally by many talkers in difficult communication situations. For example, clear speech is often used when conversing in noisy or reverberant environments or when speaking to foreigners. One of the keys to living well with hearing loss is for participants to learn how to educate their frequent communication partners about clear speech. Research has indicated that people (including young children) can be taught to produce speech that is much more easily understood by people with hearing loss.

A useful guide for discussion is to provide the group with a brochure (made available by Oticon) titled Communication Is a Two-Way Street

Handling Difficult Situations

Toward the end of Session 4, you can moderate a discussion on how to plan ahead for traveling with hearing loss, and additionally, how to enjoy dining out at restaurants. Try to incorporate lessons learned during the previous two activities, if possible.