

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO LEARN AND GROW: AGE 13-18

Every day in school, when you spend time with your friends, or when you pursue personal interests such as hobbies or sports, you learn something about yourself. You learn about what you like and dislike and what happens when you make decisions. You also learn to speak up for yourself, including how to explain to others how they can help you hear better. And you discover what you are particularly good at, and what new skills you would like to learn. When you know and understand yourself, it is easier to:

Key skills:

- **Make choices:** Know what you prefer when more than one option is available.
- **Make decisions:** Consider your possibilities and select the one that best suits your needs.
- **Solve problems:** Find solutions for challenging situations.
- **Set goals:** Decide on a goal and how you will achieve it.
- **Speak up for yourself:** Know and stand up for your rights.
- **Monitor and evaluate your own behavior:** Be in charge of your own learning and development.
- **Understand your own strengths and limitations:** What are your preferences, interests and abilities?

Below are some things you can do to practice these skills. When you have done them, you can make up other exercises yourself to keep developing the skills further.

Make good choices:

- Choose somebody you would like to do your next school assignment with and ask them to join you.
- Choose where to sit in the classroom. Find out where you hear best in each classroom. Some classes may be different than others depending on how they are taught.
- Choose who to tell about your hearing loss. Find out who you feel comfortable talking with about your hearing.
- Choose how to instruct your teacher on how to use the FM system. You may want to email your teachers, talk to each teacher privately, arrange a meeting to show all your teachers at one time or have your itinerant teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing help you to show your teachers how to use the system.
- Think about a choice you have recently made and write down why you made that choice.
- Ask yourself:
 - Were they good choices? If not, why? What would you do differently next time?
 - How did my choice affect me?
 - How did my choice affect others?

TRANSITIONS MANAGEMENT

Make good decisions:

- Decide how you will respond if someone asks you about your hearing device. We have options when we respond to others (openness, annoyance, embarrassment, courtesy). Discuss several “response options” with someone, and the possible outcomes of each one. For example, “If I respond with a negative attitude, how will the other person feel/think/act?”
- If you are having difficulty following the topic in the classroom, decide what would be the best way to get help in the moment. You might want to ask the teacher directly, ask a classmate close by directly, write your question down to talk with the teacher or a classmate later, etc. Depending on the activity, one option may work better than another at the time.
- Decide which future careers you are interested in and explore what they entail. Talk to others who enjoy their career and ask them how they knew their choice was a good fit.
- Ask yourself:
 - Why do some careers interest me more than others?
 - What should I do if many careers seem interesting?
 - What steps do I need to take now to be prepared for a preferred career?

Solve problems:

- Think of a problem you have had, for example: If someone teased you at school about your hearing loss, if you were feeling lonely, if you weren't hearing the coach's instructions to the team. How did you solve it? What did you do to change the situation?
- Visit a place you will soon be at, e.g. a new school, theatre or sports facility, and think about possible communication difficulties. How will you address them? Who might provide additional support if needed?
- Ask yourself:
 - Why did I choose the solution I did?
 - Did I need others to help me?
 - Did my solution work?

Set goals and meet them:

- Set a goal for yourself – something you really want to learn or do. Now write down one or two activities that you can engage in, or people you can meet with, to bring you closer to your goal.
- Write down goals you would like to include in regular planning meetings with your teachers. What can help you achieve these goals?
- Ask yourself:
 - Are my goals realistic?
 - Who else can help me?
 - How will I know when I have achieved my goal(s)?

Speak up for yourself:

- Prepare for and participate in your next planning meeting with your teachers to set goals for the next year and make sure that your wishes and concerns are addressed. Practice beforehand with a parent or teacher.
- Involve yourself in extracurricular clubs, organizations and projects inside and outside school and practice explaining your communication challenges and needs to others.
- Ask yourself:
 - What is it like to join new social activities? Would I describe myself as an extrovert, someone who is outgoing, or an introvert, someone less outgoing? Am I shy or outgoing?
 - How will I do it next time?
 - Who can I ask for support and advice when needed?

Monitor and evaluate your own behavior:

- Think of a new skill you want or need to learn. Create a small sheet with the following information and use it to monitor your progress:
 - Skill to be learned:
 - Steps I will take to learn the skill:
 - What will happen when I have learned the skill:
 - When I will begin to learn the new skill:
 - How will I know when I have learned the skill?
 - Who might support me in the development of that skill?
 - Why is the skill important to me?
- Think of new methods for hearing better in situations that are important to you. Think of new ways to express your hearing needs to others. Think of new ways to communicate how you feel to your friends. Use the above sheet to monitor your progress.
- Ask yourself:
 - Am I making the progress that I want?
 - What else can I do to improve my progress?
 - Who can help me?

Understand your own strengths and limitations:

- Create two lists for yourself - one with the things you do well and one with the things you need help with. Now share it with a good friend. Ask them if they agree. Do they have any suggestions to add to your list?
- Create a "Hearing Journal" for yourself in which you describe the milestones or important events of your hearing journey to date. What skills did you use to overcome obstacles on the way?
- Ask yourself:
 - What can I do to learn these things?
 - Where could I look (people, others' stories, information) to help me to enhance my limitations?
 - What other things do I want to become good at?