

Visual And Hearing Impairments

BEACON HEALTH STRATEGIES

Topics

- > Overview of Visual Impairments
- > Types of Visual Impairments
- > Tips for working with the visually impaired
- > Overview of Hearing Impairments
- > Tips for working with the hearing Impaired

Visual Impairment

What is it?

- > Impairment is defined as “any loss or abnormality in an anatomical structure or a physiological or psychological function.”
- > Visual impairment is defined as the limitation of actions and functions of the visual system
- > The National Eye Institute defines low vision as a visual impairment not correctable by standard glasses, contact lenses, medication or surgery that interferes with the ability to perform activities of daily living

Visual Impairment Types

Glaucoma

- > Due to the rise of normal fluid pressure inside the eyes. Visual field can become like a tunnel.
- > Vision remains intact in the center while progressively the peripheries of the visual field start decreasing.
 - > The center of the tunnel reduces in size progressively till total vision is lost if left untreated.



Visual Impairment Types

Age-Related Macular Degeneration

- > Central area of woolly or cottony opacity obscures the central part of the vision.
- > The peripheries may be normally seen.
 - > AMD usually blurs the sharp, central vision that is needed for closely viewed activities like reading, sewing, and driving.
 - > This is a painless condition



Visual Impairment

Cataract

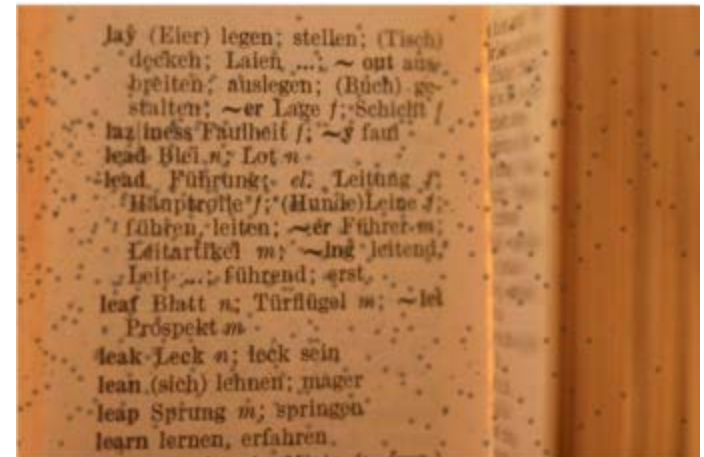
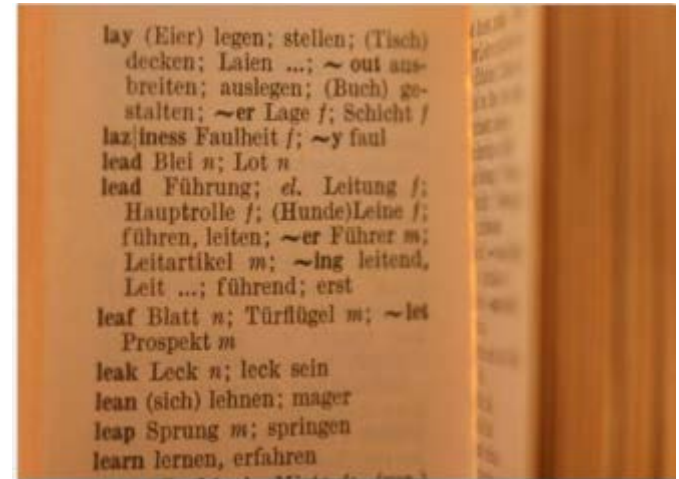
- > There is general clouding of the vision
 - > As the whole eye lens is affected the blurring of vision may be diffuse until it is totally lost
- > There may be other symptoms:
 - > photophobia
 - > inability to see in direct light;
 - > diplopia
 - > double vision etc.
- > Cataracts are very common in older people.



Visual Impairment

Diabetic Retinopathy

- > Diabetes leads to damage of the smaller arteries and blood vessels at the back of the eyes over the retina
- > Diabetic retinopathy is the most common diabetic eye disease and a leading cause of blindness in adults.
- > Usually vision impairment in diabetics begins as black spots or floating shapes that appear in the field of vision
 - > Slowly complete vision may be lost if left unchecked.



Visual Impairment

Working With Member That Have Impairments

- > Increase lighting
- > Eliminate glare whenever possible
- > Eliminate hazards
- > Create color contrasts
- > Keep work area organized and clear of barriers
- > Documentation should be in large simple print

When you invite a person who is blind or visually impaired to an interview...

- > Ask if he or she needs directions if someone is driving
- > If the candidate is taking public transportation, indicate which stop is closest, then give directions from the stop.

- > Offer assistance from the reception area to your office by asking, "Would you like to take my arm?" If the person needs to, he or she will lightly grasp your arm just above your elbow and will follow one step behind you. Don't insist on helping, and certainly, don't push the person ahead of you. If the person uses a dog guide, the dog will follow you. Do not pet or distract the dog.

- > When you get to your office, place the persons hand on the back of the chair you are offering. Do not push the person into a chair.

- > When a blind or visually impaired person is in your office...
- > Be yourself. Use normal language. Its OK to say:
 - > o "Do you see what I mean?"
 - > o "Would you like to take a look at the work area?"
 - > o "I hope to see you again."

Hearing Impairment

What is it?

- > A hearing impairment is a hearing loss that prevents a person from totally receiving sounds through the ear.
 - > If the loss is mild, the person has difficulty hearing faint or distant speech.
 - > A person with this degree of hearing impairment may use a hearing aid to amplify sounds.
 - > If the hearing loss is severe, the person may not be able to distinguish any sounds.

- > There are four (4) types of hearing loss:
 - > **Conductive:**
 - > caused by diseases or obstructions in the outer or middle ear that usually affect all frequencies of hearing.
 - > A hearing aid generally helps a person with a conductive hearing loss.
 - > **Sensorineural:**
 - > results from damage to the inner ear.
 - > This loss can range from mild to profound and often affects certain frequencies more than others.
 - > Sounds are often distorted, even with a hearing aid.
 - > **Mixed:**
 - > occurs in both the inner and outer or middle ear.
 - > **Central:**
 - > results from damage to the central nervous system.

Hearing Impairment

Working with Members that are Hearing Impaired

- > **Maintain eye contact**
 - > The person always needs to be able to see your lips if he has learned to read lips.
- > If a sign language interpreter is present, talk directly to the person who is deaf, not the interpreter.
- > Use sign language only if you're qualified
- > Use complete sentences
- > Speak slowly and clearly, but do not exaggerate.
 - > Do not shout
- > Be expressive, but not overly so.
- > If a word is not understood, try another word.
- > Demonstrate if possible.
- > Hearing aids make sounds louder, but they do not clarify the person's reception or understanding of the sound.
 - > The presence of a hearing aid does not mean that the person can hear normally.
- > If all else fails, use a pad and pencil to communicate.
- > Use visual aids whenever possible.
- > Watch the person who is deaf or hearing impaired carefully for facial expressions and body language that will help you determine the success of your communication.
- > If you have trouble understanding the speech of a person who is deaf, don't hesitate to ask him to repeat what he said.

- > Your willingness and desire to communicate is what is most important, not the ease with which you understand.

Summary

A perception of Inability may be the biggest obstacle faced by visually or hearing impaired people.

- > Remember it's okay to ask about ideas for improving your communication.
- > “What is the best way for me to review with you your care plan?”
- > “Would better lighting be helpful?”
- > “Please let me know as soon as I've said something you didn't hear or you would like me to repeat.”

Losses are difficult

- > Most people adjusting to lower vision or hearing loss take time out to re-learn and change their living situation and work so that continuing to live a meaningful life is possible and probable.
- > The stages of grief are appropriate to reference if someone is newly adjusting to the loss of vision or hearing.