

Now Hear This

Avoid Stress At Festive Gatherings

by Jennifer Gehlen, Au.D.

(NAPSA)—Getting together with family and friends can be more enjoyable when you know you're hearing what's going on. Now, thanks to the latest technology, that may be easier.

Problem

For people who would like to hear better, large gatherings can be challenging. Hearing loss occurs mostly at higher pitches, so they rely on low-pitch sounds in speech to understand conversations. People with hearing loss also rely on nonverbal cues.

Unfortunately, in large gatherings, all these cues can become compromised. There's often a variety of background noise that can drown out the sounds needed to understand conversation.

As a result, those with hearing loss have to pay extra-close attention and still catch only fragments of words and sentences that they then have to piece together. It can be very tiring and lead to becoming withdrawn and socially isolated.

Hearing Aids Can Help

Fortunately, modern digital hearing aids are designed to improve these stressful situations. Wearers can differentiate speech from noise, and the hearing aids suppress noise. In new smart hearing aids, noise-reduction algorithms are completely automatic and can target a variety of different sounds. They can even work fast enough to reduce the brief pockets of noise between natural pauses in words and sentences. This makes listening in difficult situations more comfortable and less stressful.

Smart hearing aids with directional microphone technology pick up sounds primarily from the front, since you're most likely facing the person you're talking to. Some even activate automatically and adapt to various sound envi-



Thanks to today's technology, many people can hear better than ever before.

ronments. When hearing aids are worn as a pair, directional microphones work together to sharpen the focus. In really noisy conditions, this technology has been clinically proven to let wearers understand speech even better than listeners with normal hearing.

Use Communication Strategies

Advanced hearing aid technology can help tremendously but some simple strategies can make communicating even easier:

- If the location of the event is within your control, minimize background noise. Consider having the party in a place that's relatively quiet and request a table in a more secluded area.
- Remind people to get your attention first and face you when speaking. Position yourself in a well-lit area with your back to the windows and face the person you're speaking with.
- Finally, relax. Even those with normal hearing often miss a few words.

Dr. Gehlen is an audiologist and educational specialist for Signia.