

Deaf Awareness Month: 10 Things to Know About Being Deaf

10 Things to Know about Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

1) If someone doesn't respond to you, they most likely can't hear you

It can be easy to think someone is being rude or ignoring you when you say something and they don't respond. However more likely than not, they are deaf or simply didn't hear you.

2) Every deaf person has their own preferred methods of communication and language

Everyone has their own preferred language and preferred communication. Some deaf individuals may choose to speak, sign, both, or neither of the two. Some may choose written communication or other method of communication that works best for them.

3) Some deaf individuals may not identify as "Deaf"

There is a wide spectrum of Deaf Culture and Deaf Identity. Just because one's hearing loss is classified as "Profoundly Deaf" doesn't mean that they identify as a full member of the Deaf community and vice versa. Some may prefer the term "Hard of Hearing", others may identify as deaf (not fully Deaf but not hearing).

Read more: [Celebrating the diversity of deafness](#)

4) Social situations and various environments may be different for deaf individuals

Social situations can be sometimes challenging for those who are deaf. Trying to keep up, communicate, and follow along with conversations can pose a variety of challenges especially in certain contexts.

5) No two deaf people are alike

Whether two people have the same level of deafness or hearing loss, that doesn't mean that their methods of communication, preferences, ways of doing things etc. are the same. Everyone is different. What might work for one deaf person may not work for another.

6) Deaf does NOT mean "dumb"

Although the term "Deaf and Dumb" is not as prominent as it used to be, some may continue to carry that impression/stigma. However, this couldn't be farthest from the truth. Many deaf individuals go on to lead successful and fulfilling lives in a wide variety of professions.

7) Deaf people don't often consider deafness as a disability

While deafness is considered an invisible disability, it does not mean that Deafness makes us disabled. It simply means we can't hear or have different ways of hearing and communicating etc.

8) Using hearing assistive technology is a personal choice

A lot of Deaf individuals hear the question "Why don't you get a cochlear implant or hearing aid?" Not everyone chooses to use hearing assistive technology for a variety of reasons and everyone has their own preference and way of life and communicating.

9) Deafness is often invisible

Similar to what I mentioned above, deaf individuals may often hear the phrase "well you don't seem Deaf". Many deaf individuals learn various ways of adapting to communication, environments, etc. that work for them so it may not always be so apparent that someone is deaf.

10) You don't need to feel sorry for our deafness

Often when we tell someone we're deaf or hard of hearing we'll hear something along the lines of "Oh, I'm so sorry". While most probably mean well, there's truly nothing to be sorry for. Most of us are happy being deaf because it's who we are and we have our own ways of navigating life and communication.

These are just 10 of the main things to be aware of in regard to deafness, deaf culture, deaf identity, etc. However, this is definitely not all. As mentioned, there are so many aspects, ways of life, communication methods, languages, preferences, cultures, identities and so much more making up the deaf community. You may be thinking about what you can do, how you can help spread awareness, and/or communicate with the members of the deaf community.

How to help spread awareness this deaf awareness month and any other time!

1) Don't give up or assume we're ignoring you, try another way

If someone doesn't reply to your greeting or something you said, try using hand gestures, nonverbal communication, or writing to get their attention. As mentioned above, it can be easy to assume someone is just being rude or ignoring you but more often than not, this is not the case.

2) Please be patient

We may need repetition sometimes and sometimes even a few times before we fully hear you. We know it can be frustrating but please keep in mind it's just as frustrating for us too.

3) Learn some basic signs

You don't have to be extremely fluent in sign language to communicate with the Deaf community. However, knowing some basic signs can always help if you do run into someone who signs.

Read more: [How to learn sign language](#)

4) Remove the labels

Refrain from using terms such as "Deaf and Dumb", "impaired" or "disabled" as these things can be very offensive and a false representation of the deaf community.

5) Don't judge us for our preferences or personal choices

As mentioned above, everyone is different. We all have different preferences in terms of communication, technology, language, and educational settings, etc. that work for us.

6) Don't hesitate to ask questions

Many may refrain from asking questions in fear of offending us. However, we actually appreciate it when you get to know us and are genuinely curious. We don't expect you to know everything about our community so it's totally okay to ask questions to become more aware.

7) Learn about Deaf Culture and Deaf Identity

Whether it's taking a class, just doing some research, or reading some of our articles on this blog, learning about our culture, community, and identity can help us create a more inclusive world.

8) Make eye contact and face us when you're speaking

We rely heavily on facial cues, lip-reading, and nonverbal communication. We can't understand what you're saying if your back is turned to us.

9) Share deaf awareness content on social media

We live in a predominantly hearing world. Helping spread the word about the deaf community to as many people as possible can help get the word out.

10) Don't treat us differently

We may need some accommodations in terms of communication etc., but that doesn't mean you have to treat us differently. We are just as human as you are and just want to be included and accepted for who we are as anyone else.

"Deaf people can do anything except hear." – I. King Jordan.

The above quote is truly one that speaks volumes when talking about the topic of deaf awareness. It is simply ears that don't work. We can do anything the average person can do. Sometimes it just takes a tad bit of patience and effort. We have our own community just as you have yours and we may do things differently but that's just us. Our deafness is a part of us but it does not define our worth, our capability, intelligence, or ability.