

**"THE BEST-WRITTEN, BEST-PLOTTED, DEEPEST, MOST DARING
- AND FUNNIEST - NEW PLAY IN RECENT YEARS" - THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**
"EXTRAORDINARY... SCINTILLATING" - THE NEW YORKER

TRIBES

**BY/DE
NINA RAINÉ**



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ABOUT THE AUDIENCE GUIDE

Written and compiled by Julia Ainsworth.

This audience guide is compiled to enhance and deepen our audience's experience and understanding. All content is intended for educational purposes only.

To reserve tickets at a reduced rate, or for questions, comments, citations or references, please contact Patrick Lloyd Brennan:
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PRODUCTION CREDITS

A SEGAL CENTRE PRODUCTION

CAST

BILLY	Jack Volpe
DANIEL	Daniel Brochu
CHRISTOPHER	Greg Ellwand
BETH	Toni Ellwand
RUTH	Lisa Norton
SYLVIA	Andrea Runge

CREATIVE TEAM

PLAYWRIGHT	Nina Raine
DIRECTOR	Sarna Lapine
SET DESIGNER	Lara Dawn de Bruijn
COSTUME DESIGNER	Louise Bourret
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Nicolas Descôteaux
SOUND DESIGNER	Dmitri Marine
VIDEO DESIGNERS	George Allister & Patrick Andrew Boivin
STAGE MANAGER	Elaine Normandeau
ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR	Jennifer Roberts
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	Danielle Skene
APPRENTICE STAGE MANAGER	Marissa Ireland

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

Welcome to the Segal! We are so pleased to have you join us at our production of Tribes. To make the most of your viewing experience and in consideration of actors and audience members around you, please be mindful of the following:

1. Cell phone use in the theatre is not permitted. Please put your cell phone on silent and refrain from taking pictures, videos or texting during the performance.
2. Please refrain from talking or opening candies during the performance.

3. Food and beverages are not permitted in the theatre.

4. Please do not kick or step over the seats when entering and exiting.

5. If you are taking notes for the purposes of writing a response or review, please be discreet to avoid distracting others.

6. Enjoy the show!

THEATRE CONTEXT/PRODUCTION HISTORY

Tribes received its world premiere at the Royal Court Theatre in London, England on October 14th, 2010. It was directed by Roger Mitchell with scene and costume design by Mark Thompson and Lighting design by Rick Fisher. The cast featured Jacob Casselden, Nina Markham, Michelle Terry, Stanley Townsend, Harry Treadaway and Phoebe Walter-Bridge.

Its North American premiere was directed by David Cromer at the off-Broadway Barrow Street Theatre, New York City in 2012. In 2012, it received the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. *Tribes* has been produced to international acclaim in Hamburg, Budapest, Sao Paulo, Zagreb, Wellington, Melbourne, the US and was first produced in Canada in February of 2014 by Theatrefront at Canadian Stage.

Productions have included ASL interpretation to make the production accessible for deaf audience members.

PROFILE OF THE PLAYWRIGHT

Since graduating from Oxford University, Nina Raine has worked primarily as a playwright and director in London, England. She trained as a director at the Royal Court theatre where she was the recipient of the Channel Four Jerwood Space Young Regional Theatre Director Bursary. She has directed productions of *Unprotected* (appearing at the Edinburgh Theatre Festival), *Shades*, *Jumpy* (both at the Royal Court) and *Longing*. Raine's premiere as a playwright was *Rabbit* which appeared at the old Red Lion Theatre in London and later won the 2006 Most Promising Playwright Award at the Critic's Circle Theatre awards. Her second play, *Tribes*, was commissioned by the Royal Court Theatre. Most recently, she wrote and directed *Tiger Country*, which was staged at the Hampstead Theatre.

In an interview about *Tribes*, Raine says:

"I first had the idea of writing *Tribes* when I watched a documentary about a deaf couple. The woman was pregnant. They wanted their baby to be deaf. I was struck by the thought that this was actually what many people feel, deaf or otherwise. Parents take great pleasure witnessing the qualities they have

managed to pass on to their children. Not only a set of genes. A set of values, beliefs. Even a particular language. The family is a tribe: an infighting tribe but intensely loyal".

(i) <http://www.royalcourttheatre.com/news/articles/nina-raine-why-i-wrote-tribes/>

PROFILE OF THE DIRECTOR

Sarna Lapine is an American director specializing in developing and directing new works. She received her BA with honours at the University of Washington and her MFA at Columbia University and was the recipient of the Marcie Bloom Fellowship in Film.

Her work as an associate director and assistant director has included the National Theatre's touring production of *War Horse* (North America and Japan) and several Broadway productions including *Women on the Verge of Nervous Breakdown*, *Sondheim on Sondheim*, *South Pacific*, *Awake and Sing!* and *The Light in the Piazza*. She is currently developing several musicals and teaches at the Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute



(i) www.sarnalapine.com

THE FAMILY

Billy

Billy (20's) is the youngest child of the family. He was born deaf and was taught to speak and read lips at a young age. He has returned home from university to live with his parents. Billy is sensitive and thoughtful.

Ruth

Billy's sister (20's) is a few years older than Billy. She is an emerging opera singer and has returned from university to live at home. She is passionate about music.

Daniel

Billy's oldest sibling, a few years older than Ruth. Daniel is a fledgling academic writing a thesis on the worthlessness of language. He struggles with a stammer and is beginning to hear voices. Daniel has recently returned to live with his parents.

Sylvia

Sylvia (20's) is going deaf. Both of her parents are deaf and she learned to sign at a young age. She works at a local charity for the deaf community and is Billy's girlfriend.

Christopher

Christopher (60's) is father to Billy, Ruth and Daniel. He is a retired teacher and writes critical essays. He has a sharp wit and is highly critical and opinionated.

Beth

Beth (60's) is Christopher's wife and caring mother to Billy, Ruth and Daniel. She taught Billy to speak at a young age. She is currently writing a detective novel.

PLAY SYNOPSIS

ACT 1

The play begins with the family at the dining room table in the middle of several conversations happening at once and insults being hurled back and forth. Christopher complains of being surrounded by his “parasite” adult children, who have all returned home to the nest. Billy, who relies on lip reading and his hearing aid to communicate, struggles to keep up with the fast paced exchanges.

Shortly after, Billy meets Sylvia at an art exhibition. They talk and Billy learns that Sylvia was born hearing to deaf parents, but is now going deaf. They share a kiss, though Sylvia mentions that she has a boyfriend.

At the family home, Daniel and Ruth are fighting about opera. Daniel becomes agitated and admits that he and his girlfriend Hayley have broken up. Christopher tells him he is “well off out of it” and joins Ruth in insulting Hayley’s background, appearance and intelligence. Billy notices how upset Daniel is and gives him a hug. Billy wants to tell his family about Sylvia but the battery on his hearing aid is drained and it interrupts his speech.

Late at night, Daniel tells Billy that he is hearing voices and uses the radio to drain out the sound. Billy tells Daniel how he feels about Sylvia. Daniel is happy for him but warns him to protect himself.

A short while later, Billy brings Sylvia home for dinner to meet his family. Billy has learned to sign and translates some of the conversation for Sylvia. Christopher presses Sylvia about the intricacies of the deaf community and the weaknesses of sign language. Sylvia explains that the topic is sensitive because she is struggling to come to terms with her hearing loss. In the final moment, she plays “Claire de Lune” on the piano and the family gathers to watch.

ACT 2

Billy and Sylvia stay over at the family home after spending the evening at an event for the deaf community. Billy has started working for the courts as a lip reader for surveillance videos. Billy goes to bed and Sylvia stays up to have a cigarette and chats with Daniel. Daniel tells Sylvia that the whole family loves her but begs her not to take Billy away. He then kisses her.

Later, Billy’s career as a lip reader gains momentum as Daniel’s stammer and auditory hallucinations worsen. Billy confronts his family about his frustrations. Sylvia translates as Billy expresses in sign language how his family’s decision not to learn sign language makes him feel like a “second class citizen”. Billy tells his family he is leaving them and moves into Sylvia’s flat.

Sylvia’s hearing continues to worsen and she avoids socializing with the deaf community. She tells Billy she needs to “keep a little bit of herself separate” and he interprets this to mean she has met someone else. Sylvia denies this and tells Billy to go back to his family.

Sylvia and Billy break up. An investigation of Billy is launched due to him falsifying dialogue in the surveillance videos. Billy admits he made up evidence that lead to convictions and compares this to the way Beth writes fiction. He tells Daniel he is good at guessing, and uses his knowledge of Daniel kissing Sylvia as an example. Billy tells Daniel that he is going to get back together with Sylvia. He teaches Daniel the sign language for “love”.

DEAF

Individuals who experience a severe level of hearing loss with very little remaining hearing. Deaf individuals may make use of speech-reading, oral language, ASL or la langue des signes québécoise (LSQ), hearing aids, communication technology, and/or cochlear implants for communication. Deaf is often spelled with a capital D and refers to embracing the cultural norms, beliefs, and values of the Deaf Community. Although Billy is deaf, he still has some residual hearing remaining and is able to make use of a hearing aid. He was not taught ASL growing up and has developed an ability to speech-read to compensate. Sylvia grew up with deaf parents and learned ASL at a young age. She has not developed an ability to lip read and relies more and more on ASL with the onset of her hearing loss.

LINGUISTICS

The complex study of how ideas and emotions are expressed through language. The structures, commonalities, differences and acquisition of human languages are studied in the fields of semantics (meaning), phonetics/phonology (speech sounds), syntax (structure), pragmatics (use) and morphology (formation of words).

ASL: AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des signes Québécoise (LSQ) are the two predominant visual languages used by deaf people in Canada. Distinct from English, ASL has its own grammar and syntax. Since its origins in the 19th century at the American School for the Deaf in Connecticut, ASL has been widely taught in schools and centres for the deaf. ASL signs include specific movements of the face, body and hands.

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Culture is a way of life and learned ways of acting, feeling and thinking based on a group who share common language, beliefs, values, traditions, social norms and identity in a society. The culture includes language, values, traditions, social norms and identity. A **community** is a group of people and supporters who have common ideas, beliefs and goals.



Left to Right: Daniel Brochu (Daniel), Sarna Lapine (Director), Jack Volpe (Billy), Jordan Goldman (ASL-English Rehearsal Interpreter), Lisa Norton (Ruth) / Photo by Leslie Schachter

LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION

In *Tribes*, Nina Raine addresses the complexities and subtleties of human communication. How does our language inform our identity? How does our method of communication inform our relationships? In prioritizing verbal speech & expression, what are we missing?

In the opening scene, we meet Billy's family – an exceptionally bright, verbose group that is constantly bickering and bantering. Everyone seems to be talking at once, intent on loudly expressing their opinions, with very little listening.

"Beth: Christ! Why can't you move a step without an argument starting in this house?" (Raine 21)

Though Billy is immersed in this world and has developed an ability to lip-read, he has difficulty keeping up with the frenzied pace of exchanges. His heightened awareness and sensitivity to gesture, facial expression and body language gives him insight into things that his family members fail to notice. An instance of this appears when Billy notices Daniel is upset and gives him a hug to comfort him:

"Ruth: Hayley. What did Daniel tell you?

Daniel: Nothing. I just saw it on his face. I think they've split up again." (Raine 20)

Raine presents different attitudes and theories about language and communication through the characters' diverse perspectives. Daniel theorizes that "ultimately language is worthless. We have words but they are a token. They are pale photocopy of life" (Raine 16). In contrast, Christopher presents the notion that textual language is an essential component of the human experience. "How can you have a feeling if you don't have the word for it"? (Raine 42). Caught in the middle of these opposing ideas is Sylvia, who is "between both worlds". In Sylvia, Raine has created a character who embodies conflicting feelings, experiences and attitudes about language and struggles to reconcile them.

IDENTITY

Billy, Sylvia and his siblings (all in their twenties) are in the early process of defining their identity and finding their method of self-expression (through language, music, academic writing). As the protagonist, Billy undergoes the greatest personal transformation as he discovers his "voice" and a language for self-expression in ASL. As his ability to communicate through ASL develops, his confidence improves and he is able to confront his family and express his feelings of isolation with Sylvia's help. Billy's father Christopher justifies the family's

choice and says "we didn't bring up Billy as a handicapped", explaining that they didn't want him to self-identify as a "disabled" individual (Raine 41). "Defining your personality around the fact that you're deaf it's like basing your identity on coming from Gateshead! If what constitutes your identity becomes ideological-" (Raine 31)

Billy makes the decision to temporarily separate himself from his family, and in doing so, gains a sense of empowerment and pride by joining a community of like individuals.

Through his career as a speech-reader for the court system, Billy uses an ability he developed as a result of being deaf, thereby transforming it into an exceptional, profitable skill.

COMMUNITY

Tribes explores the intricate hierarchies, rituals, traditions and attitudes imbedded in the family tribe and surrounding communities. Billy's family is a symbiotic group of like-minded individuals, who, in spite of their constant quarrelling, are more alike than they are different. Ultimately this family ferociously loves, protects and supports one-another. Ruth affirms the positive aspects of being part of a community: "it's a scary world out there. If you're part of a group, it's easier" (Raine 37).

Discrimination against outsiders to the family tribe is demonstrated in the assumptions and attitudes that Christopher perpetuates about people of different religious sects (conservative Jews), backgrounds ("Northerners") and abilities (deaf). Christopher explains that the presence of the "other" contributes to community bonding explaining "Like any cult, it's founded on exclusion. A sect has to have enemies and...the feeling of persecution is necessary because it bonds." (Raine 31)

Raine also explores the paradox of preserving one's identity within a community. As Sylvia experiences a shift in her personality from one language to another, she emphasizes the need for solitude and self-reflection. "I just need to keep a little bit of myself separate." (Raine 60)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. WHAT EXAMPLES OF PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION CAN BE FOUND IN *TRIBES*?

2. THOUGH THE SUBJECT OF THIS PLAY CENTERS AROUND THE “DEAF COMMUNITY”, HOW CAN THE THEMES SPEAK TO BROADER COMMUNITIES AND “OTHERNESS” IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE?

3. HOW DOES CHRISTOPHER AND THE FAMILY DEFEND THEIR DECISION NOT TO LEARN SIGN LANGUAGE? WHY MIGHT A FAMILY OR INDIVIDUAL MAKE THIS DECISION?

4. WHAT ALLIANCES / TRIBES ARE MADE AND BROKEN THROUGHOUT THE PLAY?

5. WHAT INFLUENCE DOES SYLVIA HAVE ON BILLY? HOW IS HE TRANSFORMED BY THEIR RELATIONSHIP?

6. DISCUSS THE PARADOX OF SOLITUDE AND COMMUNITY. HOW DOES SYLVIA STRUGGLE TO FIND A BALANCE BETWEEN HER OWN IDENTITY, AND THE WORLDS SHE STRADDLES (HEARING AND DEAF)? WHAT IS MEANT BY THE “NEED TO KEEP JUST A LITTLE BIT SEPARATE”?

7. WHY DOES DANIEL KISS SYLVIA?

8. HOW DOES BILLY JUSTIFY HIS FABRICATION OF EVIDENCE? WHAT PARALLELS CAN BE DRAWN BETWEEN HIS ACTION OF MAKING ASSUMPTIONS AND “GUESSES” WITH ACTIONS OF OTHER CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY?

9. HOW ARE SILENCES USED IN THE PLAY? WHAT PURPOSE DOES THE SILENCE SERVE?

10. IN *TRIBES*, RAINE’S TREATMENT OF DIALOGUE IS CRASS, CHAOTIC, FAST-PACED AND DISJOINTED. WHAT MIGHT SHE BE SAYING ABOUT THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE?



Left to Right: Toni Ellwand (Ruth), Jack Volpe (Billy) / Photo by Leslie Schachter

SUGGESTED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. NON –VERBAL COMMUNICATION

(Curriculum Connections: English Language Arts, Performing Arts)

In pairs, have students create a simple, short 1-2 minute skit to perform for the class. Students will create two versions of this skit (one with verbal dialogue), the other silent (non-verbal). The silent scene must include gesture, facial expression, movement and body language. Have students perform both versions with the non-verbal scene presented first.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

- What information was understood in the verbal scene that was not understood in the non-verbal scene?
- How could this information be expressed non-verbally?
- It is believed that 90% of information is communicated non-verbally. What information (i.e. mood, emotional state, etc.) can you notice about your peers by observing their non-verbal gestures, facial expressions and body language?

2. COMMUNITY AND CULTURE ANALYSIS

(Curriculum Connections: Ethics and Religious Cultures, English Language Arts)

*Refer to the definition of “Community and Culture” in Glossary of Terms.

Individually or in groups, students list the shared behaviors, values, traditions, activities and social norms in Billy's family. Compare and contrast this list with those in the Deaf community.

Questions for Reflection: (Individually, Students write a 1-2 paragraph response to the following questions)

Select a community or culture you personally identify with (i.e. your family or school culture for example).

What shared behaviors, values, traditions, activities and social norms can you identify? What are the “do’s and don’ts” in this community?

What happens in this community when an individual behaves or expresses attitudes that are different from the shared social norms? How do members of the community react?

3. TABLEAU

(Curriculum Connections: English Language Arts, Performing Arts)

In small groups, assign students one of the following themes:

- communication
- community/culture
- discrimination
- love
- identity
- isolation

Have students work together in groups to recreate a series (1-3) of tableaus (frozen images) from the play related to their given theme. Students must hold each image for a total of 1 minute. Ask the class to identify what scene or moment is being recreated.

Questions for Reflection:

From inside the frozen scene, ask students to speak briefly as the character they are embodying. Students will answer the questions: What do you want most in this moment? What is standing in your way? What are you thinking/feeling?

4. PLAY REVIEW

(Curriculum Connections: English Language Arts, Performing Arts)

Write a play review of the Segal's production of *Tribes* (1-2 pages). Include the following information in your review:

- Production information (play title, theatre company, date, production credits)
- A plot synopsis (a brief description of what happens in the play)
- Staging/design (how was the stage used? Describe the design elements: set, props, costume, lighting, sound, and video)
- Acting (What character choices did the actors assume vocally, physically? Were they believable?)
- What moods, feelings and emotions did you experience while watching the play?
- What questions did you have while watching the play?
- What do you think the central message or “premise” of the play was?
- In conclusion, what elements were most effective and enjoyable about this production? What elements needed improvement?
- Overall, would you recommend this play?

SAMPLE RUBRICS FOR ASSESSMENT

(Designed for grades 9,10,11/ QEP Curriculum)

PERFORMING ARTS RUBRIC

Project: *TRIBES RESPONSE*: Silent Scenes/Tableau (Unit Topic; Non-Verbal Communication/Physical Theatre)

COMPETENCY	(32)	(41)	(50)	(56)	(66)	(73)	(80)	(87)	(94)	(100)
CREATES	Group is lacking in contribution of ideas. Creation lacks incorporation of non-verbal/physical theatre elements. Heavily reliant on teacher to focus on creative task.	Group makes some creative contributions. Incorporates some basic non-verbal/physical theatre elements. Needs support to focus on creative task.	Group contributes creatively / incorporates many non-verbal /physical theatre elements with clear organization of ideas. Mostly self-sufficient and focused on task.	Group makes many creative contributions /incorporates non-verbal/physical theatre elements with effective organization of ideas. Self-sufficient and focused on creative task.	Group actively contributes creatively and incorporates non-verbal/physical theatre elements effectively and creatively . Demonstrates excellent use of rehearsal time and is self-sufficient.					
PERFORMS	Demonstrates a lack of commitment in performance and inability to focus. Requires constant support. Lacking in execution of theatrical elements	Demonstrates some commitment and focus. Needs support. Struggles to execute theatrical elements	Demonstrates acceptable commitment and focus in presentation. Executes theatrical elements adequately .	Demonstrates thorough commitment /focus in presentation. Executes non-verbal/physical theatre elements effectively .	Demonstrates exceptional commitment and focus in presentation. Executes non-verbal/physical theatre elements with skill and creativity .					
APPRECIATES	Unable to provide feedback and reflection on creative process and the work of other groups.	Gives minimal feedback and reflection on creative process and group presentations.	Formulates clear ideas and expresses ideas about creative process/group presentations.	Articulates specific concepts about creative process/group presentations.	Provides exceptional insight into non-verbal/physical theatre presentations Provides concrete examples and prompts group discussions.					

ETHICS & RELIGIOUS CULTURES RUBRIC

Project: *TRIBES RESPONSE*: Community and Culture Analysis (Unit Topic: Values and Social Norms)

COMPETENCY	(32)	(41)	(50)	(56)	(66)	(73)	(80)	(87)	(94)	(100)
ENGAGES IN DIALOGUE/ UNDERSTANDS ETHICAL ISSUES	Struggles to engage in dialogue on the subject of values and social norms. Struggles to identify social norms and values in his/her community. Struggles to demonstrate an understanding of ethical issues.	Engages in limited dialogue on the subject of values and social norms. Identifies basic social norms and values in his/her community Demonstrates some understanding of ethical issues.	Engages in dialogue on the subject of values and social norms. Identifies some social norms and values in his/her community Demonstrates a solid understanding of ethical issues.	Actively engages in dialogue on the subject of values and social norms. Effectively identifies social norms and values in his/her community Demonstrates a strong understanding of ethical issues.	Actively engages in dialogue on the subject of values and social norms and prompts group discussion. Effectively identifies social norms and values in his/her community. Demonstrates a thorough understanding of ethical issues.					

SAMPLE RUBRICS FOR ASSESSMENT

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS RUBRIC

Project: TRIBES RESPONSE: Play Review

COMPETENCY	(32)	(41)	(50)	(56)	(66)	(73)	(80)	(87)	(94)	(100)
PRODUCTION	Demonstrates a lack of comprehension of the literary elements (character, plot, themes, etc.) of the Tribes text. Written response is incomplete and demonstrates a lack of organization of ideas.	Demonstrates some comprehension of literary elements (character, plot, themes, etc.) of the Tribes text. Written response is somewhat complete and demonstrates some organization of ideas.	Demonstrates a solid comprehension of the literary elements (character, plot, themes, etc.) of the Tribes text. Written response is complete and demonstrates organization of ideas.	Demonstrates strong comprehension of the literary elements (character, plot, themes, etc.) of the Tribes text. Written response is detailed and demonstrates strong organization of ideas.	Demonstrates thorough comprehension of the literary elements (character, plot, themes, etc.) of the Tribes text. Written response is thorough and demonstrates excellent organization of ideas.					

RESOURCES & MATERIALS

To further explore *Tribes*, its themes and subject matter, please refer to the resources listed below:

Canadian Hearing Society
www.chs.com

Canada Institute of Linguistics (Blog)
www.canil.ca

Mab-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre
www.mabmackay.ca

Deaf Culture Centre
www.deafculturecentre.ca

Royal Court Theatre: Interview with Nina Raine: “Why I Wrote Tribes”
www.royalcourttheatre.com/news/articles/nina-raine-why-i-wrote-tribes/



SEEING VOICES MONTREAL

Raising *D/deaf awareness*
through performing arts,
education & social events.



www.seeingvoicesmontreal.com
www.facebook.com/SeeingVoices



Stay tuned for *"Seen & Heard"* (2016),
a documentary shining a spotlight on
our Deaf & hard-of-hearing actors.



HELLO



THEATRE



DEAF



FAMILY



PLEASE



THANK YOU

TIPS TO COMMUNICATE WITH DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS

As a hearing person, it may be difficult to imagine life without clear sound. In this day and age, it's hard enough to get any silence at all. If you're like most people, you may have found yourself tongue tied during an unexpected encounter with a deaf or hard of hearing person. While it is not rocket science, interacting with a deaf person is not something you're born with and certainly not something they taught you in school.

That's why we've compiled a tip sheet that doesn't require you to become a master of Sign Language. Whether you are a lawyer, restaurant manager, doctor, banker, or work in the hospitality industry, these are universal tips you can use in any scenario or profession. With good intentions and a little guidance, you can learn how to communicate with ease.

TIP #1 Speak like an Italian: Use Body Language and Facial Expressions

If you've traveled outside of America, you can identify with a deaf person's two-fold challenge: a) Making yourself understood, and b) Understanding what the locals are saying. The natural solution: Use body language and facial expressions to ease your communication.

TIP #2 Good Lighting Isn't Just For Photographers- It's For Deaf/HH People

Because eyes are the primary compensation for their ears, Deaf and hard of hearing people intentionally congregate in well-lit venues. In fact, many will pick a business solely based on the rubric: "Is there good lighting?" You must avoid standing in front of a light source, such as a window or lamp. This creates a bright background and silhouette on your face, making it almost impossible for a deaf person to speech read.

TIP #3 Eye Contact Will Make or Break Your Conversation

Good lighting is one thing, but focused eye contact is another. Always look directly at the person you are speaking to. Even a slight turn of your head can obscure the deaf/hh person's view causing them to miss out on important information.

TIP #4 While You Watch Their Eyes, Remember They Are Watching Your Lips

Speechreading is a skill not all deaf persons have. Only about 30% of speech is visible on the lips, and even the best speechreaders cannot read every single word spoken. The other 70% relies on guesswork to fill in the gaps. To make it easier, speak slowly and clearly, but at a natural pace. It is tempting to exaggerate and overemphasize your words, but this actually distorts your lip movements. And, if you're having a hard time getting your message across, opt for rephrasing the sentence instead of repetition. Other distracting factors affecting communication include mustaches covering the lips and habits such as smoking, pencil chewing, and putting your hands in front of your face.



TIP #5 Write It Down, Somewhere

When someone tells you their phone number, you write it down. When you hear about an interesting book over cocktails, you jot it down on a napkin. Likewise, if you have to use a medium like pen and paper to facilitate communication with a deaf or hard of hearing person, there is nothing to be embarrassed about. The most important thing is getting the point across.

TIP #6 Learn Basic Sign Language

While not all deaf/hh people sign, learning a few basic signs and the American Sign Language (ASL) Manual Alphabet can set the stage for an inviting experience. ASL is not universal, nor is it “exotic”. It is still American, though its syntax may throw you off. If that's the case, forget the syntax at the beginning and opt for building your basic vocabulary as well as A-B-Cs.

TIP #7 Get Their Attention, Politely

One of the common misconceptions that many people unfortunately have about deaf people is that they are aloof or worse, rude. This can often be attributed to the fact that most deaf/hh people may not catch your initial greeting. While it may be tempting to stomp your foot to get one's attention, this strategy can be considered rude as it causes unnecessary attention. Rather, consider giving Bob a soft tap on the shoulder, or a hand wave that is subtle. This is especially important in food service businesses, where it is obviously counterproductive to yell out a patron's order number or name when their food is ready.

TIP #8 Know How to Properly Utilize a Sign Language Interpreter

Just as it can sometimes be frustrating to adjust to communicating with someone who speaks a different language than you, it can also seem like a godsend when a sign language interpreter is present. After all, this is the person who can speak with you in your language, and sign with the deaf person just as fluently. But it is crucial that you learn the proper etiquette for communicating with interpreters, who are trained to assist the deaf and hard of hearing. Here are a few important guidelines:

- ✓ Speak to the deaf/hh client as you normally would a hearing client. That means refraining from language like “tell her/him that” or “can you ask him/her if...”
- ✓ Make eye contact with the deaf person. This may sound counterintuitive, but deaf people require eye contact at a greater level than hearing people. Since the interpreter can hear without visual cues, it isn't necessary to look at them.
- ✓ Pace yourself. Now may be the time to slow down, and practice weeding out your “uums” and “aahs”. Interpreters don't necessarily have kryptonite hearing, and are doing three things simultaneously: listening, processing, and interpreting into a different language.
- ✓ Keep the interaction professional. Interpreters are professional service providers and deserve to be treated like one.



TIP #9 Instead of Playing Phone Tag, Use E-mail, Text Message or the Relay

Often, telephone communication presents an understandable challenge to deaf and hard of hearing people. If you find yourself not getting many, if any, of your well-intended voice mails back, it's probably because it's not the right medium. Relay services (text and video), text messaging and e-mail are fast becoming the deaf community's preferred communication choice of non-face-to-face communication. If you have the opportunity, always ask the deaf or hard of hearing person, "What's the best way for me to contact you?"

TIP #10 In Their Shoes, What Would YOU Want?

There are over 35 million hard of hearing or deaf individuals living in the U.S., each with different needs and preferences. What works for some doesn't always work for others and there is no cure-all for bridging the communication gap.

The best thing you can do to set the stage for a successful interaction? ASK.

