Strategies to Improve Hearing and Concentration

Many people with hearing loss and/or tinnitus experience difficulty in certain listening situations. The following strategies can help improve hearing and communication:

1. Amplification
   - Hearing aids: worn in or behind the ears to make sounds audible
   - Assistive listening devices: helps reduce background noise and focus on the speaker
   - Cochlear implants: for individuals who have severe to profound hearing loss

2. Reducing background noise
   - Position the person with the hearing loss so that the noise is behind him/her
     - (have your child) Stand or sit close to the person speaking
     - Go to another room if background noise is too loud

3. Watching faces
   - Good lighting
   - Positioning
     - (have your child) Face the talker
     - Minimize noise and visual distractions
     - Position the person with the hearing loss near the speaker

4. Anticipatory Strategies (anticipating the conversation)
   - Know (teach your child) the topic and key vocabulary words of the discussion
   - Practice a dialogue of what might be said
   - Use relaxation techniques: deep breathing, stretching, etc.

5. Lip-reading Strategies
   - Consider:
     - Topic of conversation
     - The expressions and gestures of the person speaking
   - (teach your child to) Ask communication partners to:
     - Slow down
     - Use clear speech but don't shout
     - Face you (your child)
     - Avoid chewing and random gestures while speaking

6. Repair strategies for when communication breaks down
   - (teach your child to) Ask communication partners to:
     - Repeat – say it again the same way
     - Rephrase – say it again in a different way
     - Reduce – eliminate unnecessary information and only say the important points
     - Elaborate – expand on what was said by providing an explanation or description of key points

7. Positively influencing the communication situation
   - Communication styles:
     - Assertive-guides communication partner, takes responsibility for communication difficulties
     - Passive-avoids social situation: bluffs, nods, & pretends to understand
     - Aggressive-dominates conversation, unwilling to take responsibility for communication difficulties