



Social anxiety and hearing loss

Social anxiety is common for young people with hearing loss, often because social situations take more effort and can feel unpredictable. Your child may worry about missing what others say, feeling different, or making a mistake in a fast-moving conversation. Here are some tips for managing social anxiety:

- **Acknowledge their feelings.** Let them know it's okay to find some social situations hard.
- **Practice simple self-advocacy phrases** together, like "Can you say that again?" or "Can we move somewhere quieter?"
- **Plan for tricky environments.** Before parties, playgrounds, or group activities, discuss what might help - such as finding a well-lit spot, using captions, or taking breaks to reduce listening fatigue.
- **Build connections.** Encourage time with friends who communicate well with your child, including other deaf or hard-of-hearing peers.
- **Talk about feelings openly.** Normalising emotions - "It makes sense that this felt hard today" - helps young people process experiences rather than internalise them.
- **Learn coping strategies.** Breathing techniques, grounding exercises, a fidget tool, exercise, and positive self-talk can help manage anxiety in the moment.
- **Get professional support if needed.** Psychologists, counsellors, or mental health workers can teach personalised strategies to build confidence and reduce anxiety. If anxiety leads to constant worry, avoiding school or friends, or thoughts of self-harm; getting professional help is recommended.
- **Model inclusive communication.** Face them, get their attention, and reduce background noise where you can - it helps them feel more confident and less anxious.

