



Raising Confident Teens

Phone Rehab for Teens and Parents



Connectedness and the desire to belong is a fundamental human need. Renowned psychologist, Abraham Maslow's theory on the Hierarchy of Needs suggests that humans possess a core need to belong and feel acceptance among social groups¹. He goes on further to say that an absence of connectedness can negatively impact mental wellbeing and lead to feelings of loneliness and social anxiety.

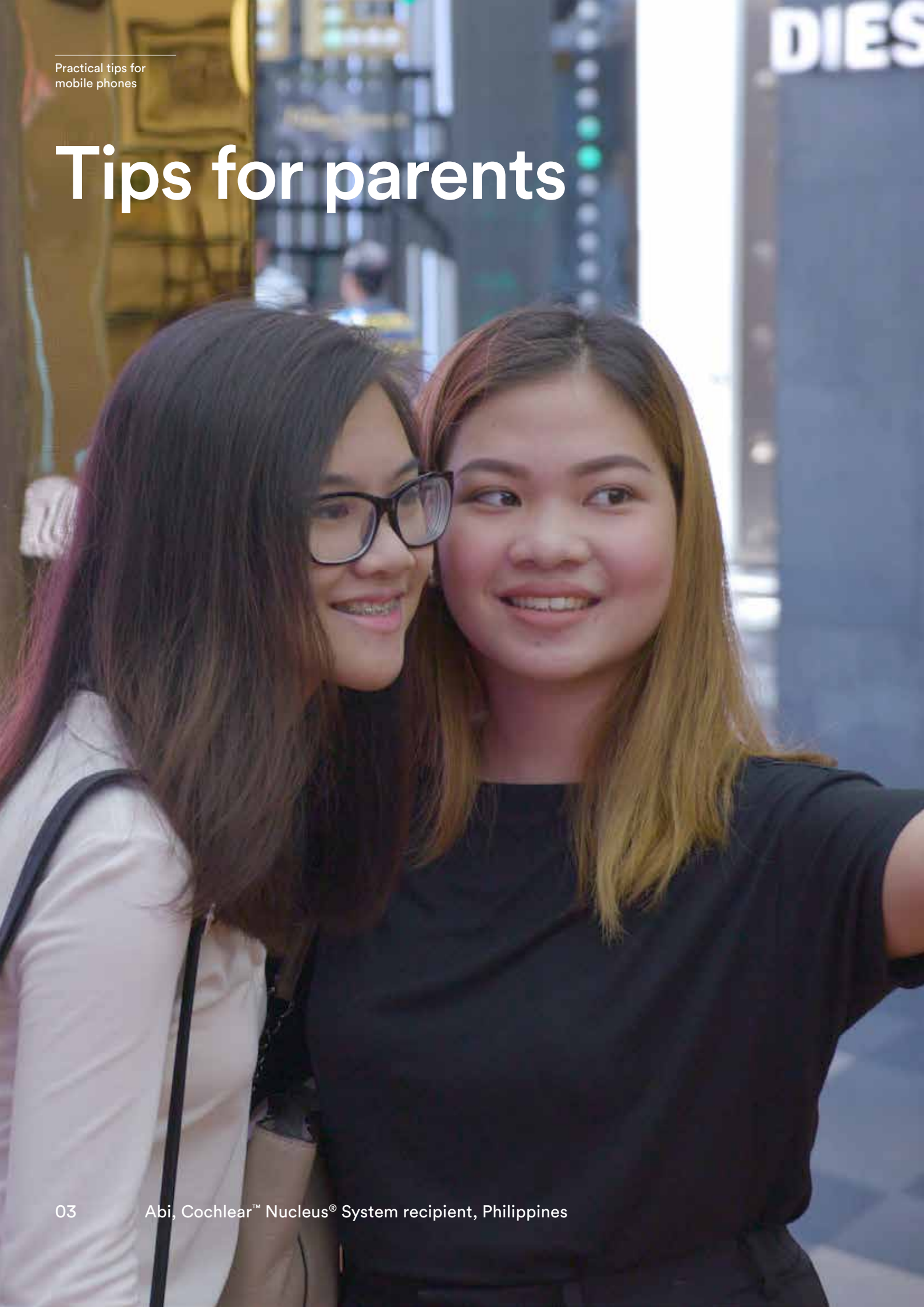
Modern research also links social relationships and physical health. Stating that social connection is a biological imperative, and without social ties, distress emerges and health fails².

Hearing loss can make teens feel lonely in a social world. However, in a digitally connected world, the way we interact with each other has evolved over time and has made communication more accessible for teenagers with hearing loss.

According to Teens, Technology and Friendship, research by the Pew Research Centre, 88% of teens text their friends and texting is the dominant way they connect with each other³. In addition to texting, teenagers are using a variety of devices and platforms to interact with friends and connect socially. Examples include social media, video chat, phone calls and video games³. Interestingly, the research also found that when teenagers are speaking to their closest friends, phone calls continue to be the second most popular way they connect after texting.

In this guide, we share some practical tips to support your teen's hearing on the phone and on video calls. An important thing to remember before starting these exercises is that factors such as age of cochlear implantation, auditory nerve function and the quality of auditory input over time can influence success in listening over the phone. We recommend speaking with your child's hearing healthcare professional or clinical team for a more tailored rehabilitation plan.

Tips for parents



Practical tips for mobile phones

1 Rehab at home

For your child to hear their best over the phone, encourage them to wear their sound processor as much as possible. It is also important to follow the guidance of your clinical team and continue doing hearing rehab exercises with your child. Ten minutes of hearing rehab a day can help with speech understanding and comprehension. If there are particular speech sounds that your child has difficulty with, focus on these during exercises. Refer to the *Raising Confident Teens: Communication Rehab Guide* in this series, for some exercises you can do together.

2 Check phone compatibility

If you decide your child is ready for a mobile phone, the number of phones to choose from can be overwhelming. If you choose a smartphone, it is important that you consider the sound processor your child is wearing and phone compatibility.

Direct audio streaming from the phone to the sound processor is the best way to optimise speech clarity on phone calls. If your child's sound processor technology permits, we recommend directly streaming phone and video audio using a compatible* Apple or Android device. To view the list of compatible devices, visit www.cochlear.com/apps/en/sound-processor-and-app/compatibility.

If the phone you select is not compatible with your child's sound processor, direct wireless streaming can also be achieved with various accessories. Visit the Device Support page on our website, www.cochlear.com, for instructions on how to pair your device.

3 Speak to your child's hearing healthcare professional

Before your child gets started with using their mobile phone, it's a good idea to speak with your child's hearing healthcare professional. Speak to them about how to optimise your child's technology to give them the best chance of success using the phone.

4 Put clear communication into practice

When you are talking to your child over the phone, remember to use good phone technique and speak clearly. For example, speak directly into the mouthpiece and speak naturally at a moderate speed. If your child has difficulty understanding you, try rephrasing the sentence instead of just repeating what you just said.

Or, if your child's listening isn't at a level that will allow them to understand a phone signal, try using video calls.

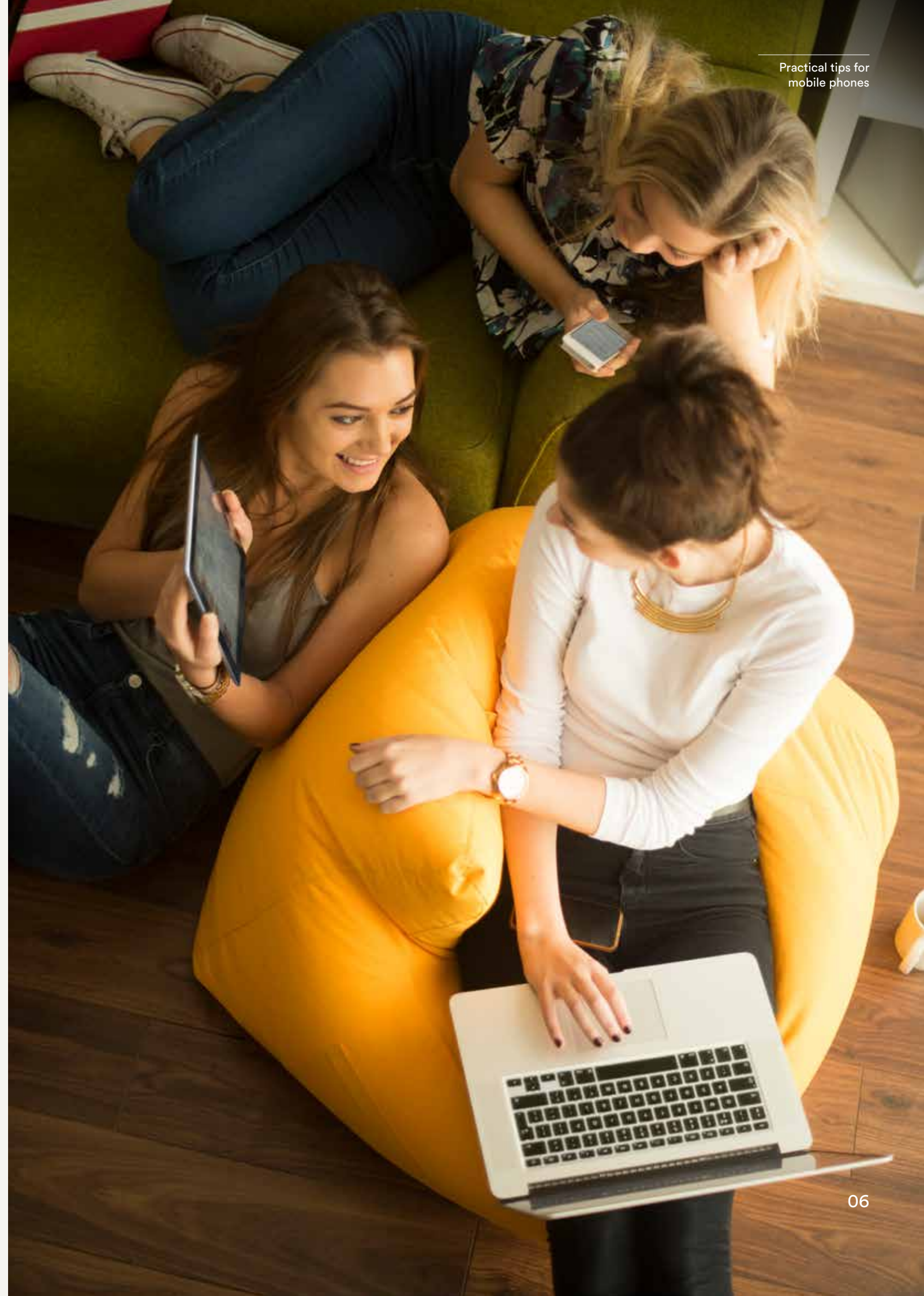
Your child may find the visual cues provided through video calls more beneficial. Remember to practice clear communication in video calls, ensure that you are facing the camera when speaking and that there is good lighting for your child to see your face during the call.

5 Be mindful of your environment

When you are calling your child, remember to consider your environment. Background noise can make it difficult to understand phone conversations. Calling from a café or using handsfree whilst in the car will make it harder for your child to hear your voice. Try moving to a quieter area or tell your child you will call them back when you have found a quieter space to talk.

6 Teach your child to self-advocate

Teach your child the importance of self-advocacy and give them tips on how to put this into practice. Show them how to remind friends and family about the phone communication strategies that make listening easier for them. Get them comfortable with telling conversational partners if they are having trouble hearing them, to speak slowly and clearly, and to advise when there is too much background noise.



Tips for teens

Get comfortable using the phone

As you enter your teen years, you may find yourself developing new friendships and finding new ways to connect with others. When you first start using the phone, conversations might feel a bit awkward. Getting comfortable with speaking on the phone can take some time. It is completely normal to feel a bit nervous about using the phone for the first time, especially when you have hearing loss. But working on your hearing and listening rehab can go a long way toward building on the skills you already have.

Below are rehab exercises you can do in the comfort of your room or home environment.

Practical advice to get you started

1 Be kind to yourself

Listening practice can take time and patience to see improvements. Everyone is different, so start slow, take breaks if you need to and go at a pace that suits you.

2 Choose a quiet place

When you first start off with phone listening practice, it is important to choose a quiet environment. We recommend somewhere like your bedroom where you can close the door, rather than a family living area or the kitchen. It will be easier to focus on listening to speech in a quiet room without echo.

3 Practise listening

Listening activities should be broken up into short, but frequent sessions. We recommend practising for around 10 to 15 minutes per day, five days a week. A good idea is to schedule this in before or after you have finished your school homework. We have shared some phone exercises you can do on pages 11-13 of this guide. Alternate the days when you do rehab with a partner and when you do independent rehab. Overall, the more you devote to phone rehab, the better!

4 Optimise your technology

Check that you are using the sound processor program and setting you hear best with before starting. If you are using external speakers for your listening exercises, set the volume at a moderate level and try not to use built-in laptop speakers – they tend to distort sound which will affect the quality and clarity of the speech.



5 Find a Rehab Partner

You will get the best results from phone rehab when you work with a supportive family member or close friend. This is especially important when you are doing the practise phone call exercises. When you are first getting started with using the phone, we recommend that you work with someone whose voice you are very familiar with.

You could even try developing a script that you can role play with your rehab partner. This may be a good way to ease into things and help practise your listening.

6 Set and revisit listening goals

You can track your progress by setting yourself some listening goals. You can set realistic goals with the help of your hearing healthcare professional. But remember not to put too much pressure on yourself, your goals can always be revisited over time and adapted.

7 Be an advocate and educate others

Don't be afraid to remind family and friends about the phone communication strategies that will make listening easier for you. For example, request that they speak clearly and at a moderate pace. If they are taking the call in an environment with a lot of background noise, ask if they can move to a quieter area or re-schedule the call to a time when they may be in a quieter setting. For video calls, encourage communication partners to face the camera so you get extra visual cues and to use headphones with a microphone, so their voice sounds clearer.

Phone rehab exercises

We have developed some simple exercises that you can follow to help make you feel more comfortable communicating with others over the phone. Start with the basics, go at a pace that you are comfortable with and try to not overcomplicate things.

Develop a rehab plan

- 1 Before you get started on your phone rehab journey, speak to your audiologist or clinician. They will help determine the best rehab plan for you.

Practise with a familiar speaker

- 2 Start by practising at home with a family member that lives with you. Their voice will be most familiar to you and will make it easier for you to recognise what they are saying over the phone. Arrange to have 5-minute calls with them 2 to 3 times a week and choose a different topic to talk about each time. This will expose you to a wider variety of words and help expand your vocabulary. Remember to take the calls in different rooms of the house to vary the environment.

Video call with a familiar speaker

- 3 Video calls now play a big role in how we communicate. Explore making calls using video platforms and discover which one works best for you i.e Whatsapp or Skype. Again, start by practising these calls with a familiar speaker. You may find that conversations using video calls are a bit easier to follow because of the additional information that comes from visual cues.

Check if the video call platform that you are using has closed captions. This will be especially helpful initially, but when you are feeling a bit more confident, you can try switching these off.

Rehab with apps and websites

- 4 Another way to build your confidence with using the phone is to work on your auditory rehab. Try doing independent auditory rehab on the days that you aren't practising phone or video calls. We have listed a few helpful apps and websites on page 14 to get started. Remember, 10 to 15 minutes a day is all you need to do!



Vlogs, Audiobooks and TikTok

5 When you start to get more confident with phone or video calls with family, it's time to move onto understanding less familiar speakers. A great way to get started is to listen to vlogs of your favourite YouTubers and audiobooks, as the content focuses mostly on speech without background music. For more of a challenge you can watch clips on Instagram or TikTok. When you are listening to the speakers, focus on distinguishing accents, recognising shifts in tone and pace of speaking.

Phone call with less familiar speakers i.e friends

6 If you can understand your friends without seeing their faces, you are ready to try calling one of your friends from school. If you've never tried this before, it may take a bit of practise. This is also a good opportunity to practise your self-advocacy skills; gently remind friends to speak up or slow down their speech if you are having trouble understanding what they are saying.

Call a business with a simple enquiry

7 A great way to build confidence when speaking to new people on the phone, ask a question you know the answer to. When you are the one making an inquiry, you are in control of the call and will have a good idea of what the response may be. For example, try calling a shop and asking them what their opening hours are. Before making the call, you can practise with your rehab partner at home. For example, "Hello, can you please tell me what time your store closes today?".

Order something over the phone

8 Are you ready to try ordering something over the phone? Phone orders usually follow a predictable pattern, which can help you anticipate what will be said. Start by ordering a pizza. Prepare your greeting, your order, how you will pay, and if you would like the pizza to be delivered.

Celebrate your wins (even the small ones)

9 Using the phone for the first time can be a bit nerve wracking for everyone. So, remember to take a moment and give yourself a pat on the back. You're doing a great job!

Helpful resources

Below are a list of websites and apps to help with phone rehab and aural training.

Apps



1. Hearoes
An interactive auditory training platform developed by audiologists and speech pathologists. Designed to help hearing impaired recipients gain confidence identifying speech and environmental sounds. Encourages 'play-based' learning to help with identifying words, vowel and consonant sounds and with sentence comprehension.



2. i-Angel Sound
An interactive auditory training program that lets you take control of your listening rehab independently at home. The program provides audio visual feedback.

Websites

1. Angel Sound™
An interactive auditory training and hearing program. You gain practice in discriminating and identifying sounds and speech components through a series of self-paced modules. The level of difficulty is automatically adjusted to match your developing listening skills.
www.angelsound.tigerspeech.com

2. ESL Lab
A series of short audio stories on a wide variety of topics. Your comprehension will be tested via a series of questions and told where you answered correctly and incorrectly. Includes listening exercises and vocabulary activities. The tutorials are divided into 'easy', 'medium' and difficult content.
www.esl-lab.com

Visit cochlear.com for additional support information or contact your local customer service or hearing healthcare team.

Hear now. And always

Cochlear is dedicated to helping people with moderate to profound hearing loss experience a world full of hearing. As the global leader in implantable hearing solutions, we have helped more than 700,000 people of all ages to hear and connect with life's opportunities.

We aim to give people the best lifelong hearing experience and access to next generation technologies. We collaborate with leading clinical, research and support networks to advance hearing science and improve care.

That's why more people choose Cochlear than any other hearing implant company.

www.cochlear.com

References

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2. Umberson, D., Crosnoe, R., & Reczek, C. (2010). Social Relationships and Health Behavior Across Life Course. Annual review of sociology, 36, 139–157. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-070308-120011>
3. Lenhart, A., Smith, A., Anderson, M., Duggan, M. & Perrin, A. (2015). Teens, Technology & Friendships. Video games, social media and mobile phones play an integral role in how teens meet and interact with friends. (Report No. 202.419.4372). Pew Research Centre. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2015/08/Teens-and-Friendships-FINAL2.pdf>

Please seek advice from your health professional about treatments for hearing loss. Outcomes may vary, and your health professional will advise you about the factors which could affect your outcome. Always follow the directions for use. Not all products are available in all countries. Please contact your local Cochlear representative for product information.

Views expressed are those of the individual. Consult your health professional to determine if you are a candidate for Cochlear Technology.

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