



Rehearsal Guide

Hearing and Ear Exam

Preparing people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) to successfully complete a hearing and ear exam

Introduction for Caregivers

A rehearsal guide contains realistic pictures, concrete ideas, and clear, brief instructions for guiding a person through what can be expected in a specific situation. It includes helpful suggestions for caregivers to follow to make the experience meaningful for the person and increase the likelihood of a successful outcome. This approach is beneficial when supporting people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) who are anxious about situations such as doctors' appointments, hospitalizations, and medical testing.

A rehearsal guide provides opportunities for the caregiver to assist the person to learn about a specific situation. It contains information on what is needed and why and explains what can be expected. Such a guide is most effective when it is person-centered and used in conjunction with discussion to allow exploration of specific areas of concern. It can be a powerful tool when used as intended.

The expected result is that the person will then experience the situation in a way that supports health and well-being by being prepared and knowing what to expect. The guide can be used at all stages of the situation to facilitate a positive end result.

Thank you for taking the time to use this tool to work with self-advocates to improve their health outcomes.

How to Use This Rehearsal Guide

For best results, begin to review this rehearsal guide with the person prior to the day of the appointment. Sometimes it will help to review this material with an individual several days or weeks before an appointment; other times, it may be better to wait to review this material until just before the procedure is to take place, perhaps the day before or the morning of the procedure. Together with the individual, determine which will best suit the individual's needs and abilities in understanding the information provided; however, it is important not to wait until 5 minutes before a procedure to introduce this guide to an individual. Give the individual enough time in advance to become familiar with the procedure based on the pictures and information contained on each page and with the individual's abilities in mind.

It is best to review this guide slowly and to focus on one idea/page at a time, allowing the person to talk and/or ask questions after each idea/page is presented. A caregiver may want to share personal experiences related to having this procedure done but be sure to do so in a positive manner, depicting a positive outcome.

For Best Practices

- ✓ Allot time to review this material when the individual is alert and interested in doing so.
- ✓ Ensure that the setting is free from distraction. Based on the individual's attention span, it may be best to review one page at a time, rather than reviewing an entire guide in one sitting.
- ✓ Explain each picture and practice the suggested exercises with the individual, such as deep breathing, as they appear throughout the guide.
- ✓ On the day of the procedure, take this guide along to continue rehearsing the various steps involved in the procedure.
- ✓ Remain positive, calm, and upbeat.
- ✓ Remember to offer positive reinforcement throughout the procedure. If the procedure is not able to be completed, focus on positive aspects. If the individual seems upset, talk about it later when they are calm to find out how they felt and what could be changed or improved to have a better outcome the next time.

What is an Ear Doctor?

Different doctors do different things. Some doctors check your heart and lungs to make sure they are healthy. A doctor who specializes in hearing and ear health is called an ear, nose, and throat doctor.



Why See an Ear Doctor?

An ear doctor can prescribe hearing aids to help you to hear better. An ear doctor can diagnose and treat ear diseases. An ear doctor can help you keep your ears as healthy as possible.

Ear doctors know all about ears and can answer your questions about your ears.

The ear doctor will tell you what is going to happen before doing anything. It is important that you relax and listen to the doctor.



Before the Appointment

Before you go to the ear doctor, it is important to remember to bring health history information, a list of your medications, and your hearing aids (if you have hearing aids).



Introducing the Process

(Name of individual), your doctor wants you to get a hearing and ear exam on (insert date here) at (insert name of location).

Hearing and ear exams are an important step in taking care of your ears.

(Name of caregiver) will stay with you during your hearing and ear exam.



Note to Caregiver: Contact the doctor's office in advance to assure that a caregiver will be permitted to remain in the room while the exam is taking place.

In the Waiting Room

At the ear doctor's office, you will wait until someone calls your name to be seen by the doctor.

(Name of caregiver) will stay in the waiting room with you.

You may be given paperwork with questions about your hearing and general health history. You may answer questions or ask a caregiver to help you.

You might want to take a book or magazine to read or some of your favorite music to listen to on your headphones while you wait.



When Your Name is Called

A medical assistant will invite you into the exam room. They will talk to you about what you need to do for the exam. They are friendly and will help you.



Note to Caregiver: Be patient and use a calm, reassuring tone while assisting the individual.

Meeting the Ear Doctor

Next you will meet with the ear doctor.

The ear doctor will ask questions about your hearing and ears. If you have problems with your ears or questions about your ears, talk to the ear doctor about them.

Be sure to tell the ear doctor if you have trouble hearing or if you have other concerns about your ears.



Note to Caregiver: Wait for the person to respond to questions from the ear doctor, and then offer additional information, as needed, such as reports of pain or problems, or any changes in hearing.

The Hearing Test Room

Hearing tests are done in a quiet soundproof room. The ear doctor will place headphones on your head and ears. The headphones are connected to a machine that will make sounds in your ears, one ear at a time. You will need to be quiet and not talk during the test. If you need to ask a question or say something, raise your hand and keep it up until the ear doctor asks you what you need.



Note to Caregiver: Caregivers may want to visit the ear doctor's office prior to the visit to allow the individual to meet the staff at the office and to see all the equipment prior to the scheduled visit.

Testing How Well You Can Hear

The doctor will ask you to raise your hand or press a button each time you hear a sound. Point to the ear in which you hear the sound.

This test lets the doctor know how well you can hear.



Do You Need Hearing Aids?

The hearing test might show that you need hearing aids to help you hear better. If you need hearing aids, the ear doctor will provide ones that work best for you and fit you well.



Checking Your Ear Health

The ear doctor will look at the inside and outside of your ears.

The ear doctor will use a special tool called an otoscope to look inside your ears. It does not hurt. The ear doctor will place the otoscope gently into one ear and then gently into the other ear.

This lets the ear doctor know if your ears are healthy.



Note to Caregiver: Ask the doctor if the individual can feel and touch the otoscope prior to it being placed in the ear. Encourage the individual to be as still as possible during the exam.

You Are Almost Done

After your hearing and ear exam is done, you will go to the lobby. If you need hearing aids, this is where you will schedule a follow up appointment to get fitted for your new hearing aids.



You Can Do It!

That is how easy it is to go to the ear doctor!

I know you can do it!

You always do a great job!



Note to Caregiver: Take time to determine how well the person understands what was presented. Ask some brief questions such as, “Do you know what will happen when you go for your hearing and ear exam?”

Review the rehearsal guide as often as needed to ensure the person understands and is prepared when the day for the hearing and ear exam arrives.

References

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- Healthy Hearing. (2022, October 18). Hearing loss tests. Retrieved on May 26, 2023, from <https://www.healthyhearing.com/help/hearing-loss/tests>
- Jacobs, M. (2022, September 21). Hearing Tests: A Walkthrough of Your First Visit. Retrieved on May 26, 2023, from <https://jacobsaudiology.com/hearing-tests-a-walkthrough-of-your-first-visit/>



For additional information regarding this guide or any of our physical or behavioral health trainings, contact:

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