

WHAT DOES “GO FOR GOLD” MEAN?

The cochlear implant is amazing technology. However, even though it is brilliant at helping you to hear, it is **still** not exactly the **same** as hearing normally.

Instead, there are some **missing** pieces in the sound information when you listen through your cochlear implant. To **fill in** these gaps, your brain has to **work harder** (this is called “**listening effort**”), so that you can make sense of what you are hearing.

Everyone has to use some listening effort to understand speech. This makes us all **mental athletes**. It takes lots of training (especially in the early years of childhood) to work out what the sounds mean and how to put them together into words.

But your brain will be **working harder** than a hearing person, because it **also** has to **fill in** the gaps in your sound information (before you can even begin to understand the words). This means that you have to be a **mental athlete** at **Olympic gold medal standard**.

Like any Olympian athlete, your brain needs specialist **training** and **support**. Your brain also needs the right amount of **rest**, so that you can **recover** from all the listening effort. With the right combination of all of this, you can successfully “**Go for Gold**” and improve the quality of your life.

This leaflet will explain how you can help yourself achieve your full potential by using the **Go for Gold strategy**.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND AND MANAGE LISTENING EFFORT?

It is normal, natural and healthy to experience listening effort. However, if listening effort becomes **too high** for **too long**, this can cause “**cognitive overload**”. This is where the brain becomes **overwhelmed** and will start to struggle to process any new information. The brain then becomes **stressed**.

Normally, stress is not damaging to your health as long as it is not constant. So, a healthy pattern of stress is where stress levels go up and down over time (like a wave).



However, if the stress levels stay **high** for **most** of the time, health problems begin to happen. These can be physical problems (e.g. **allergies, gut problems, bloating or fluid retention, muscle aches, poor blood circulation, infections, sleeping badly, feeling tired** all the time, having **cravings** or **not feeling hungry**). The health problems can also be mental (e.g. feeling **very emotional, panicky, anxious, depressed**, or having **problems with eating** or even **eating disorders**).

People with cochlear implants are **more likely** to reach **cognitive overload** more quickly than hearing people. This is because you need to use **more listening effort** than hearing people to understand what is being said.

Reducing listening effort helps to produce a healthy and more “wave-like” stress pattern. A healthy stress pattern also means a healthy brain. So, **reducing listening effort** is really important for your **health**.

To find ideas for how you can **manage** and also **reduce listening effort**, look inside this leaflet for the **Go for Gold strategy**.



Go for Gold!



For **ADULTS** with **COCHLEAR IMPLANTS**

Helping you to get the **most out of your cochlear implant**:

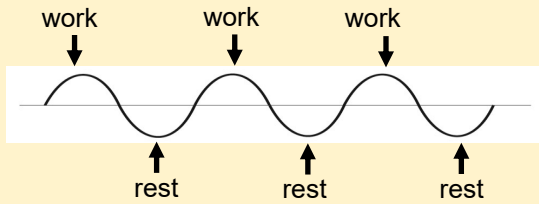
Understanding and managing **Listening Effort**

By

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THE “GO FOR GOLD” STRATEGY.....

1. GOLDEN SILENCES



To get a healthy pattern of stress, you need to **rest** your brain a few times during the day.

You can do this simply by making time for a **“golden silence”**. You do not have to turn off your cochlear implant. Just find a place where it is **quiet** (with no music and no talking). Then choose an **activity** that will help your brain to **recover** and **“reset”** itself.

There are loads of **activities** to choose from, so you can pick ones that **you** enjoy.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS.....

1. Drawing, painting, or “mindful” colouring
2. Knitting, crochet, sewing, or other craft activities like carpentry
3. Stroking and playing with your pet
4. Going for a walk in a park
5. Reading a magazine or a book
6. Going for a run or a jog
7. Taking deep breaths or meditation
8. Doing yoga, pilates or tai chi

Making time for at least one **golden silence** during the **working day** is really good for your brain and your body. You also need to find time for **golden silences** at the **weekend**, or when you are on **holiday**, so that you can keep the same healthy pattern of **resting** your brain **every day**.

IMPORTANT: Do **not** use your **computer** or your **phone** during **golden silences**. Also, do **not** watch the TV. These **“screen time”** activities are actually really **hard work** for your brain. So, give yourself a break away from them during your **golden silence**.

2. GOLDEN OPPORTUNITIES

Finding ways to make listening **enjoyable** will help to reduce your stress levels too.

To do this, you need to make **“golden opportunities”** to listen to other people, so that you can keep **training** your brain to get **better** at understanding what they are saying.

The most important thing about **golden opportunities** is that you should **choose when** they happen, **where** they happen and **how long** they last for. In this way, you have **control** and you can stop when you have had enough.

For example, if you are going to meet your friends, think about ways to make it easier for you to hear them.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS....

1. Meeting each person on their own (rather than in a group) in this way, you only have to understand one person at a time
2. Choosing a place that is not too noisy..... in this way, it is easier for you to have a good chat for as long as you want to

If you do have to go somewhere where there are lots of people and lots of noise, **remember** to find time later to have a **golden silence**, so that you can give your brain a **rest**.

Also, if you have to spend a lot of time in a place where you find it **difficult** to hear (because of the noise), you **need** to think of ways to make it easier to understand. Getting **“Gold Star” support** can help with this.



3. GOLD STAR SUPPORT

Because your brain has to work **hard** to understand what people are saying, it is a really good idea to get as much **help** as you can (to make things easier). This support should **not** just be **good** (Gold standard), it should be **so good** that is **exactly right** for you (**“Gold Star”**).

DECIDE WHAT WORKS BEST FOR YOU.....

This could be anything. Some people use **speech-to-text technology**, or **support workers** who **type** what is being said. Other people prefer using some kind of **communication support** (e.g. Cued Speech, Sign Supported English, or British Sign Language).

You may be entitled to help to **pay** for this **support**, through **DSA** (Disabled Students Allowance) or **Access to Work**. Do **not** be **afraid** to ask for the help you need.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.....

You need to look out for signs that **listening effort** is becoming **too much**. If you find that you are becoming grumpy (or start having problems understanding or remembering what has just been said), give yourself a break with a **golden silence**.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF.....

Remember that you are an **Olympian mental athlete**. Your brain has to **work hard** so that you can hear through your cochlear implant.

So, do **not** give yourself a hard time if you are feeling tired.

Use **“Go for Gold”** to help you.