

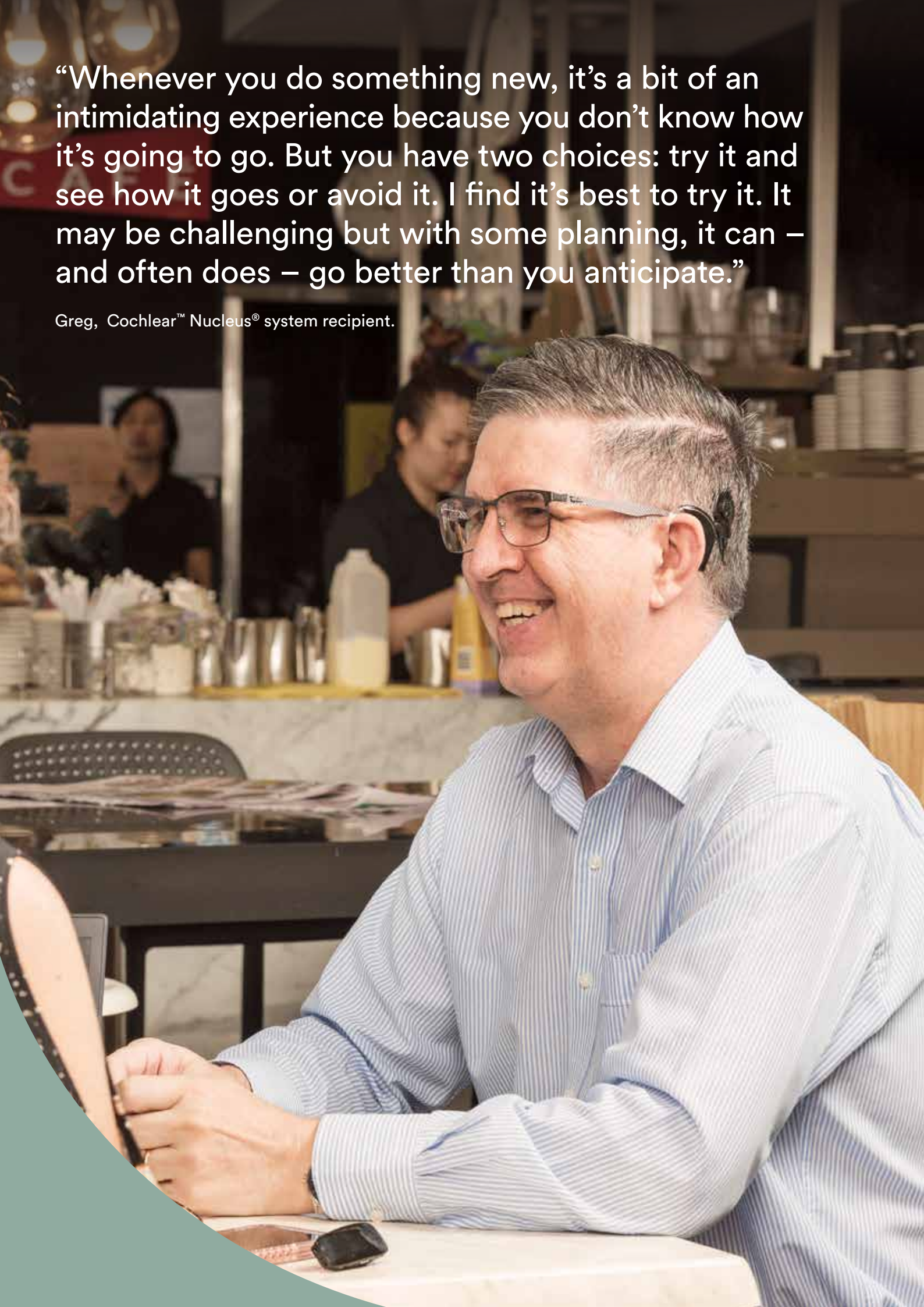


Cochlear Family

Practical Guide for
Workplace Communication

“Whenever you do something new, it’s a bit of an intimidating experience because you don’t know how it’s going to go. But you have two choices: try it and see how it goes or avoid it. I find it’s best to try it. It may be challenging but with some planning, it can – and often does – go better than you anticipate.”

Greg, Cochlear™ Nucleus® system recipient.



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“Be open and tell people about your hearing loss. If people don’t understand that you have hearing loss, they can’t help you... They are generally more than interested and happy to accommodate you.”

Kelly, Cochlear™ Baha® system recipient.

Introduction

Whether you are in an existing job and are looking for ways to facilitate better communication, starting a new role where you need to discuss accommodations for your hearing loss, or resuming work after being recently implanted, we want to help you feel supported and prepared.

This practical guide contains information on communication strategies you can adopt in the workplace, how to get the most benefit out of your technology and the various ways you can self-advocate for your needs.

We also share the experiences of other recipients from across the world and their advice on how to optimise communication, productivity and educate colleagues about hearing loss.

Practical advice to support better communication in the workplace

Whether you work in an office environment, a shop, on a building site, or in the great outdoors, we want to help facilitate better communication and help you self-advocate in the workplace.

Communication tips to set you up for success

Be open with colleagues

- 1 The best communication happens between people when they understand each other’s communication needs. When you feel ready, we encourage you to tell your colleagues about your hearing loss and needs.

Take time to prepare

- 2 It helps to prepare for new situations that you may find yourself in. For example, if your work requires overseas travel, you could look into commonly used phrases and local greetings. Or, if you need to use new equipment or tools, take the time to familiarise yourself with the terminology associated with operating this equipment. Further in the guide, we also share more specific tips on how to prepare for face-to-face and online meetings.

Remember to take breaks

- 3 Having hearing loss can require extra listening effort during meetings and in conversations with colleagues. This may lead to listening fatigue and cognitive exhaustion. So, it’s important to take breaks throughout the day. Don’t be afraid to take five minutes for yourself and find a quiet place to recharge.

Check funding options

- 4 Depending on where you live and your circumstances, you may be able to access funding for additional support such as assistive technology in your workplace. We recommend looking into government, disability and philanthropic funding that you may be able to access.

Self-advocacy in the workplace

Educate others about your hearing needs

- 1 Don’t be afraid to share your hearing needs with your colleagues or customers. Remember to be specific about what will help you to hear. For example, if people are talking simultaneously, let them know that it helps you to hear if they speak one by one. You will find that people are happy to accommodate your needs, provided that they are aware and know how.

Don’t be afraid to tell others when you are struggling

- 2 It’s completely normal to feel overwhelmed when you are starting a new job, project or find yourself in a new situation. For example, if you miss something, it’s okay to ask colleagues to repeat themselves or rephrase their statement. It’s better to tell colleagues that you missed something instead of trying to piece the conversation together down the track.

We also recommend speaking to your manager about what accommodations can be made to help support you and what will help you to succeed.

Brush up on communication repair strategies

- 3 Familiarising yourself with communication repair strategies can go a long way toward facilitating better communication in the workplace. It will also help you better educate your colleagues about the specific things they can do to help you. For more information, refer to the *Adult Communication Strategies Guide*.

Practical tips to optimise hearing in an office setting

If your role requires office or desk-based work, there are a number of things you can do to optimise your hearing and maximise productivity. In this section, we share some helpful strategies you can adopt when you are in the office, in face-to-face meetings or when you are working from home and joining virtual meetings.

Strategies to use in the office and in face-to-face meetings

Request a meeting agenda in advance

- 1 Cochlear™ Nucleus® recipient, Greg's advice is to "ask for a meeting agenda from the meeting organiser. While this is generally good business practice, it helps you to prepare background information on the topics to be discussed and provides some boundaries on what might be said during the meeting."

Nominate a person to take notes

- 2 We recommend asking another attendee to take notes about what is discussed during the meeting and list any follow up actions. This is a great way to recap what was discussed and can help to fill in any gaps that you may have missed. If presentation materials are shared during the meeting, you may also wish to check if the presenter is happy to share these materials.

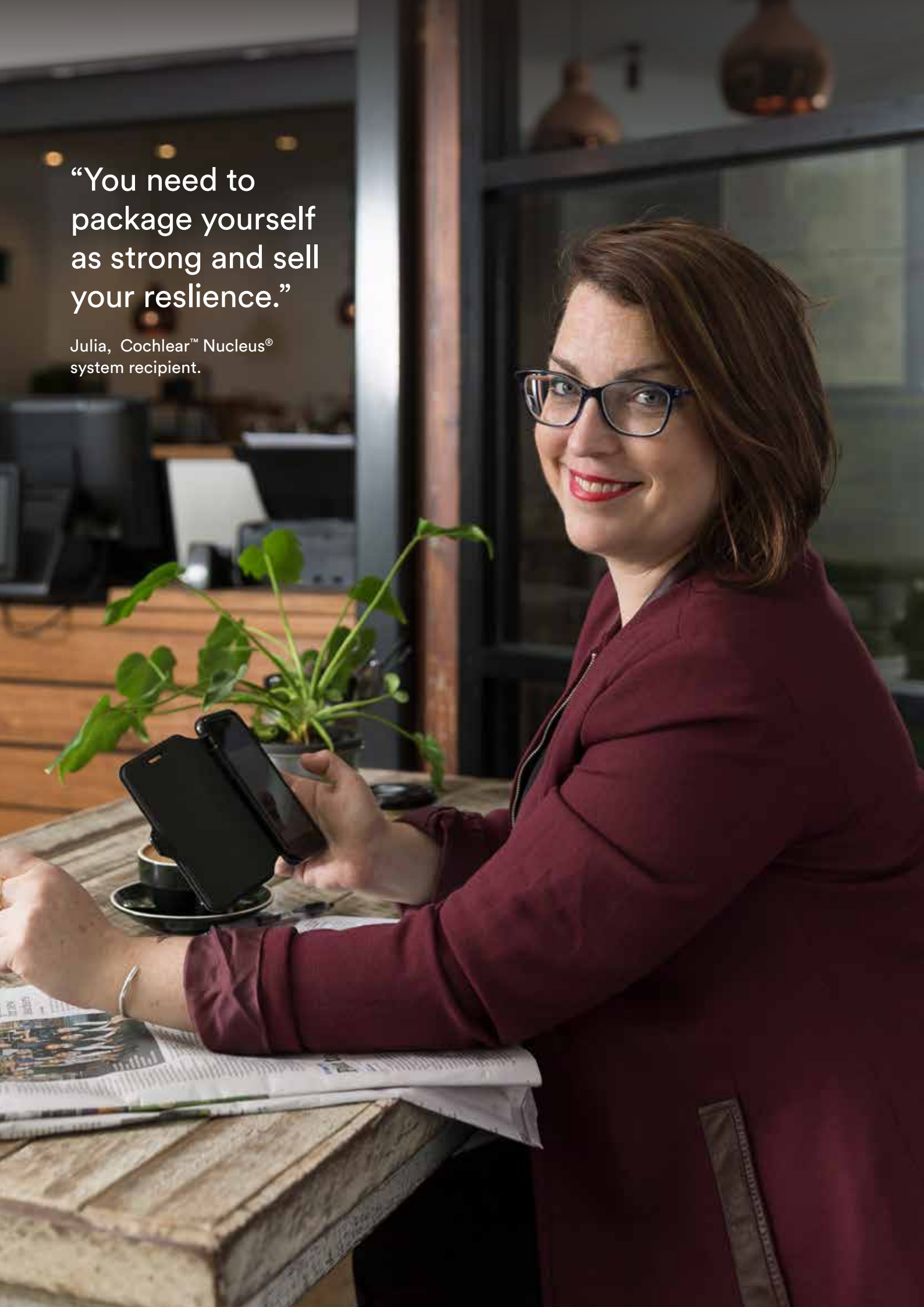
Consider the location for your meetings

- 3 When having face-to-face meetings, we recommend selecting a location with minimal background noise. If you have dedicated meeting rooms in your office, book these ahead of time or put the request to the meeting organiser. Alternatively, find a quiet place in the office to have your meeting and have your back facing the wall rather than the noise source.

Use wireless or assistive listening technology

- 4 In larger group meetings, it can be hard to follow what each person is saying.
 - If you have a wireless assistive listening device, try placing this horizontally in the centre of the group discussion. This may help improve speech clarity and reduce listening effort.
 - **Android™ phones:** If your sound processor has direct streaming capabilities**, place your compatible Android phone in the centre of the group and record the meeting. You may find it beneficial to re-listen to the discussion at a later time by streaming the audio directly to your sound processor.
 - **iPhone:** If your sound processor has direct streaming capabilities**, try placing your compatible iPhone in the centre of the group and enable the Live Listen function. With Live Listen®, your iPhone can act like a microphone that sends the sound signal directly to your sound processor.

Live captioning through a smart phone can also help. You can also use captions and transcriptions on video conferencing platforms.



“You need to
package yourself
as strong and sell
your resilience.”

Julia, Cochlear™ Nucleus®
system recipient.

Strategies for virtual meetings or remote work

Optimise your environment

- 1 Check the acoustics in your workspace and consider introducing some soft furnishings into the space. Hard surfaces can create reverberation and distort sound quality.

We recommend checking the settings on the device you are using to join virtual meeting in advance, to ensure there is clear sound. Good lighting can help you more easily access visual cues to supplement your hearing.

Use direct streaming

- 2 Use wireless or assistive listening devices to directly stream audio and media from your computer or table to your sound processor. This will make it easier for you to hear video call and alerts or notifications.

- **Assistive listening devices** : Check that your compatible sound processor[^] is paired correctly.
- **Direct Streaming**: Depending on your sound processor and how you access video calls, direct streaming without an intermediary device can be achieved using compatible Apple and Android devices^{**}. Refer to your sound processor user manual for more information.

Request or arrange to have video calls and meetings

- 3 Enabling video during group meetings not only promotes engagement, but it can make communication easier. Ask fellow participants to turn on their cameras. It will allow you to draw upon visual cues, such as their lip or facial movements, gestures, and body language. It will also make it easier for you to follow the conversation and identify who is speaking at any given time.
- Don't be afraid to give communication partners direction. For example, encourage communication partners to face the camera when speaking, speak one at a time, speak up or speak more slowly. Another thing that will help, is to ask participants to go on mute when they aren't speaking. This will help cut down background noise.



“I’ve learned that it’s better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. I want to ensure that I know enough about the activity we’re going to do, about the environment and the person that I’m going to be speaking with.”

Alana, Cochlear™ Nucleus® system recipient.

Ask conversational partners to use a microphone

- 4** This can help improve speech clarity on phone and video calls. Cochlear Nucleus recipient, Bec, advises, “Hearing loss isn’t just about volume, it’s also about clarity. Ask them to use a personal microphone close to their face. This can really improve the sound quality. They simply need a pair of earphones with a microphone that they would normally use with their mobile phone. Any kind of lapel microphone worn on the collar can also work.”

Get to know technology

- 5** Meeting platform functions, such as the chat box can help to supplement verbal communications. Usually, platforms for video calls will also have other functions such as the raise hand button. This can stop people from talking over each other. You may also find it helpful to adjust the meeting video settings so that it automatically focuses on and enlarges the video of the person speaking. This can help you identify who is speaking and see non-verbal or facial cues more easily. If the meeting platform you are using has a subtitle or captioning function, you can remind the meeting organiser to activate this. They may find this helps everyone on the call to follow along more easily.

Nominate a meeting chair and note taker

- 6** During group calls, the meeting chair can help to keep the meeting on track, moderate the chat and ensure that everyone gets the opportunity to speak. During group calls, you could also ask one of the attendees to record the meeting and take meeting minutes to send to the group afterwards.

Request meeting materials

- 7** Asking for the meeting agenda ahead of time can help you prepare and more easily follow the topics covered during the call. If presentation materials were shared during the meeting, we recommend asking the meeting organiser to share these with the group.

Take regular breaks

- 8** Virtual meetings and phone calls can be especially tiring when you have hearing loss, as it requires additional listening effort. If you are in control of your work calendar, we recommend scheduling short breaks between your meetings. You may also find it helpful to book your meetings earlier in the day when you are feeling more alert and when listening fatigue may be less.

Practical tips to optimise hearing in a non-office setting

If your work is not office based, there are a number of things you can do to optimise your hearing in more dynamic listening environments.

Use wireless technology or streaming

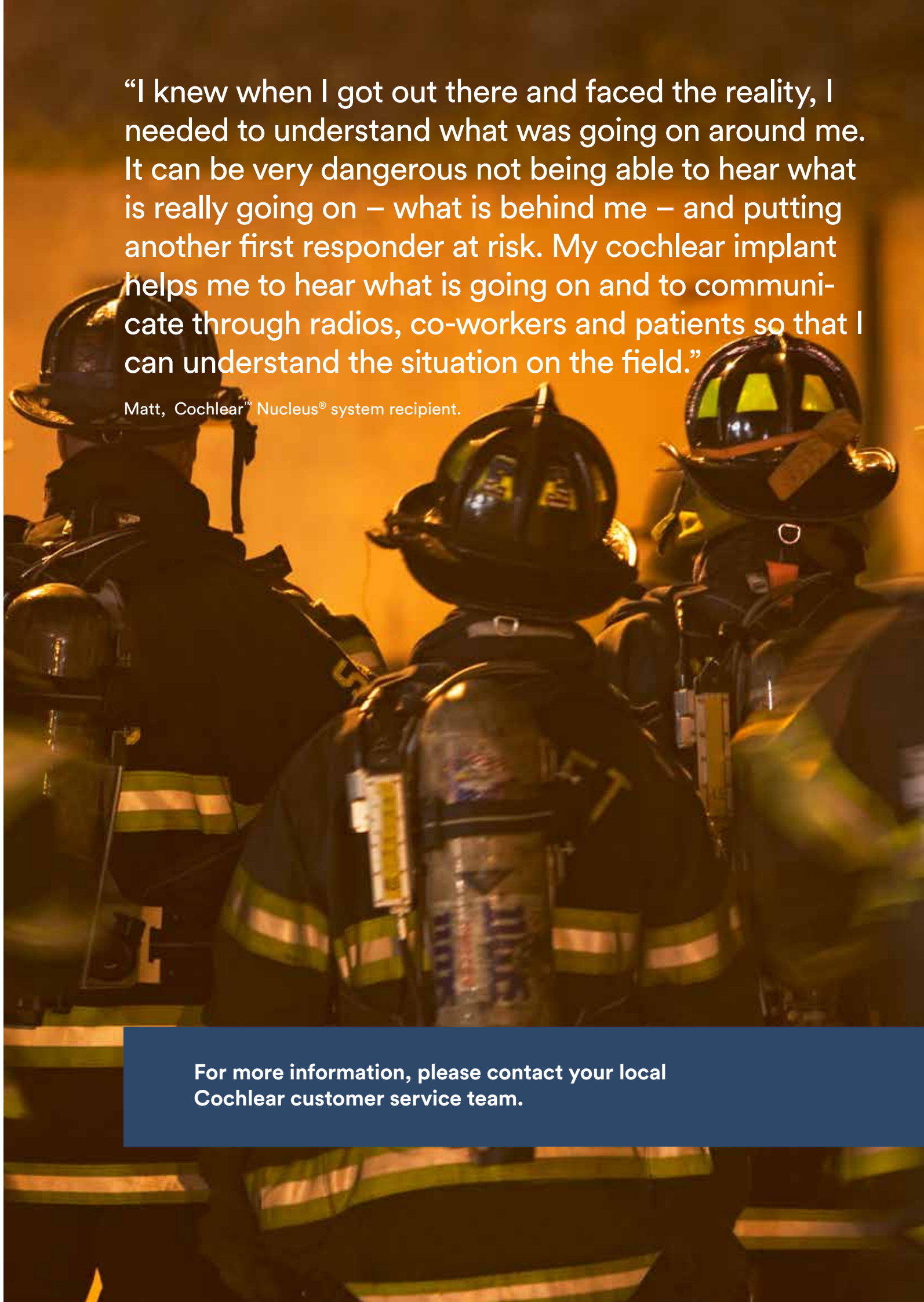
- 1 Wireless technology can help improve speech clarity when speaking with colleagues, clients, or customers. For example, if you work on a building site, try using assistive devices and accessories to hear speech more clearly over background noise or distances. Another example is if you work as a hairdresser, try clipping the assistive device onto the collar of your client's top. This can help you hear their speech over the noise in the salon.

Ensure your settings are optimised

- 2 We recommend speaking to your hearing healthcare professional about sound processor settings that will help you hear in your workplace. For example, if you will be working outdoors or having conversations in noisy environments, ask if your clinician can enable features of your sound processor to help you hear more clearly in challenging listening environments.

Talk to your manager

- 3 You may find it helpful to arrange a time to speak with your manager about how they can support you in the workplace. To help facilitate discussions, we recommend coming prepared to discuss your concerns and some of the solutions that may help. Some examples are:
 - Arranging to have a personal alerting device that lights up or vibrates when there is an emergency or when a customer comes through the door.
 - If you work on a building site, you could ask your manager to confirm the routes for heavy vehicles and machinery for your awareness. That way, you know to be more careful and attentive in these areas of the site.
 - You could also ask your manager to arrange additional training for your colleagues on inclusivity and communication in the workplace.



“I knew when I got out there and faced the reality, I needed to understand what was going on around me. It can be very dangerous not being able to hear what is really going on – what is behind me – and putting another first responder at risk. My cochlear implant helps me to hear what is going on and to communicate through radios, co-workers and patients so that I can understand the situation on the field.”

Matt, Cochlear™ Nucleus® system recipient.

For more information, please contact your local Cochlear customer service 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

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.

Cochlear™ Nucleus® implant systems are intended for the treatment of moderately severe to profound hearing loss. Baha implant systems are intended for the treatment of moderate to profound hearing loss. Cochlear, Hear now. And Always, the elliptical logo, True Wireless, Nucleus, ForwardFocus®, Kanso and Baha are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Cochlear group of companies.

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