

The Pebbles of Demosthenes. Born 384BC Greece. Thomas M Leahy

The Greek Orator Demosthenes is said to have cured his speech impediment by filling his mouth with pebbles and practicing speaking at the seashore.

Response to the threat of COVID requires wearing masks and physical distancing. For the average person these responses make communication and hearing difficult. For a person with a hearing loss, the addition of masks and distance means a significant reduction in communication. In school, work and public, the loss of communication can mean a dramatic decrease in learning, productivity and even safety. Working with teachers wearing masks I am now catching only about 50% of what some people say requiring intentional additional inquiry to communicate effectively. A teacher or facilitator who is not heard or understood by students will not deliver an effective education.

Communication skills for COVID are needed and must be taught as part of this program. Facilitators must lead by example.

1. Witness the efficacy of your speech, volume, tone, enunciation, speed and word choice as you engage with peers and facilitate.
2. Speak clearly and enunciate.
3. Choose your words carefully and get to the point. I recommend an initial outline that you edit on the fly and improve for each new program.
4. Slow your speech just a bit especially if you are prone to or have been told that you speak fast.
5. Be aware of ambient and situational noise that will diminish hearing. Pause as needed.
6. Project your voice and adjust the volume so that the sound reaches others.
7. Ask for feedback from participants to ensure that everyone can hear and understand you.
8. Demonstrate and support all participants to develop their voice.