

pathways and the expression of the message into meaningful communication. Examples are **aphasia**, the inability to express ideas in any form, either written or verbal; **agnosia**, the inability to interpret sound correctly; and **dysacusis**, difficulty in processing details or discriminating among sounds. In the **functional** type of hearing loss, no organic lesion exists to explain a central auditory loss. Examples of functional hearing loss are conversion hysteria (an unconscious withdrawal from hearing to block remembrance of a traumatic event), infantile autism, and childhood schizophrenia.

Symptom Severity

Hearing impairment is expressed in terms of a **decibel (dB)**, a unit of loudness. Hearing is measured at various frequencies, such as 500, 1000, and 2000 cycles/second, the critical listening speech range. Hearing impairment can be classified according to **hearing threshold level** (the measurement of an individual's hearing threshold by means of an audiometer) and the degree of symptom severity as it affects speech (Table 18-2). These classifications offer only general guidelines regarding the effect of the impairment on any individual child, because children differ greatly in their ability to use residual hearing.

TABLE 18-2
Classification of Hearing Impairment Based on Symptom Severity

Hearing Level (dB)	Effect
Slight: 16 to 25	Has difficulty hearing faint or distant speech Usually is unaware of hearing difficulty Likely to achieve in school but may have problems No speech defects
Mild to moderate: 26 to 55	May have speech difficulties Understands face-to-face conversational speech at 0.9 to 1.5 m (3 to 5 ft)
Moderately severe: 56 to 70	Unable to understand conversational speech unless loud Considerable difficulty with group or classroom discussion Requires special speech training
Severe: 71 to 90	May hear a loud voice if nearby May be able to identify loud environmental noises Can distinguish vowels but not most consonants Requires speech training
Profound: 91	May hear only loud sounds Requires extensive speech training

dB, Decibels.