**Why your man can't watch TV and chat at the same time: Focusing on visual tasks leaves people deaf to sounds around them**

* **Scientists used brain scans to study how the brain copes with visual tasks**
* **They found people experience a phenomenon called inattention deafness**
* **The eyes and ears compete for finite brain power and the eyes tend to win**
* **Researchers advice shouting as a way of getting the person's attention**

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Ladies - if your husband is deaf to your attempts to make conversation while he is watching football or doing the crossword, it may not be his fault.

Scientists say that far from ignoring you, he simply cannot hear you.

A University College London study has shown that when we concentrate on a visual task, we become deaf to sounds we would normally be able to hear.

Scans suggest that the senses of sight and hearing share limited brain capacity and when in competition, the eyes win.  
  
Tests on 13 people showed the brain to respond less to sounds when focusing on a complicated word search – like puzzle then when doing an easier one.  
  
Study co-author Maria Chait said: 'We found that when volunteers were performing the demanding visual task, they were unable to hear sounds that they would normally hear.

'The brain scans showed that people were not only ignoring or filtering out the sounds, they were not actually hearing them in the first place.'

The phenomenon of inattentional deafness has been shown before but the study, published in the [**Journal of Neuroscience**](http://dx.doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.2931-15.2015), is the first to show what is happening at the level of the brain.

Researcher Professor Nilli Lavie said: 'Inattentional deafness is a common experience in everyday life, and now we know why.

'For example, if you try to talk to someone who is focusing on a book, game or television programme and don't receive a response, they aren't necessarily ignoring you, they might simply not hear you.

'This could also explain why you might not hear your train or bus stop being announced if you're concentrating on your phone, book or newspaper.

'This has more serious implications in situations such as the operating theatre, where a surgeon concentrating on their work might not hear the equipment beeping.

'It also applies to drivers concentrating on complex satnav directions as well as cyclists and motorists who are focusing intently on something such as an advert or even simply an interesting-looking passer-by.

'Pedestrians engaging with their phone, for example texting while walking, are also prone to inattentional deafness.

'Loud sounds such as sirens and horns will be loud enough to get through, but quieter sounds like bicycle bells or car engines are likely to go unheard.'

The professor does have some advice for frustrated wives.

She said: 'Shouting might help.'