



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association North Shore Branch

Published four times a year in March, June,
September and December by CHHA – North Shore Branch,
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Editor: Hugh Hetherington Issue 102 September 2018

Mountain Ear

September AGM And Presentation

Monday, September 17, 2018
7:00 pm at the Summerhill
135 West 15th Street,
North Vancouver

Guest Speaker

Kelly Tremblay, Ph.D., CCC-A
Topic

“Hearing Aids and the Brain
What’s the Connection”

Everyone Welcome

Wheelchair and Hearing Accessible



For information call
604-926-5222



Guest Speaker

Dr. Tremblay is an audiologist and an auditory neuroscientist. With this background she is keenly aware of the communication difficulties experienced by people with age-related hearing loss and developed a

translational program of research aimed at optimizing auditory rehabilitation. People are living longer and thus the older proportion of the global population is rapidly growing. According to the Census Bureau’s projection that the elderly population will more than double by the year 2040 and there are dire predictions about the inability to meet the health and communication needs of our aging society. Her research area addresses this concern in two ways: (1) by identifying physiological and perceptual processes associated with aging and hearing loss. Her National Institute of Health (NIH) funded research has yielded much information about the aging auditory system as well as the effects of amplification on the brain, and (2) by working with public health officials to disseminate and implement much needed information and services.

Prez Mez

by Mike Hocevar

Greetings to you all as we approach our Annual General meeting on September 17th. Members will have received our AGM package containing our annual report and your membership renewal notice, if due at this time. The membership fee is \$30 again this year and is payable by the end of September. You can also pay it at our AGM in September.

At our last directors meeting, Bill Friend reminded us that it’s important to wear your hearing aids “all the time” to ensure that your listening experience is

optimum. Just wearing your hearing aids occasionally is not the answer to your best hearing experience. You remember the advice we provide to those getting a hearing aid for the first time. The trial period is to allow the brain to adapt to the new hearing soundscape that your hearing aids will provide you with. This is very important. Remember, when you did have good hearing, you didn't turn your ears off when you weren't in a listening situation. Environmental sounds are just as important to the brain as what you want to hear. This point was very well emphasized in the presentation given by Glen Grigg at our June meeting. See the report on the meeting in this newsletter.

At a seniors fair I recall speaking to a hearing aid company representative who mentioned he was astounded that many attendees he spoke with weren't wearing their hearing aids. When asked why, the responses were often that they didn't work or that they just weren't happy with them. In many cases it isn't the failure of the hearing aid, but more likely that the adjustment wasn't made to the new and different hearing experience the hearing aids provide. The old maxim holds true here that, "if you don't use it, you will lose it".

Another item mentioned by Hugh Hetherington at the same meeting was about noisy environments, such as, in coffee shops and restaurants. At our September AGM you will be hearing about a new smart phone App called "iHEARu Here". As an iHEARu user, you will be able to take actual sound level readings anywhere, anytime. You can also read reviews, and find links to each establishment, so you can make a decision on where to eat, hold a meeting, read a book, gather with friends and more. Dr. Kelly Tremblay, our guest speaker in September, designed this App and will be telling us about it.

And about those noisy restaurants, pubs, cafes and other public places, we encourage you to take Flo Spratt's coping strategy advice to be analytical and assertive in such situations. Maybe you can ask to have your seating location changed, or ask for the volume of canned music to be reduced or turned off. There may also be other such things that can improve your ability to hear and participate when you are out. Hugh, of course, has taught us at our meetings and in our newsletter "Mountain Ear" of other technology options in addition to your hearing aids. All of these tips are found in past newsletters, which are archived on our branch website.

Since we're on tips, how about this reminder too. Some of you may recall our famed long time science instructor at now-gone North Van High, the beloved Mr. Art Creelman who used to frequently say, "If all else fails, read instructions." Check out simple things like is the device plugged in? I had a pack of hearing aid batteries that didn't seem to last as long as I expected. When I returned them to the audiologist he asked me if I let them sit for a couple of minutes after removing the tab to give the air activation time to work. "It's in the brochures you got when you bought the hearing aid," the audiologist admonished....

Good news about our free hospital kits that are designed to alert staff and health professionals that you are hard of hearing. As well as, other useful materials and information, these also have a storage pack for your name and room number so you don't lose your hearing aids, a frequent occurrence in hospitals. Through Alan Dion the branch reached out to have the kits available on-site at all all North Shore health facilities in the Coastal Health region. We wanted to be sure to have both management and staff aware that the kits are there for distribution. Alan pledges to follow up on a regular basis to ensure they always have a supply of the kits.

At the end of September the annual Walk2Hear fundraiser for the Young Adult Network (YAN) group will be held at Jericho Beach Park. You are encouraged to participate by joining in the walk. You can choose to walk 2Km or 5Km or just make a donation. The Young Adult Network is not a stand alone branch, rather, it is a caucus of interested people aged up to 40 years old from all branches to benefit from activities designed to assist that younger age group as they cope with young family life and workplace experiences. For example, the YAN runs a free peer counseling and mentoring service that was set up by CHHA-BC and WorkSafe BC. So please consider your support of Walk2Hear.

So now let's acknowledge our terrific guest speakers over the past year and look forward to receiving Dr. Kelly Tremblay as our keynote speaker at the AGM. Also, please note that the first "Sound Advice" session of the new season is on September 7th, the second Friday. This is because the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre is closed for annual maintenance until September 4th. Enjoy the rest of the summer and we looking forward to meeting up with all of you again in September.

June Presentation

by Hugh Hetherington

For our June Summerhill presentation we were pleased to have Glen Grigg, Ph.D., Professor of psychology at City University of Seattle in Vancouver and a Registered Clinical Counselor present to us. Glen's presentation was titled "Feeling Safe – Connecting Hearing to Your Inner Watchdog". Glen is no stranger to us and over the years has given us many interesting, humorous and informative presentations. Glen, himself has a mild hearing loss and was also the spouse of our late member, Andrea Gauthier who many of you will remember.

For this presentation he described just how our inner safety system works and the important role that hearing plays in alerting us to dangers. He began his talk by describing the hearing mechanisms of various animals and how their hearing is tailored to meet their individual needs. Human hearing while not necessarily the most sophisticated of the animals is indeed very specifically designed to meet our human needs. Dogs also have a very specialized hearing system suited to their animal needs.

Glen tells us that hearing, unlike the other four senses, is continuous in that it never shuts down, even while we are sleeping or heavily concentrating on a task at hand. For reasons of survival, we are always unconsciously listening for signs of danger. Going back in history he described how important this was for the cave man and how hearing in man has developed through the ages. Today this is still true as almost everyone uses this way of scanning the world. Hearing, unlike sight connects to more of the brain than any of the other senses.

We recognize "pitch" – how high or low a sound is with our cerebral cortex, the newest and most complicated part of the brain. We recognize rhythm with our brainstem, the oldest and most primitive part of the brain. So, what are we – and the dogs – doing when we are hearing? We are sensing the vibration of molecules in the air and our ears are changing these vibrations into electrical signals. Our brain makes sense of the electrical signals and turns them into what we sense as sound. When the sound is unusual, threatening, or changes suddenly, our emotions take over. In dire situations this can trigger our fight or flight mechanism.

What are the things our ears in connection with our brain can do for our safety? They use the difference in the arrival of sound between our two ears to locate the direction the sound is coming from. They use the relative mix of frequencies – pitch of the sound to tell us how far away the source of the sound is. They adapt to sounds that are continuous so that we are not bothered by background sounds. And, they scan for change, and then alert the emotional brain. The emotional brain notices the importance and emotional tone of sounds. It is constantly checking for signs of threat. It gives messages to your body about what is going on. It also helps with thinking and planning but can also block the thinking and planning processes when danger is imminent.

How good are our ears? We can hear at zero decibels – the sound of a mosquito ten feet away. We can tolerate sounds up to a million times louder, for example, a rock concert. Over our lifespan, we tend to lose some high frequency hearing because of, but not limited to, loss of cilia (hair cells) receptors and loss of the flexibility in the basilar membrane which houses the hair cell receptors.

Glen spoke about the brain's connection to feeling safe. Everyone, hearing and hard of hearing, hears only fragments of what is said. The brain fills in the missing parts using context and previously stored knowledge. In addition the brain sorts out the importance and emotional impact of sounds and puts together the meaning of sounds. When the sound is reduced the brain has to do more thinking work in order to reconstruct its meaning. The more uncertainty there is causes it to lead to emotional arousal. The general rule is that emotional arousal interferes with thinking and leads to more uncertainty.

So, why do we get upset? Less sound means we get less information. That leads to more uncertainty, which means more chance of danger. Of course, more danger equals arousal. The brain's natural reaction – don't sit there thinking! Get ready to escape! The experience of uncertainty leads to a very unpleasant emotion called "anxiety". It is something like fear, except there is nothing to respond to. The two general ways to cope is to either escape or avoid.

It looks like there are three options. Escape, Avoid, or Cope. Escape and avoid have their downsides. Just leave (escape) when you are overwhelmed or if the situation is hopeless. For example, the acoustics are very bad. There is also avoidance, when you can.

The downside is that these methods lead to isolation and even eventual loss of skills and abilities.

The art and science of listening includes maximizing the input while minimizing the “noise”. In other words, support the functions of the “thinking brain” and optimize the responses of the “feeling brain”. But beware, not too little which leads to apathy or not too much which leads to anxiety and stress. When you are anxious, the situation is more confusing. The brain starts to double check. This causes slow down and your thoughts go around in circles. The result is that frustration goes way up, which, of course, leads to Stress in the brain. That shuts thinking down and emotional reactions go up. Your whole body changes to prepare for fights, running away or being injured. Stress feels just as if we had been hurt.

The tactics of success include avoidance, remediation and compensation. What links these is planning and self-awareness. Examples of avoidance are noisy restaurants, people who lack good communication skills, and areas with poor lighting and visibility. However, if you avoid too much you risk loss of brainpower and changes in the emotional brain. Remediation includes learning new skills like speechreading. Get your eyes involved and use other cues like television subtitles. Stay involved with language. Do some reading. Stay involved with sound. Listen to music. Compensation includes checking out assistive listening devices, “acoustic engineering” like optimizing room design. Use loop systems when available to minimize “echo” and background noise. Institute “one at a time” talking rules.

Don’t always believe that it is just because you are old. People can have central nervous system problems at any age. Learning only changes in minor ways with age. Thinking, on the other hand, hardly changes at all. Memory shows very, very mild effects with age. But your senses do “dull” with age. Don’t dwell on the negatives. Concentrate on the positives and you will find coping much easier. Remember, this life is about balance.

What this means is that Hard of Hearing people face extraordinary demand on their central nervous system. Analysis, memory, and Integration all have to be achieved under conditions of high stress. The tactics of success include striking a balance among avoidance, remediation and compensation as described above. What links these is planning and self-awareness.

To sum up, the “victorious cycle is: Optimizing the information you provide to your brain, optimizing your motivation and emotion, and building a partnership between the “emotional you” and the “thinking you”.

(The following three articles are reprinted here with permission and are from the blog section of the website www.hearinglosshelp.com where you will find many more interesting articles. Neil Bauman, Ph.D. is a hearing loss coping skills expert and the owner of the website from which the articles are taken.)

Learning to Speechread (Lipread)

by Neil Bauman, Ph.D.

A lady explained,

I am new to the world of hearing loss. I want to know if there is a way to learn lipreading. How did you learn? Did you just watch people? I am trying to do that but getting frustrated. I am sure that is normal. My problem lies when everyone is talking, and one person is trying to talk to me, and I simply can’t hear them. I asked one colleague to repeat herself 3 times yesterday and just couldn’t figure it out. I end up getting embarrassed and stressed out! I just feel defeated. I think if I could read lips, it could help me in that situation.

Most definitely, speechreading can help you communicate better. However, be aware that learning to speechread (lipreading was the older term) takes time. It is easy to get frustrated. One reason for this is because you can only readily see about 30% of English sounds on a person’s lips. The rest of the sounds are formed behind the teeth, or even in the throat where they are totally invisible. Thus there is a lot of educated guessing involved.

Another frustrating reality is that there is a lot of ambiguity in speechreading. Several words may look the same on a person’s lips, but sound different. We call these words homophenes. For example, the words “bat”, “mat” and “pat” all look identical on a person’s lips. So too, do such different words as “queen” and “white”. So do the words “shoes”, “shoot”, “June”, “Jews” and “juice”. Thus it really helps if you know what subject people are talking about so your brain can figure out the correct word to fit the context.

A third reason speechreading can be frustrating is that some people are animated and move their lips a lot—and thus are easy to lipread—while others don't move their lips much, or move them in ways that make it impossible to speechread even one syllable! (You'll come across the odd person like that.)

Because of these limitations, you need to have proper expectations of what speechreading can and cannot do for you. It will definitely help you, but it definitely is not perfect. So don't be hard on yourself when you don't catch something.

Now, let's address your question of how do you learn to speechread. My first rule is always watch people when they are talking to you. Some people, such as myself and my younger daughter, learned to speechread almost from the day we were born, because we were born with significant hearing losses. I've always had to watch people's faces in order to know what they were saying. In fact, some of my earliest memories are of doing just that in order to try to "hear" grown-ups talking to me from "way up there" when I was just a little guy sitting on the floor. I've had lots of practice speechreading—I've been practicing every day of my life and yet I'm still far from perfect. However, in spite of all its shortcomings, I'd never want to be without speechreading as it is my main means of communicating. It's that useful.

My second rule is to combine your residual hearing with speechreading. This is the most effective way. You do far better using both your eyes and your ears, rather than trying to use speechreading without hearing any sound (although I do that a lot too—but remember, I've have more than 60 years of experience doing this).

When talking to one person in group situations, get as close as you can to the person. Make sure you are face to face and looking at each other and that there is adequate light on the other person's face. In that situation, speechreading is typically quite easy. Furthermore, when you are that close, you will catch some sounds which will often dramatically increase your understanding of what is being said.

Don't feel bad, or embarrassed when you have to ask for a repeat (or two) or you miss something entirely. That happens to me too—even with all my speechreading practice and skills. Just two days ago I was talking to a clerk in a store and couldn't get

more than maybe 10% of what he was saying. That's just the way it is depending on how they move their lips. It really helps to have an animated "face" to speechread.

Third, take a speechreading course, if you can.

Editor's Note: In the Vancouver area Vancouver Community College have excellent Level 1 and Level 2 speechreading courses held starting in January, April and September. The instructor, Lisa Dillon Edgett can be contacted for more information at 604-871-7348 or by email at ldillonedgett@vcc.ca. Lisa is also willing to put on an outreach course on the North Shore if enough participants are able to sign up. A successful course was held in West Vancouver starting last April and may be repeated next year. You can get on a waiting list by contacting Lisa by phone or email.

Why Do I Hear Buzzing Sounds When Using My T-coils with Loop Devices?

by Neil Bauman, Ph.D.

A lady explained,

I got a t-coil installed in my hearing aid. Now I hear buzzing noises every time I use my t-coil with the neckloop I got from you. Can you tell me what's going on?

Very likely what is happening is that there is magnetic interference in the room where you are using your neckloop. This is not the fault of your hearing aids and t-coils, nor is it the fault of the neckloop or room loop.

There is a simple procedure you can use to determine where the problem lies.

Step 1: Leave any/all loop devices turned off and switch your hearing aids to t-coil mode. If you hear the buzzing sound you know it is not related to the neckloop (or room loop or any other loop device) because it/they are not even turned on.

You have now determined that the sound is either magnetic interference in the room that your t-coils are picking up, or that your t-coils and/or hearing aids are not set up properly (maybe set too sensitive) or are not working right.

Step 2: The easy way to tell which is which is to move to another room, or even out of the building you are in. If the buzzing noise is just as loud

everywhere you go, then the fault probably lies in your hearing aids. The solution is to go back to your hearing aid dispenser or audiologist and have the t-coil sensitivity set correctly or fixed if necessary.

If the buzzing disappears when you move away from where you originally heard it, then you know that some electrical device or the electrical wiring in your house/building is creating the interference. If this is the case, you should have an electrician or knowledgeable loop installer trace down the source of the interference and fix the problem.

Step 3: However, if you only hear the buzzing when you turn on the device to which you neckloop is attached, or only hear it when the room loop is on, (and not in the same place when the loop system is off), then the problem lies in the loop system itself or any equipment into which it is plugged. You should contact the loop installer or equipment supplier and get them to find the problem. It could be faulty equipment, but more often it will prove to be a bad signal passed from the audio device to the loop system device.

Laugh at Yourself—It Sure Beats the Alternative

by Neil Bauman, Ph.D.

Tammy, a hard of hearing lady, explained, “In spite of the many hardships I’ve experienced from my progressive hearing loss, I am by nature an optimist and always try to see the silver-lining and humour in situations. I have had countless opportunities to laugh at myself over misunderstood conversations, misheard words, etc.

Over the years of living with hearing loss and tinnitus I have developed a light-hearted list. I think you may appreciate it.

10 REASONS TO LOVE YOUR HEARING LOSS

1. You don’t hear mosquitoes buzzing.
2. You have a legitimate excuse not to listen to annoying people.
3. You don’t have to sit for jury duty (been there, done that).

All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association or CHHA – North Shore Branch.

4. You don’t have to participate in phone surveys.
5. You truly believe you are a genius who has all the answers (not realizing that someone else has just said the same thing).
6. Life is full of surprises—when you finally clue in to something everyone else has known for awhile (i.e. your colleague is pregnant).
7. You don’t hear your partner snore.
8. You laugh twice at every joke. The first time when everyone else is laughing. The second time when you finally hear the joke.
9. Your hearing aids prevent earaches when the cold wind is blowing.
10. You always have the last word in an argument (at least, that’s what you believe).”

Sound Advice

Presented by:

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

The group meets on the First Friday of each month

(except July and August)

from 10:00 AM to 12 Noon

Next Meeting September 7th

at the West Vancouver Seniors’ Activity Centre’s Social Rec Room, 695 21st Street in West Vancouver.

When we meet, we discuss topics and issues dealing with hearing loss.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Bring a friend, a family member, they are welcome too.

Subjects to be addressed include:

Technology;

Speechreading;

Coping Strategies;

Improving Relationships;

Improving Hearing Environments

For Information call:

604-926-5222