



# Canadian Hard of Hearing Association North Shore Branch

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## Mountain Ear

### Prez Mez

by Mike Hocevar

Holiday Greetings to you all. Many of us hard of hearing get somewhat antsy about going to social gatherings and dinners. Since the year-end celebratory season is nearly upon us, I consulted Flo Spratt, our branch's coping strategies expert for advice. Firstly, she reminds us that it's our responsibility to initiate the process towards better hearing and communication; remember, she has spoken to us often about being assertive. And, Flo gives us her top three tips to help us through these occasions:

1st: Assessment: Understand what YOU need in order to hear (the other person/the speaker/the group/the actors on stage, etc.). Do you need the music turned down? Do you need the person to face you? Do you need to move toward a quieter environment? Only the HOH person can know what is needed and this is the critical part that must first take place.

2nd: Communicate: The HOH person must make those needs known, and in a patient, understanding manner. For example, "Excuse me, I need you to \_\_\_\_\_ so I can hear you better" or "Could we move to that corner over there where it is quieter? I can hear you better with no noise competition". It is also important that the reason for asking the speaker to make a change is expressed; he/she will be more likely to make the change when the reason is better understood.

3rd: Evaluate: The HOH person should make some comments as to how the change made a difference in order for the speaker to know what helped, and will be more likely the next time to help in that way. For example, "Thank you for speaking more slowly. It

### February Presentation

Monday, February 19, 2017

7:00 pm at the Summerhill

135 West 15th Street,

North Vancouver

Special Presentation

Sound Advice

With Flo Spratt and

Hugh Hetherington

Hearing Loss Workshop—Come  
and Join us for Answers to your  
Hearing Loss Questions

Everyone Welcome

Wheelchair and Hearing Accessible

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made a big difference for me" or, "I appreciate your extra effort to make sure I could hear the discussion. Thank you!"

We might add, that Flo's husband, Doug also participates as a hearing "buddy" to keep her engaged in group conversations. Perhaps you can do the same with a friend or family member, including sitting with them at dinner tables. Thank you, Flo, as always! Your wise advice is always appreciated.

Here are just a few other notes to share with you. I was happy to see Gael Hannan, our very entertaining AGM speaker this year, accepted to serve in a vacant directors' spot on the CHHA Provincial chapter. I also want to report that we received the final disbursement from our late branch member Carrell Hearn's estate. In recognition of her generous bequest we have created a \$1000 scholarship to be awarded to a post secondary hearing impaired student to be added to the three other annual scholarships administered by CHHA National. Finally, I want to note with regret, that since the AGM, director Caroline Wickham has just recently tendered her resignation. We thank her for her service and wish her all the very best. On behalf of the directors, we wish you our members and readers the very best, in the upcoming special season.

## Annual General Meeting

by Hugh Hetherington

On September 18, 2017 the Annual General Meeting for the CHHA North Shore Branch was held at the Summerhill Retirement Residence in North Vancouver. Mike Hocevar and Hugh Hetherington MC'd the meeting for the 20 members and 12 guests present. The current directors had all expressed their desire to stay on and serve another term and were re-elected by unanimous vote at the meeting.

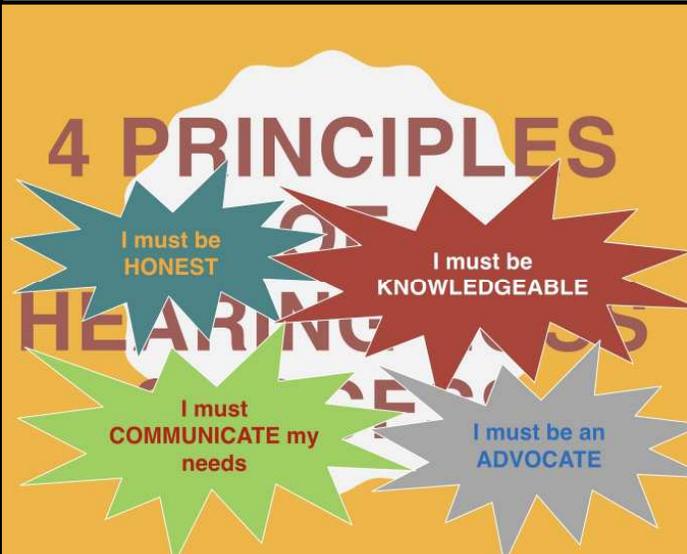
The constitution of the board is: Mike Hocevar, President; Bill Friend, Vice President; Ruth Lapointe, Secretary; Hugh Hetherington, Treasurer; and three Members-at-large, Susan Gelinias, Caroline Wickham, and Alan Dion.

Following the short AGM our special guest speaker, Gael Hannan, author, humourist, editor and frequent contributor of articles to [HearingHealthMatters.org](http://HearingHealthMatters.org) regaled the attendees with a presentation entitled "I'm Hearing as Hard as I Can." Gael is also author

of the book "The Way I Hear It, A Life With Hearing Loss."

Gael's inimitable way of presenting coping strategies through showing us how we so often deal with hearing loss in reality, delighted the audience through her humour and directness in the presentation. In describing Gael's talk, the written word is inadequate in demonstrating the true depth and sincerity that she conveys in showing us in a humorous way how we can improve our daily lives by recognizing those actions which hold us back in a hearing world. For those who were not there to see the presentation, I ask that while reading this you use your imagination to visualize the action and feeling that went into giving the talk.

Gael started her presentation by going through the different aspects of what makes the hearing hard:



(1) Who am I? (2) Explaining It! and (3) Relationships. Firstly, Gael described the principles of Hearing Loss Success: I must be honest, I must be knowledgeable, I must communicate my needs, and I must be an advocate. In being an advocate, you often also help others while speaking up for yourself.

What's in a name? How to tell if you are a HOH? (Gael's term for a Hard of Hearing person) The answers Gael gave to this were many. Here are just a few. If your family and friends say you do... over and over again. Your favourite question is "Pardon?" People are waving, but they're not being friendly... they're just trying to get your attention. Even when the movie is heart stoppingly loud... when the actors face away from the camera, you

can't understand them. Your partner whispers something in your ear at a party ... you say, "Sorry honey ... what?" (And from 3 feet away your friend says, "He wants to go home and make out?") You read lips... A lot of lips... all the time. You're sitting with a friend. A dog barks. Your hearing friend looks one way... and you look in another. The audiologist says you do. Romantic ambiance ain't what it used to be... others have one candle on their table, you need 12. You realize your education is going to have a few holes in it... your teachers talk to the blackboard and you can't read their lips. Your dentist wears a mask... the mask starts to move. You don't understand him. And finally, your inner voice says so. There comes a time when we just know. The hard part is doing something about it.

Explaining it! How to ask for repeats. There are standard verbal requests, some formal and others casual. For example, would you mind repeating that please? I have hearing loss. Excuse me. I beg your pardon? For the more casual, some examples are, Eh? Huh? What? Also, with your family, Speak up! Stop mumbling! Whaddya say? Also there are visual requests, such as, hand cupping your ear, raised eyebrow with head thrust forward and other weird head movements.

Relationships. Gael spoke about the masks of Hearing Loss and how we make it harder for ourselves. She spoke extensively about bluffing. She explained bluffing is when we pretend to understand what is going on, but we don't. Our goal must be good communication and when we bluff we are not communicating. We're not sharing. We're hiding behind a mask.



So why do we bluff? Gael went into a number of reasons. For example, to hide the fact or severity of our hearing loss, a desire not to appear inadequate or slow, we don't want to annoy or interrupt others, it's just easier or just a bad habit.

Is it "OK" to bluff? It can provide temporary relief from difficult situations and speeds up non-important conversations. BUT, it is dishonest and/or disrespectful. It is also dangerous because we may

miss important information or make embarrassing mistakes. It is also important to realize that it is non-productive and irritates our family and friends, a lot. Gael described some of the places we bluff. In poor acoustics, background noise, due to unfamiliar speech patterns (accents), etc.

What's the answer? Gael says, "let's kick the habit." Be aware of our bluff patterns, believe that we have the right to understand and participate. Admit our hearing loss, be assertive and express our need. And, find the courage to say, "I'm not following."



Some of the ways to help accomplish this are. Improve the place by moving to a quieter spot. Have one person speak at a time. Use assistive technology when possible. Use captioning, if available. Write it down.

Gael concluded her presentation by giving us the no bluff pledge:

### **NO-BLUFF PLEDGE**

**In my life, I will not bluff.  
I will not pretend to understand  
When I do *not*!  
Instead I will do, all that it takes  
To engage, interact, and communicate.**

Thank you Gael for the entertaining and informative presentation.

## Sound Advice

### What is it all about?

by Susan Gelinis

Sound Advice is a monthly 2-hour meeting/workshop sponsored by the North Shore branch of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association. Its pur-

pose is to provide a platform for people to discuss issues arising from hearing loss. We provide information about the basics of dealing with hearing loss: How do I know when it is time to get a hearing aid? Who do I go to see about it? How do I choose a hearing aid? How do I know the hearing aid is working for me? We talk about features of hearing aids that will help an individual benefit as much as possible from his/her hearing aid. Often these are features that an audiologist or hearing instrument practitioner (HIP) doesn't have time to talk about or hasn't wanted to overwhelm us with too much information. We encourage people to be self-aware and communicate their needs. What questions can they ask their audiologist/HIP on the next visit? What tweaks does the hearing aid need? We go beyond that to discuss the newest advances in technology and how those can help an individual and when are they absolutely necessary.

We also go beyond the hearing aids and provide information about gadgets and assistive devices that aid our hearing aids. We answer technical questions about hearing aids. We talk about the "mechanics" of hearing loss: information about how we hear things, sound frequencies and your audiogram. An important issue is the connection between the brain and our hearing loss. Most people don't connect their hearing loss and bouts of depression. We talk a lot about coping strategies: what we do in a situation where we can't hear; how to deal with the stress of not hearing; how to make changes in our lives so that we can live to our fullest; how to get our friends and family on board with our hearing loss. Hearing loss is an emotional issue and we reach out to support those who feel separate from the real world. The group can consist of people who are just starting to lose their hearing to those who have been wearing hearing aids for several years to those where hearing aids aren't helping anymore. It also can include people who have a family member who is dealing with hearing loss. The group is open to people of all ages. The group consists of new people looking for answers to specific questions, regulars who have their own stories to share, and people who come on a semi regular basis who want to give feedback on their progress.

We are hard of hearing people helping other people with hearing loss. We listen to others with similar problems and share our solutions. We meet in a room that is equipped with a loop system so each person must use the microphone to ask questions or share

information. The meeting is hosted by two volunteers, Flo Spratt and Hugh Hetherington. Flo has had hearing loss most of her life and now has a cochlear implant; she's our coping strategy expert. Hugh has had hearing loss for several years and is our technical support guy. Perfect hearing aids don't necessarily mean perfect hearing but we want to do as much as we can to make the world user friendly for people with hearing loss. We want to inform, advise, educate and support people dealing with hearing loss.

Sound Advice is held at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre on the first Friday of each month except July and August from 10:00 AM until 12:00 noon. It is also held twice a year at the Summerhill retirement residence in North Vancouver twice yearly as an evening meeting for those who are unable to attend the daytime sessions.

*(The following two articles are reprinted here with permission from the Blog section of the website [hearinglosshelp.com](http://hearinglosshelp.com). Neil Bauman, Ph.D. is a hearing loss coping skills expert and the owner of the website from which the articles are taken.)*

## **Overcoming Your Embarrassment When Wearing Your Hearing Aids**

by Neil Bauman, Ph.D. with Eleanor (Ellie)

Many people are too embarrassed to wear their hearing aids, or even get hearing aids in the first place. This should not be. You should be no more embarrassed over wearing hearing aids than you are embarrassed over wearing eyeglasses. Eyeglasses let you see better. Hearing aids let you hear better. Neither one is cause for embarrassment. I wear both.

When you let your embarrassment have the upper hand, it controls your life. It doesn't have to be this way. Here is Ellie's story of how she overcame her embarrassment over wearing her hearing aids.

"I am 17 years old and have been wearing hearing aids my entire life. When I was young I didn't think anything of it. Hearing aids were part of my everyday routine. I'd put them on as soon as I woke up and pretty much forget about them for the rest of the day.

When I was in middle school things changed. I grew more and more self-conscious. I started wearing

looser ponytails so hair would fall down and cover my ears. If my battery died, I'd go into the bathroom to change it so no one else would see.

Freshman year of high school, it got worse. On my third day of school I had a meeting with all of my teachers to explain my hearing loss to them and to inform them of the accommodations I required. I don't think I said a single thing in that meeting, I was too embarrassed.

I grew more and more self-conscious. I constantly worried that no one wanted to be friends with me because I wore hearing aids. I started being shy and was afraid to talk to new people in my class. I would do whatever I could to prevent people from noticing my hearing aids.

In the beginning of November I had my first swim practice. I have been swimming my entire life so I joined my high school's swim team. On that day, despite my protests, my mom walked into practice with me and told the coach that I might miss a few things while in the water.

My face turned bright red and I couldn't look my coach in the eye. I knew my mom was doing what was best for me, but that didn't help me feel better.

My embarrassment about my hearing aids got worse. I have always wanted to learn sign language, but didn't want to join the Sign Language Club at school because I was afraid it would draw attention to the fact that I wore hearing aids.

One day I was fed up with myself. My hearing aid battery had died right in the middle of class and I had no idea what my teacher was saying. It took a lot of convincing, but I finally talked myself into changing the battery in the middle of class.

In reality, I don't think a single person noticed, but my heart was pounding and I furtively glanced around to make sure no one was looking at me.

After that day, I slowly began to turn back into the confident person I used to be in grade school. I began accepting who I was. I even watched YouTube videos about the benefits of having hearing aids and I listed them all in a notebook.

One day I asked my friend what, if anything, she would change about herself if she could. She an-

swered me, honestly, and with my heart pounding I decided I was going to tell her the truth.

I still remember feeling terrified when I confided in my friend that until recently, I would have wanted to get rid of my hearing aids. Saying that out loud, admitting it helped me feel so much better. I felt so relieved.

I slowly grew more confident with my hearing aids. I began to stop caring if people were watching me when I changed my battery, or when I took them off for swim practice. I even took a sign language class at a local community college with my friend.

This past year I admitted my old feelings of embarrassment about my hearing aids to a few of my friends. One of my friends said to me, "Oh wait, I totally forgot you wore hearing aids." It was 3 AM and no one saw my huge smile as a few tears fell down my face. I wasn't crying because I was so happy that my friends didn't notice my hearing aids, I was crying because I had finally realized my hearing aids didn't define me.

This morning I had my senior pictures taken. The photographer asked me if I wanted to remove my hearing aids so they wouldn't show in the pictures. I politely declined. My hearing aids are a part of who I am and I am proud of who I am.

The moral of this story: it's okay to be embarrassed when you're getting used to your hearing aids. People say that all you have to do is put them in, but it's not that bad wearing hearing aids. However, if you're a teenager and are not a part of the Deaf community, you may only know one or two people your age that wear hearing aids.

Change isn't easy, but it is necessary. If you're hard of hearing and do not choose to learn sign language, you should wear hearing aids. They have helped me get where I am today.

I have been able to do everything I wanted to do in my life, thanks to them. I don't plan on ever letting them hold me back in the future. Remember, people love you for who you are and wearing two little hearing aids won't ever change that."

If Ellie can get over her embarrassment about wearing her hearing aids and regain control of her life, you can do it too! Thanks for your encouraging story Ellie.

## Seven Advantages of Loop Systems

by Neil Bauman, Ph.D.

June 11, 2015

There are a number of assistive technologies that help us (people with hearing loss) hear beautiful, clear sound. In addition to loop systems, there are FM (and other RF and bluetooth systems), infrared systems and direct wired systems. All of these work well for us, although some have specific advantages in specific situations.

Loop systems, however, have seven distinct advantages over these other hearing assistive systems. Here are some of the advantages that make loop systems so valuable, not only to hard-of-hearing people, but also to the owners of looped venues.

1. Since audio-frequency loop systems make use of the principles of magnetic induction, hard-of-hearing people wearing hearing aids that have telecoils do not need any other equipment in order to clearly hear the sound source. They can freely move around or sit anywhere within the area covered by the hearing loop.

2. Hard-of-hearing people can use their own telecoil-equipped hearing aids which are correctly matched to their specific hearing losses. They do not have to take their hearing aids off in order to use the facility's assistive device.

3. Telecoils do not use any additional power so they do not drain a hearing aid's battery faster than normal.

4. Hard-of-hearing people with telecoils in their hearing aids do not require special receivers that they otherwise would have to pick up before, and return after, each meeting. Nor do they have to worry about the batteries going dead and search out a staff person who can replace the batteries.

5. Facility operators do not have to supply the receivers, make them available for pickup and ensure their return. This saves them manpower and money. Thus, loop systems are a win-win situation for both hard-of-hearing people and the facility operators of looped facilities.

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.

6. Loop systems give accessibility access. Did you know that there are 12 to 15 times as many hard-of-hearing people as there are people in wheelchairs. Wheelchair ramps abound. Why not loop systems too? That is why hearing accessibility is so important.

7. Loop systems are universal. There is nothing proprietary about them. This means they will work with any hearing aids that have telecoils. Furthermore, they can work anywhere in the world since they are not dependent on proprietary technology nor on a specific frequency band. (Note: radio frequency band allocations vary depending on which country you are in.)

## 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**

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;

Effective Coping Strategies;

Behavioural Issues;

Improving Relationships;

Improving Hearing Environments

**For Information call:**

**604-926-5222**