



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

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Mountain Ear

President's Message

A Recipe for

Crispy Clear Communication

Crispy Clear Communication is a “must-have” for every marriage, and should be the house special in marriages with hearing impairment. At our house, we are usually well stocked with this specialty. Whenever we run low, we make a big batch together, using the following ingredients:



- ◆ Forgiveness (marinated in “I’m sorry. How can I do better next time?”)

- ◆ Patience (Stirred in with gentleness and respect)
- ◆ Face-to-face communication (To avoid burnt feelings, stay in the same room while communication is in process)
- ◆ Humour (If you leave out the last sentence, the result will be flat)
- ◆ Rest (This is the “yeast”: more rest produces a higher result)
- ◆ Coping strategies (Comes in many flavors. See note below)
- ◆ Appreciation (Make sure you celebrate what is given by your spouse).

The amount of each ingredient is flexible. Sometimes when one ingredient is forgotten, we discover we can still work it into the batch and the results are still excellent.

The coping strategies ingredient is made up of a variety of practical skills, specially prepared to the specifications of the hearing impaired spouse. For more information on the makeup of this ingredient, see my article, “What are Your Coping Strategies?” on page 2 of the newsletter. The article addresses one-to-one situations as well as in groups.

I am hoping that you have Crispy Clear Communication at your house, too.

Til next time,

Flo

June Meeting

The next meeting of the North Shore Branch is on **June 16th, 7:00 PM** at the Summerhill at **135 West 15th Street, North Vancouver.**

Special Guest Speaker

Michael Currie

Cochlear Implant Recipient

Introduction to Cochlear Implants
Find out about the latest technology

What Happens When Hearing Aids
Are No Longer Enough

An Award for Hugh Hetherington

On Thursday, May 1, Hugh Hetherington received an award in recognition of his CHHA volunteer work on the North Shore. The award ceremony in recognition of National Volunteer Week 2008 took place at the Holiday Inn in North Vancouver. Marlene Witzke from CHHA-BC joined several CHHA members, Hugh's son Paul and his girlfriend to celebrate the event.

Over the past 12 years, Hugh has cheerfully given much of his time and energy to our hard of hearing community. He has shared his knowledge of hearing loss and hearing technology to hundreds of people who attend our meetings, seek advice for their issues on hearing loss or request at-home visits because they are less mobile. Hugh assisted various organizations such as churches and theatres to get loop systems into their meeting rooms, often making follow-up visits. For several years Hugh has worked on the North Shore Advisory Committee on Disability Issues for the North Shore municipalities. He speaks regularly for groups and co-facilitates a monthly support group on hearing loss issues. This past year, Hugh worked many hours to edit a booklet by Neil Bauman, "Talking

with Hard of Hearing People: Here's How to do it Right, Eh?". This booklet is free for our community, thanks to assistance from the West Vancouver Kiwanis Club. He also untiringly publishes our newsletter, "Mountain Ear" four times a year.

On many occasions Hugh has explained his perspective on volunteering: when one gives, he receives so much in return. Hugh has found that giving of himself to help others is a truly satisfying endeavor. Our North Shore community has been truly enriched with Hugh's gifts.

Thank you, Hugh!



Marlene Witzke and Hugh Hetherington at the award presentation on May 1st 2008

What are Your Coping Strategies?

By Flo Spratt.

What do YOU do to make sure you can hear when someone is talking to you? Or when you are with a group of people? In other words, what are your coping strategies? That is the question for everyone who has a hearing loss.

There are some "coping strategies" that we sometimes use that are not really coping strategies. For example, we pretend to hear. We nod with an, "Ah huh..." or we smile dumbly as if we understood the joke. Or even laugh with the group while they are laughing. But we didn't really hear, did we?

Or, we tell ourselves that everyone is mumbling and so how can we possibly hear them? We wave them off with indifference and do not try to participate in the conversation that goes on. Could that be denying a hearing loss exists?

Another "coping strategy" we use at times is to simply talk on and on, so that others don't really have a chance to speak. In effect, we "save" ourselves the

stress of having to try to hear what they have to say, as we do all the talking! That is not a true conversation, is it?

Let's be honest here: when we pretend, deny or crowd others out of a conversation, we are not coping at all. We may be trying to survive in a world with too much noise and stressful situations, but we are not using successful coping strategies so that we can join in with others in conversations and discussions.

Many of us with hearing loss admit that, although we pretend to hear others, we really want to do a better job at coping in challenging situations. What does one do when there is noise or when the speaker talks too fast? Or when everyone is laughing at a joke and they are paying no attention to our blank expression? Or how about when small children tell us, in a jumble of words, what happened to them at the circus? Do we laugh with them, pretending we heard it all? After all, to repeat the whole thing would be too much trouble—right?

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

I have had my hearing loss for over 45 years, and every conversation requires a significant amount of work on my part. I have to confess that I still do pretend—sometimes. But I never feel good about it (unless the speaker was drunk!). For me, most listening situations require an immediate explanation or strategy to ensure that I will hear. The dynamics of conversations, especially in group discussions that are fast paced, create a very difficult challenge. However, when I do connect with people and I am participating in the conversation, I am always glad I made the effort.

In this article I would like to highlight some coping strategies that I use to make sure I am hearing when someone is speaking to me. My hearing loss is severe to profound, which means that I require many different strategies, depending on the situation at hand. It is my hope that you will find at least one idea here that will be useful to you.

Before I begin with a list, let me describe two important prerequisites to the success of hearing in any situation. First, the person with the hearing loss needs to understand what exactly he/she needs in the situation at hand. So it is important for him or her to become well acquainted with the many useful strategies. Second, the onus is largely on the person with the hearing loss to be proactive in using a strategy and/or teaching others what he/she needs in order to hear. To express this in another way: we cannot expect hearing people to make changes in the way they speak or to include us if we are not prepared to identify the strategies we need and teach them to people who are speaking to us. This idea may seem obvious, but unfortunately people with hearing loss do not always have a plan, but expect hearing family and friends to remember to speak up or repeat themselves.

One example of these two prerequisites may explain what I mean. In a group discussion with loud music and traffic noise nearby, (e.g., outdoor café) a hearing impaired person in the group frequently asks the speakers to repeat themselves, and to do so loudly. A better strategy would have been for the hearing impaired person to ask ahead of time that the group meet in a quieter section of the café and/or another location and also request that the background music be turned down. Chances are the speakers would not have to loudly repeat themselves as often and the

hearing impaired person will be able to participate in the conversation.

Most of us have been in such a situation, and at times we are not in control of the seating. Fortunately, we do learn from our mistakes!

In the strategies that follow, I will use a real event I had recently been in to describe three main areas of coping strategies that a hard of hearing person needs to address. These areas are: 1. Set the Stage; 2. Access an Advocate; and 3. Act on your Needs. The many strategies that are available to HOH people could be grouped under these areas. I will describe the ones I used in my situation (for more ideas or strategies, refer to the resources at the end of this article).

Recently I spent a full afternoon with ten people, ages 10 to 50, where we had lunch and later gathered around in the living room. Despite the poor acoustics of the rooms, I was satisfied with the level of participation I had with the group.

Set the Stage. Everyone in the group was aware that they needed to look at me when speaking. The host had instructed his young son to look at me when he was speaking, while the adults were all aware from earlier contacts with me. When we were about to sit down at the lunch table, I moved toward the seat with the windows behind me and in the middle of the table. That way the faces around me were all well lit and I could easily see the persons seated on my side of the table. When we went to the living room to sit down, I again chose to sit between my two sons on a sofa. I knew I would be able to hear them well, and easily ask them questions to help me with the discussion.

This step is crucial to the proactive attitude the HOH person needs to arm him/herself with. Whether it is a one-to-one person discussion or a small group, whether it is when standing, sitting or walking, the HOH person needs to be aware of his/her surroundings, and make the initial move to the best position for hearing. By making these first moves, others are reminded that the HOH person has some critical needs to ensure he/she can hear.

Access an Advocate. During this visit, I was fortunate to have my husband and two sons in the group. When I was lost in the discussion, I would look at one of them, and they would know my problem, and

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

help me out. Seated farther away, my husband would mouth to me what the discussion was about, and I was then able to “catch up” on the others. It was not necessary for me to know what everyone had said; by knowing what the topic was, I was soon able to enter the discussion.

In other situations, such as when I am in a group by myself and am completely lost in the discussion, I might ask for a summary, if this is possible. Or I may ask the person next to me to tell me what they were discussing. Again, the details need not be repeated; if I know the topic, I can quickly ask a question or two to gain the information I need.

In this stage, the HOH person should actively access the help he/she needs from others around them when in a group situation. Of course, in a one-on-one situation, the “advocate” becomes the speaker and the HOH person then makes use of strategies in the next stage.

3. Be Specific in What You Need. During the afternoon visit, many different topics were raised spontaneously but usually only one person spoke at a time. That was a bonus! However, when I missed a part of what someone said, and I needed that part, I would repeat the part I heard in a question format, so that the speaker would fill in the missing information. For example, in the following hypothetical statement, “...wasn’t going to go to the game because of the flu”, I would then say, “Who wasn’t going to go to the game because of the flu?” Or if I missed a very critical piece of information but heard most of the details, I might say, “I’m missing who you were talking about. I heard what happened, but who did it happen to?”

When someone says something to me, invariably I hear something but not all of what was said. When that happens, I am usually able to ask for the missing part. However, if I heard nothing of what the speaker said, I must assess what to do before I ask for a full repeat. There are a number of things a HOH person can do before the speaker has to repeat everything. First, make sure the stage is set right: eliminate background noise; use good lighting; bring the speaker closer; etc. If there is a problem in any one of these areas, it is better to correct the setting problem first. Otherwise, the speaker may have to repeat a number of times, creating unnecessary frustration for both speaker and HOH person.

Second, perhaps an advocate is available and able to help. Sometimes, when the speaker has an accent or is very soft spoken, the HOH person may wish to request help from another person who is a better speaker. I have at times asked help from someone nearby to help me understand the speaker by repeating what was said. (The speaker may repeat the statement to the helper, who then in turn tells me).

If a repeat is the only recourse left to the HOH person, he/she could try one of the following strategies:

1. Ask for the speaker to paraphrase what was said (“Could you paraphrase that?” “Could you tell me using different words?”).
2. Ask the speaker to slow down/speak a little more clearly (“Could you say that again, just a little slower, please?”).
3. Explain why he/she cannot hear, and then ask for a specific aid such as writing down the information or using an assistive listening device (“I cannot understand you because I need to lipread and you have a moustache. Could you write the information down for me?”). By explaining the situation in an objective way, the speaker becomes informed on what is necessary for the HOH person to hear, and how he/she can make a difference in the future. (I have seen moustaches trimmed after I have made this statement!)

In conclusion, there are many things a HOH person can do to help themselves in challenging situations. Of critical importance is the HOH person’s attitude toward his/her hearing impairment. A positive attitude that is proactive goes a long way toward getting one’s hearing needs met.

Additional Resources: All situations that HOH people find themselves in are not covered in this article. Telephone conversations, lecture halls, hospital and nursing home settings are some very challenging situations for HOH people. We are able to address these issues in our Sound Advice meetings where specific needs are identified. Sometimes technologi-

(Continued on page 5)

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cal aids, such as assistive listening devices, are indispensable to HOH persons like myself. We discuss all of these issues in our meetings.

Neil Bauman's booklet, "Talking With Hard of hearing People: Here's How to Do it Right, Eh?" is a booklet we are providing free to the North Shore community. In it are numerous suggestions how speakers can help a HOH person. It is recommended that HOH persons read and highlight the suggestions that are most useful to them before they hand it to their family and friends. This booklet is available free of charge at any of our meetings.

Our course, Managing Your Hearing Loss, is offered every year to anyone interested in learning more about coping with a hearing loss, including how to speak more effectively. Interested HOH people can register through the West Vancouver Seniors' Centre in August. (The next course runs every Monday, 1:00 - 3:30pm, from October 6th through December 1st, except on Thanksgiving day).

We also have an effective DVD, Hearing Loss in the Family, available later this summer, for our HOH community. It describes some of the main issues that hearing impaired people face within the family.

"Hearing Loss (Needlessly) Adversely Affects Marriages"

by Neil Bauman, Ph.D.

Hearing loss in a spouse adversely affects marriages. This should be no surprise. In fact, according to a recent survey of baby boomers with hard of hearing spouses, 48% "of the respondents feel that their marriage has suffered because of their spouse's hearing loss."

This does not have to be. Hearing loss can bring about changes in a marriage, but these changes do not have to adversely affect the marriage itself. Let's look at this a little closer.

One of the findings was that 65% "feel annoyed when their spouse can not hear them." Instead of being annoyed and letting that affect the marriage, why don't these spouses practice good hearing loss coping strategies so that their spouses DO hear them the very first time? When they do this, the annoyance factor fades away.

A second finding was that "another 16% feel ig-

nored". I think this applies much more to family gatherings rather than just spouse to spouse communication. In groups its so easy to ignore the person who misses what is said. Because they miss things, they often don't respond--and thus become "invisible" to the group. The hard of hearing person is not intentionally ignored--it just happens. This is why practicing good coping strategies, including being assertive, is so important. So too are using hearing aids and any assistive listening devices (ALDs) that will help the hard of hearing person hear better.

A third finding was that "8% feel sad or hurt." I'm surprised this figure is so low. Hearing is important to us. We value it, so when we lose it, we feel the loss--and therefore must grieve this loss. Some of the emotions we experience during the grieving process include sadness and feeling hurt. These feelings should go away as we work through the grieving process and learn to become well-adjusted hard of hearing people. In addition, the hearing spouse must also grieve--not for the hearing loss since they don't have any--but for the loss of the free and easy communication they once had with their now hard of hearing spouse.

Excerpted from Dr. Neil Bauman's April E-Zine and reprinted with permission. Dr. Neil is a Hearing Loss Coping Skills Expert and has a website at: www.hearinglosshelp.com. By visiting his website you can sign up to receive his monthly E-Zine free of charge. It is always filled with many useful articles on hearing loss.

Sound Advice

Presented by:

**The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
North Shore Branch**

**The group meets on the first Friday of each
month from 10:00 AM to 12 Noon**

(Holidays excepted) at the West Vancouver
Seniors' Activity Centre's Learning Studio,
695 21st Street in West Vancouver.

(No Meeting in July and August)

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 will include:

Technology; Coping Strategies;

Improving Relationships;

Improving Hearing Environments

For Information call: 604-926-5222



Congress Overview

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association is proud to join with the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People in hosting the eighth International Hard of Hearing Congress in Vancouver, Canada. This prestigious international conference, which is held every four years, draws presenters and participants from countries around the world. The theme for Congress 2008 is A Global Community of Communications and reflects the growing momentum to recognizing the significance of hearing loss as a major health and socioeconomic concern. According to 2005 estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO), 278 million people worldwide have moderate to profound hearing loss in both ears, making hearing loss the most common sensory disability in the world. However, these figures are modest compared to the incidence level expected in the coming decades unless aggressive preventive strategies are adopted. As the population ages so too will the numbers of those with hearing loss.

Societal impacts of hearing loss has far-reaching implications in terms of healthcare costs, poverty, loss of economic gains, reduction in quality of life, and lack of civic participation. The good news is that the effects of a hearing loss can be ameliorated through early detection and intervention programs, educational and self-help support, education and awareness of hearing loss, technological and other supports, medical care and other interventions, and various programs. Congress 2008 provides an important vehicle to keep abreast of the latest developments in all fields of endeavor to continue advances to improve the health, well-being and socio-economic status of hard of hearing persons.

Congress 2008 is designed for consumers and professionals. Plenary sessions, workshops and poster sessions will focus on all ranges of hearing loss from infancy and childhood to older adults. A specific youth forum will be tailored for youth and young adults. Presenters from around the world will share their knowledge, perspectives and research on the following five Congress themes:

- Global Challenges and Issues
- Quality of Life Issues for Persons with Hearing Loss
- Technology and Technical Advances
- Education and Employment Issues
- Early Childhood Intervention and Development Programs.

The Congress will include numerous opportunities for social interaction and networking in the first-class Sheraton Wall Centre in downtown Vancouver.

**Wednesday July 2nd through
Sunday July 6th**

Sheraton Wall Centre, Vancouver, B.C.

**Hosted by the Canadian Hard of Hearing
Association and the International Federation
of Hard of Hearing People**

Visit the Congress website at:

www.chha-ifhohcongress2008.com/

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.