



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

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Tel: 604-926-5222 Fax: 604-925-2286 email:chha_nsb@telus.net
Charitable Registration No. BN 89672 3038 RR0001

Editor: Hugh Hetherington

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Mountain Ear

President's Message Giving Up is Not in Our Vocabulary



In the last newsletter, my president's message was about accepting that we cannot hear everything. I even challenged us to try being truly thankful when others are enjoying conversations without us. We may even have initiated these conversations, but because of our hearing loss we may not be able to join in.

Is that the same thing as saying that we should give up? That we should not ask others to repeat the joke? That we should not expect others to look at us and speak more clearly?

Absolutely not. We do not give up and become reclusive, antisocial or put on fake smiles and pretend we heard.

So what is meant by "being truly thankful...?"

It's about an attitude that says, "These people care about me. Perhaps they forgot what I need or they may not know exactly how to help. Perhaps they are unable to help. I can still teach and remind them, without demanding that I must hear everything."

This attitude is what the CHHA-North Shore Branch is all about. In our meetings and in-house visits we provide a wealth of strategies and technical information on how to ensure successful communication takes place. Hearing family and friends are welcome to our meetings because we are convinced that both hard of hearing persons and their hearing friends and family need to learn the "rules of the game".

Inside this newsletter on page 2 is an article on some of those rules. After you have read it, give it to your family members and friends who may need this information. Discuss them together and let your loved ones know which rules apply to you when you are in a conversation. Remind them, when they forget, just what you need so you can join in the laughter.

After all, we don't give up.

Til next time,

Flo



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
Edmonton 2007
Smile from EAR to HEAR
May 24 - May 27

Fantasy Land Hotel
West Edmonton Mall

For more information
visit the conference website at:
www.chha.ca/conference

Neil Bauman on: Talking With Hard of Hearing People

By Flo Spratt

Dr. Neil Bauman has been providing guidance to the hard of hearing for many years through his numerous books and speaking engagements. His website, www.hearinglosshelp.com contains a wealth of information on hearing loss and hearing related issues such as Meniere's disease, tinnitus and vertigo. This article provides highlights of the first half of his booklet, "Talking with Hard of Hearing People: Here's How to Do it Right!" The booklet was written for hearing people and contains dozens of tips when communicating with those who have a hearing loss in various situations.

(The second half of the booklet is focused on the formal group settings such as classrooms, in emergencies such as police and fire situations, and in hospitals and nursing homes. An article addressed to these special workers in our community may be written in a future newsletter.)

Dr. Bauman sets the stage for his booklet by stating that for the hard of hearing person, communicating with others requires the right listening conditions. By understanding and putting into practice these conditions, both hearing and hearing impaired persons can avoid misunderstanding and frustration.

I would like to mention that Dr. Bauman has a severe to profound hearing loss. By writing this booklet, he has set a fine example that I, a hard of hearing person, can use to explain to others the conditions that will help me to hear. His booklet encourages me to identify the conditions most critical for me, and then to explain those conditions to the people who speak to me.

The following are some of the "must have" conditions that Dr. Bauman mentions:

1. Use total communication: speech, gestures, writing, speechreading, anything to get your message across.
2. Before speaking, get the person's attention.
3. Get close: 3 to 6 feet is ideal. Volume falls off rapidly with distance.
4. Face the person when you are talking (never from another room!).
5. Your face must have good lighting.

6. Cut out the noise.
7. Speak slowly, clearly and naturally.
8. Speak a little louder, but never shout.
9. Speak simply, with common words and without sudden changes in topic.
10. Avoid distorting or covering your lips (e.g., gum chewing, beards or moustaches).
11. Repeat when asked, rather than saying "Never mind!"
12. When changing the topic, give a clue (e.g., "Now I want to tell you about...").
13. A 1:1 conversation in quiet surroundings is the best condition; your efforts in making it happen will be appreciated.

Dr. Bauman devotes a section to larger group settings and meetings. He says,

"For those of us who are hard of hearing, trying to hear and understand in groups and meetings is one of the most difficult, frustrating and tiring listening situations we encounter. For example, in groups with rapid repartee and banter flowing back and forth, we are quickly left out. Conversations among more than three or four people are nearly impossible even for highly skilled speechreaders to follow. By the time we've caught on, someone else will be speaking. Often we never catch up, but fall farther and farther behind as our brains slowly try to make sense of what we're seeing...Unfortunately, when we do not contribute to the group conversation, we are just simply, though not intentionally, left out... That is why those with normal hearing find others like themselves easier to talk with. In contrast, conversations with us require conscious effort. Normally you become so involved in your conversation with other hearing people that you tend to forget that we are not following the conversation and need your help". (p.12)

Dr. Bauman then suggests that a group follow four simple ground rules when in a group situation with a hard of hearing person. They are:

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1. Only one person speaks at a time.
2. The speaker must face the group at all times when he is talking.
3. If the person speaking isn't standing up at the front, the teacher (group leader) must repeat all questions and comments before answering them.
4. The speaker must have the light on his face at all times.

I would like to mention that, for most of us with hearing loss, the first ground rule mentioned above is the most important rule in groups such as dinner visits, socials and group meetings. In my experience, when the group consciously keeps to the one-person speaking rule, the other conditions naturally take place. This is the kind of group that is aware and considerate of the hard of hearing person's needs. It is truly a wonderful experience to be part of such a group.

To our hard of hearing friends and members, let me also say that we need to exercise patience when others forget our needs. We also need to be willing to give our hearing friends and families a break! It is hard work to include us in every situation.

In my family, talking about these issues openly has been very helpful. My family knows when I would like to be part of the conversation and when it is too difficult for all of us and I am willing to bow out (e.g., in the car, in the dark, when there is music, etc.). I have learned to sit back and let them banter back and forth without me. It is during those times that I tell myself that I have a family that enjoys being together and doing things together. To have such a family is a blessing that I cherish.

Special May Meeting

Our regular April meeting is going to be delayed until May 14th this year as Dr. Neil Bauman From Pennsylvania will be in town And has offered to speak at our meeting.

Topic:

The Erie world of Tinnitus, Phantom Voices, Etherial Music and other spooky sounds

Date: May 14th Time: 7:00 PM

Place: The Summerhill, 135 West 15th Street North Vancouver.

Dr. Neil Bauman is Executive Director of the Centre for Hearing Loss Help. Visit his website at www.hearinglosshelp.com

FESTIVAL OF VOLUNTEERS

by Karen Hunter

The first ever "Festival of Volunteers" for the North Shore was held on Saturday, Feb. 24th in the North and South Malls at Park Royal. There were over 50 non-profit organizations represented including our North Shore Branch for the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association.



Karen Hunter and Flo Spratt at the Festival of Volunteers

The purpose of the Festival was to celebrate volunteering in community organizations as well as to let the general public know about our organization.

Those of us who volunteered that day were very pleased with the questions and requests for information we received regarding hearing loss. Many people wanted to know what questions to ask when they see an audiologist for the first time and where they could go to find out more information about coping strategies.

We handed out brochures about "Sound Advice" (held on the first Friday of the month at the West Vancouver Senior's Activity Centre from 10:00 AM to 12 Noon) and also provided information about our Managing Your Hearing Loss and Speech reading course, etc. I am hoping this will become a yearly event so we can continue to share our information and help others. Thank you to all the volunteers who turned out to help.

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.

Taking Advantage of Technology

By Hugh Hetherington

Although we don't often consciously think about it, acoustics always play an important role in the life of a hard of hearing person. When we struggle with hearing loss, three of our major enemies are distance, reverberation, and noise. All of these factors have an effect on how well we hear and consequently the intelligibility of what we hear. Taking them individually, let's first look at how they impact our communications.

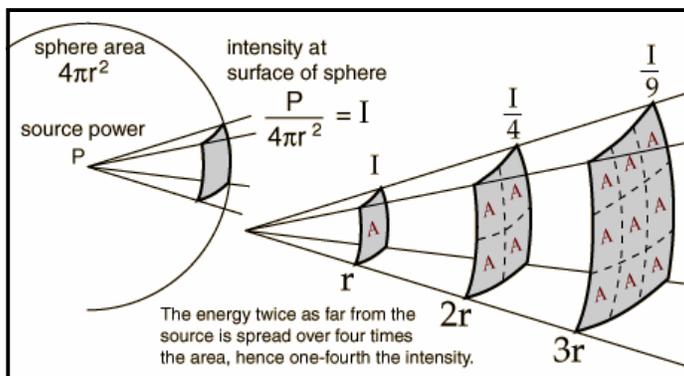
When someone speaks to us or we listen to the radio or television, the sound travels to our ears through the air. The sounds we hear are the vibrating molecules of the air we breathe. Sound cannot travel in a vacuum. Perhaps you remember the experiment we used to do in science class. An electric bell is placed under a bell jar and the air is pumped out creating a vacuum. When the vacuum

is created, we can no longer hear the bell ringing. Although air is the medium through which sound travels, it is far from perfect and this is true even if you are not disadvantaged with a hearing loss. Distance has a major impact on the sound we hear. This is because the intensity of sound varies inversely with the square of the distance from the sound. It means that with every doubling of the distance between us and the source of the sound, the intensity of the sound is reduced by a factor of four. As a hard of hearing person, a conversation is best when we are within two to four feet from the speaker.

Reverberation or echo is when sound bounces off hard surfaces and arrives at the listener's ears sometime after the original sound. Reverberation is measured in delay time and the longer the delay, the more difficult the listening situation becomes. A person with good hearing can still understand with delay times of up to 1 second or more, while a hard of hearing person will have great difficulty when delay time reaches 0.5 seconds. The competing echoes manifest as noise in the listener's ears. For example, try and carry on a conversation in a school gymnasium during a basketball or other sports game.

Background noise is probably the situation that most comes to mind when we talk about the difficulties we have as a hard of hearing person. Noise can come from many sources. It may be competing speech when more than one person is trying to speak at once or a radio or television playing in the background. It may be an air conditioner, traffic noise, water running, a vacuum cleaner or other machinery. The list is endless and let's face it, we live in a very noisy world today.

Fortunately, technology is all around us today and we no longer have to suffer in silence, so to speak. When we walk down the street or visit the malls, how many people do we see with things sticking in their ears? There are people listening to music with earphones, people talking on their cell phones with hands free devices, etc. With this technological paraphernalia all around us, we shouldn't be shy about improving our lives and the lives of those around us in a similar fashion.



For a person with hearing loss, a good hearing aid should be the first consideration. Louder is not necessarily better. It can help, but when noise and reverberation are also amplified it generally makes the situation worse. Today's modern digital hearing aids don't just amplify sound.

They are tiny computer devices capable of listening for us, processing the sound and delivering to our ears more of what we want to hear while helping to minimize the background noise we don't want to hear.

To combat the problems listed above, these modern digital hearing aids can be equipped with such features as directional microphones and digital noise reduction capability. These features both work independently to help us in noisy environments and digital hearing aids can be equipped with both.

Directional microphones are designed to pick up more sound from in front in contrast to an omnidirectional microphone which picks up sound from all around. The hearing aid wearer should be able to switch from one mode to the other since there are many situations where we need to be aware of the

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sound all around us. In carrying on a conversation one to one in a noisy location, the directional microphone will focus mainly on the person in front of us.

Digital noise reduction works in a different way to enhance the listener's comfort in noise. It accomplishes this by analyzing the nature of the sounds in our listening environment and amplifying the speech content more than what it perceives to be noise. Noise has certain characteristics different from speech, and as such can be processed differently in the digital circuitry of the hearing aid.

Another important feature in a hearing aid is a telecoil. Sometimes referred to as a T-switch, this is a small magnetic pickup coil inside the hearing aid that can be switched in to replace the microphone when talking on the telephone. This allows the hearing aid to receive the sound from the phone by magnetic induction. With the microphone off, background noise is reduced or eliminated for the listener. Since many public facilities are now equipped with induction loop systems, this feature can also be used to the listener's advantage in meetings and presentations taking place in these facilities. In this case the sound from the microphone being used by the presenter will deliver the sound clearly to the hearing aid wearer's ear without any background interference. Some hearing aids also feature an MT setting or program in which the sound is received through the telecoil while the microphone is still activated in order to hear others speaking close to the listener.

When hearing aids are no longer enough to fully satisfy the listener's needs, FM technology can be a real boon to the hard of hearing. Although FM systems have been available for a number of years now, recent advances in miniaturization have allowed the FM receiver to attach directly to behind-the-ear hearing aids, or in some models it is actually integrated right into the hearing aid. Hand held FM transmitters are used to transmit the voice directly to the wearer's hearing aid. These can be used in conversations in noisy environments like restaurants, meeting rooms, social gatherings, and while in the car or other transportation modes.

Some of the more sophisticated FM transmitters are also able to connect wirelessly to other electronic devices, such as, cell phones, home phones, stereo systems and television. If your hearing aid is not able to accommodate an FM receiver directly, there are neckloop FM receivers that can be used with telecoil

equipped hearing aids to the same advantage.

Pockettalkers are also useful devices for use in one-to-one conversations. These can be used with telecoil equipped hearing aids via a neckloop or with earphones or earbuds.

This is not an all encompassing list of the devices available today and you can find out more by attending our meetings. If you feel any of these would help to improve your situation, please speak to your audiologist or you can visit the Communications Aids Dept. of the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Vancouver. Help is near at hand. Go after it.

CHHA BC Booth at the 15th Annual Wellness Show

Once again this year, the North Shore Branch organized and helped to staff the CHHA BC booth at the 15th Annual Wellness Show at the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre on March 2nd through 4th.

It was a positive experience for all who took part and the volunteers answered many questions for those seeking answers on hearing loss and other vestibular disorders. This year, in addition to the CHHA BC, CHHA National, and local branch brochures we had information from the Vancouver Tinnitus & Hyperacusis Hearing and Speech Clinic (SoundidEARS), the BC Balance and Dizziness Disorders Society (BAD), and the Right to Quiet Society. We also handed out many copies of the CHHA Listen magazine and other brochures on protecting your hearing, hearing aids, assistive listening devices and cochlear implants.

Many of the enquirers at the booth were asking about hearing loss for themselves, but a large number asked on behalf of family members or friends with hearing loss. The most picked up brochure at the booth was the Tinnitus brochure from SoundidEARS. Many people stopped by and wanted to find answers to this common problem.

We would like to thank all of the willing volunteers who took time on their weekend to come down and spend a few hours at the booth. I am sure they would all agree with me that they not only dispensed information, but learned a great deal, as well. Thank You.

February Meeting

The Summerhill was the venue for our February 19th meeting. Twenty members and about eight visitors turned out on a rainy evening. Our program for the evening was a panel presentation using a format similar to our very popular "Sound Advice" meetings that take place on the first Friday of each month at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre.

With audience members dictating the issues discussed, Hugh Hetherington, Flo Spratt and Rick Waters facilitated the discussion to help provide answers to the issues brought forth during the discussion. Audience members were asked to tell about their hearing loss, how acquired, issues they faced day to day and/or how they dealt with these issues. Participation was good and later feedback from the attendees deemed the evening to be informative and enjoyable.

Topics discussed ranged from coping strategies through hearing aids and assistive devices. Since this type of discussion brings out the current issues people face, it is felt that we might use this format for at least one of our meetings each year. The meeting ended with a social and refreshments provided by member Marion Ladkin.

Portable MP3 causes hearing loss

Reprinted from the China Daily, Beijing , March 8, 2007

Health experts in Shanghai and Guangzhou warn that more young people face the risk of hearing loss due to excessive use of MP3s and Walkmans.

A survey of 1,800 young people by the Shanghai hearing science center showed that about 14 of them are suffering from loss of hearing.

Also, some primary school students are suffering from buzzing in their ears, a problem that afflicts only adults.

According to Wu Hao, a doctor at Shanghai Children's Medical Center, hearing damage among teenagers were mainly caused by drugs 20 years ago.

Hearing loss from over-exposure to noise happened mainly among workers in very noisy environments.

"Hearing loss from noise among teenagers was hardly seen at that time," he said. "Now it has become the most important reason for hearing loss among school students,

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

while drug-caused hearing damage is rarely seen now, as people learn more about side effects of some medicines."

Chi Fanglu, professor at the Ear Nose and Throat Hospital of Fudan University warned that listening to portable music players for long hours could result in more youngsters suffering hearing loss. "I could hardly do without my Ipod when I bought it," Wu Manqiao, a 24-year-old woman, said.

Exposed to noise above 90 decibels for two weeks consecutively could result in total deafness, Wang Zhengmin, another professor from the same hospital warned.

He said that young people who wear earplugs listening to MP3s or other portable music players face the risk of total deafness 30 years earlier than their parents' generation.

Many people turn up the volume on their portable players in public places. If it is more than 105 decibels it could cause permanent damage to hearing.

Experts suggest that people should not listen to a portable music player for more than an hour each day, and when they do, they should set the volume no more than 60 percent of its maximum.

In Guangzhou, the capital city of South China's Guangdong Province, the number of people who have hearing problems exceeds 140,000, accounting for 25 percent of the total number of people suffering from other ailments.

A hospital there recently conducted a survey among college students in the city and found that one-third of them have developed hearing problems.