



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

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September and December by CHHA – North Shore Branch,
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Editor: Hugh Hetherington Issue 92 March 2016

Mountain Ear

Pres Mez

By Mike Hocevar

I won't embarrass you by asking if you are keeping up with your New Year's resolutions. The good news is, that with the Chinese New Year starting as this is written, that you have a chance for another fresh start!

Also, this time of year is a chance for some reflection and renewal. How about some consideration for your personal safety at home as a person with hearing loss issues? We have in the past, provided advice and suggestions and a quick review of them can be useful. I would encourage you, as well as myself, to act on such matters.

Start with a bedside kit for a nighttime emergency. It is good to have your hearing aids handy along with your eyeglasses, if you wear them. Have a little bag with your identification, house keys, cell phone, a compact flashlight, and perhaps a whistle all within reach. A pair of slip on shoes and perhaps easy dress clothing like a housecoat, loose sweat shirt and pants would be quick to don. A button with the Hard of Hearing sign could be pinned on also.

That little earthquake we had in January should prompt us all to make up a home emergency kit that is handy to grab and run, as well as, for an up-to-72 hours-without water and power scenario type kit. These can be assembled yourself or by purchasing one commercially. Check the North Shore Emergency Management website www.nsemo.org and

check out local retail suppliers online.

Don't forget about our handy free Hospital Kit for any extended stay dealing with medical matters. These kits provide a sign to post indicating you are hard of hearing, a pen & notepad, and so important: a hearing aid storage kit with your identification. We have been told that hospitals are the worse place to lose your hearing aid. Do phone us if you or a hard

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April Presentation

**Monday, April 18, 2016 7:00 pm at the
Summerhill**

**135 West 15th Street, North Vancouver
Guest Speaker**

**Dan Paccioretti, M.Sc., Aud(C)
Western Canada Roger and
FM Sales Manager, Phonak Canada**

Topic:

**An Evening with Roger
A presentation on Phonak's
Roger Wireless Technology**

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Wheelchair and Hearing Accessible
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of hearing family member requires a Hospital Kit.

Some of you will recall our Summerhill presentation by Ted Clegg at ALDS (Assistive Listening Device Systems). He showed us an array of alerting devices designed for the hard of hearing. Home fire and smoke alarms especially are available and proven effective. Most of the devices offered by Ted's company are very pleasantly affordable. He can even provide you with a free customized list of products based on your personal home needs to ensure your safety and peace of mind for when you are both awake and asleep. Check ALDS out online www.alds.com or phone Ted at (604) 533-9884.

Another thing to consider this year is perhaps to take a speech-reading course. They are offered at the Vancouver Community College campus on Broadway. Your spouse or a family member can also participate in the eight week program. Former guest speaker and course instructor, Lisa Dillon Edgett says that if we can get enough interest from people, that a course can be offered here on the North Shore. We think it could easily work at the Delbrook Community Centre where we hold our board meetings. Please call us for more information if participating in a course is of interest to you.

Finally, in terms of the idea of a restart since it is the New Year, let's recall some of the things Dr. Glen Grigg shared with us at our 2015 Annual General Meeting when he spoke on, "The Science of Positive Aging." He advocated that you stay up to date with your hearing aids and assistive devices in order to participate in family and society in the most optimal way possible. That means you might want to think about scheduling to have an updated hearing test with your audiologist and to have your hearing aids examined and tweaked, if required. Glen also promoted the idea of trying out new things or activities to keep our minds sharp.

Think about your current listening experiences. What situations might require improvement that could be eased through the use of expert coping strategies? Flo Spratt has been teaching us these at our regular "Sound Advice" sessions at the West Vancouver Senior's Activity Centre. Flo also spoke about some of these at our Summerhill meeting on February 15th. See my report following in this newsletter. There are little things like knowing about room acoustics, room lighting so you can actually see the speaker, and many other useful aspects that

can be adjusted to your advantage. Flo says that the most important thing is to be assertive—to let others know our immediate needs. This facilitates a comfortable conversation. It also means you must show responsibility, in coaching your conversation partners as to what will work for you instead of just asking them to continually repeat the same thing over.

At the board meeting level, your CHHA – North Shore directors have recently applied to the municipalities for our annual grants. We have been looking at ways to reduce postage and telephone costs and note our membership is down slightly this year. If you are reading this newsletter and are not yet a member, think about the advantages of being a member and about the contribution you can make to the organization by sharing your knowledge and experience with others. Remember also that donations to the Branch are appreciated and are income tax deductible.

This year the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association National office is sponsoring and funding one delegate per branch to attend the annual conference to be held in Winnipeg in May. The board has assigned me to go. I have indicated to National that I want to see discussion about establishment and expansion of branches all over the country. We know here on the North Shore just how valuable it is to have CHHA in our community and wish the same for everywhere.

I'll close off with the mention of Shirley Friend's passing in early January following lengthy health issues. Along with her husband Bill of 62 years, Shirley was a frequent contributor at "Sound Advice" for many years and she will be missed. We extend our sincere condolences to Bill Friend who is one of our branch directors.

February Presentation

Report by Mike Hocevar

The Summerhill in North Vancouver was the February venue for an evening of Sound Advice. The recent decision by our Board to not bring out guest speakers in February when the weather can be unpredictable was certainly justified when the evening turned out to be like a wicked November night. In spite of this, 15 people turned out to hear Flo Spratt, our expert on coping strategies, and Hugh Hetherington, who keeps up to date on the latest hearing and assistive technology.

About half the attendees were at one of our presentations for the first time and the evening turned out to be very productive using an audience participation format to discuss many typical problems that affect hard of hearing people. Here are some of the questions and answers:

Noisy restaurants. Your table turns out to be in the middle of the room and sound is coming in from everywhere with lots of conversations going on at once. What to do? Here are some of the suggestions:

-If music is playing, you might ask to have the volume turned down.

-Have a buddy system to assist in keeping tab on the topics being discussed. Arrange this with someone beforehand, with a signal such as a light elbow tap for a prompt. A full blown recanting isn't required, just the main features of the subject, and your brain will help fit the pieces together.

-Be prepared to initiate a change of subject from time to time at appropriate occasions so that you have a bit of control over the conversation.

-Be assertive enough to seek a change of location for the table. Arrange your seat to be able to have your back to lighted windows and lighting in order to see people's faces clearly. Also, if you are against the wall it will help mitigate the amount of background noise you have being picked up by your hearing aids.

-In certain loud noise venues, it may be useful to request the person you are engaged with in a conversation to just postpone the dialogue till you can talk with them in a better environment later. Maybe you can pick it up later when the noise dies down sufficiently, or you are able to step aside to a quieter location. More often than not, they are having just as much an issue with the surrounding noise levels too.

-Be honest, know your limitations. Don't be embarrassed to tell others of your hearing difficulty in the situation, and suggest what works for you. For an example: if your hearing aid battery dies and you forgot to bring an extra with you, you might excuse the others from including you in the conversation to help mitigate the frustration. When asking someone to repeat something, don't lead him or her on to keep telling it to you in the same words while still not getting it. Be more assertive and coach them as to what you need. Suggestions might be, speak just a bit slower, look at you directly, use different words, etc. Instead of saying "Pardon" or similar requests that

imply a repeat, you might ask, "Did I hear you say _____?" or ask them to clarify something so you can pick up enough more information to understand.

What if the speaker's voice is too soft. Maybe the natural voice is a higher frequency than you can easily process or their speech volume is lower.

-Re-position yourself to see if that will resolve the matter. If you have better hearing in one ear, re-position yourself accordingly. Move closer to the person to see if that makes the difference needed. Be sure too that you can see their face clearly.

-Use of an external microphone could work. There are external clip-on microphones available with some hearing aids, and other similar devices using FM reception. These bring much more direct sound to your hearing aids. (In these newsletters and at past meetings we have shared information about the outstanding Phonak "Roger pen" device that has an extremely focused beam of sound catchment.) Costs for these devices can be an issue for some, but they come in many price ranges and it's best to share your own personal difficult hearing situations with your audiologist or practitioner to see what they might recommend. You may be able to get a trial period to see if the device works for you.

Telephones. A number of issues arise for hard of hearing people, indeed, even for those with "normal" hearing.

-Your hearing aid should have a telecoil program; most hearing aids are now so equipped but you need to ask your audiologist to have it activated through programming. Many newer hearing aids employ an ear-to-ear technology so that the sound picked up by one hearing aid is also transferred wirelessly to the other ear. This gives you binaural hearing on the telephone which can make a vast improvement in understanding voices. The telecoil also allows you to tap into a loop system in rooms so equipped, or even at the teller counters in some financial institutions like the Van City Credit Union.

-At your workplace, think of the problems you have with phone use. Perhaps a plan with co-workers can be arranged. Workplace phones may be positioned where there is background noise or the phone may not have a volume control. Perhaps you can ask your employer to provide a better phone with volume and ringer adjustments, or a better phone location. You

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also have to be cognizant about how you get a customer at the other end to repeat themselves in a way that you can understand.

-Answering machine messages are not always clear or loud enough. A couple of useful things are: to have call display for the opportunity to know who is calling and to be able to call back at least. A volume control on the phone to turn the sound up might be all that is necessary. On your “Please leave a message...” recording, you can ask the caller to speak clearly, slowly and say their name and phone number carefully, and even twice in order for you to know who is calling.

-Specialized phones for the hard of hearing are available in many models and price ranges. Some of the cell phones, the new so-called “smart phones” have useful apps that feature voice recognition, text, recorded call number display, and have “Bluetooth” technology that allows for the sound to go to your hearing aid directly. Everyone’s hearing loss is different, so it is useful to determine if a trial period or return policy is available to you.

The last part of the meeting was an around-the-room question & comment portion. One family of a Dad and two children came for the first time as the father had recently acquired a hearing aid. Flo remarked that they were very fortunate and smart, to take the issue on as a family to support each other. She shared how it worked in her family over the years, and that their support was critical in her decision to get a cochlear implant.

There were some couples and they had some different experiences. With one, the fellow has a hearing aid and it hasn’t always been perfect. The wife mentioned her frustration that for example, he couldn’t hear her from the next room and she thought, “having a hearing aid should have solved the problem”. This generated a rise from the audience, and she quickly added that she has since learned there are still some limitations!

Interestingly, the topic came up about how people with significant hearing loss often speak very loudly. This is natural because it can be difficult to regulate the volume of your own voice if you can’t hear it clearly. We hear our own voices differently from others. It is a combination of both air and bone conduction. Hearing aids will also make a difference in the volume of our voices.

Another couple talked about how they both are requiring hearing aids. The husband has his already and the wife feels she will be getting one but currently isn’t coping too badly. What they said worked was communication along with humour, not just for hearing but for their long and happy marriage.

One man mentioned that he was on a cruise a few years ago and found he was seated at a table of 12 for dinner. It just was not a good listening environment so they arranged for him to be seated at a table with a smaller group. Flo acknowledged this as a very good strategy. She said, one of the ways you can remain “in control” over your hearing environments is, for example, when inviting guests over for a dinner party, to keep the numbers limited. The result is more full, meaningful conversations that you are included in—and your dinner guests will also be provided that extra satisfaction level.

Other comments included dealing with foreign voices. Flo and Hugh said that our brains are accustomed to hearing pronunciations in certain ways and remember voices, even if you haven’t heard them in decades. So when you are regularly around someone with an accent, you tend to get used to understanding what they are saying, but if not, it can be a bit bewildering. If you are dealing with someone with an accent on the phone, and you can’t understand them well enough, you might ask to have someone at their end take over the call.

Flo stated that there are so many coping strategies she could have shared and that they would be there all night if she did. But the important thing she stressed is that we need to get into the mode of analyzing the different and, especially, difficult hearing environments (note, in couple situations it also requires “listening”!) to resolve and mitigate hard hearing situations. Our hearing needs have to be turned into hearing solutions.

This is what our Sound Advice program is all about. It is why we hold the first-Friday-of-the-month sessions at the West Vancouver Seniors Activity Centre. They are to help answer your questions about hard of hearing matters and especially for when you are getting your new hearing aid or a hearing aid for the first time. You need to be prepared to make your visits to an audiologist or practitioner as productive as possible and without fear and ignorance. And, of

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course, our Summerhill meetings throughout the year feature guest speakers to explain the psychology of hearing loss and tips to handle it in good mental health. Other speakers come to share the latest technological advances that might make a big difference for us. We as a branch feel strongly that our role is to educate you, the public and empower you to deal with your hearing loss with the right expectations and results. We'll look forward to seeing you at another future regularly scheduled event!

Gotta Love that iPhone (Part 6)

By Hugh Hetherington

In this issue I would like to talk about voice recognition and a couple of other interesting apps for the iPhone. Accurate voice recognition software has for a long time been on the wish list for many hard of hearing groups and individuals. There have always been many problems turning speech into text accurately, especially for group situations like meetings and presentations. Background noise, for one thing, has always been a significant problem. But beyond that there are the problems of different voice styles, foreign accents and, not insignificant, the complexities of the English language with its many homonyms, homophones and homographs.

To review these; homonyms can really be broken down into two categories: homophones, words that sound alike, are spelled differently and have different meanings like, "pear" and "pare". Homographs

on the other hand are words that are spelled the same, pronounced differently and with different meanings like, "lead" (to show the way) and "lead" (a heavy type of metal).

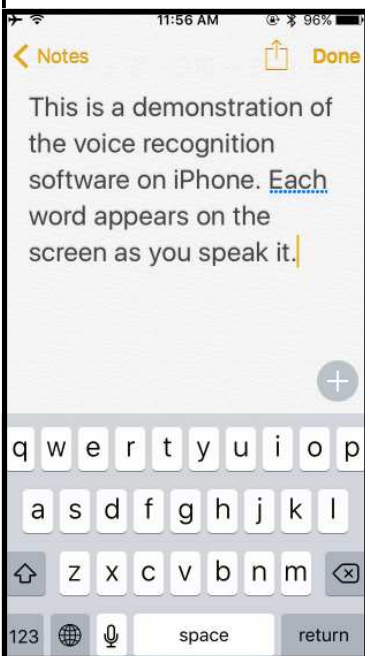
Personal dictation, on the other hand, seems to have made significant strides because it only has one voice to recognize and can be so trained. In addition, the complexities of the recognition software can be programmed to take

into account both grammar and context in making the conversion from voice to text. Accuracy is still not 100 percent but has reached a point where it can be extremely useful when used for personal dictation such as writing letters, composing emails and note taking. These types of transcriptions can be edited later to correct any errors.

I have been impressed with the dictation applications on the iPhone and iPad. This can be used for any of the above functions, but can also serve a purpose in some situations for the hard of hearing. For instance, you may be trying to communicate with a severely hard of hearing or deaf person. You can use your iPhone to dictate a sentence or phrase into an

app like NotePad or Pages. The text appears instantly on your screen to be read by the other person. You can also dictate into the Messages app and have your message appear on the screen of another device. I would also point out that since the introduction of the iPhone 6s, you no longer need an internet or data connection to use English dictation on your iPhone. This new phone actually downloads

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Hearing Aid Battery Recycling

Bring your used hearing aid batteries to our meetings and we will take care of recycling them for you

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

Rising Postage Costs

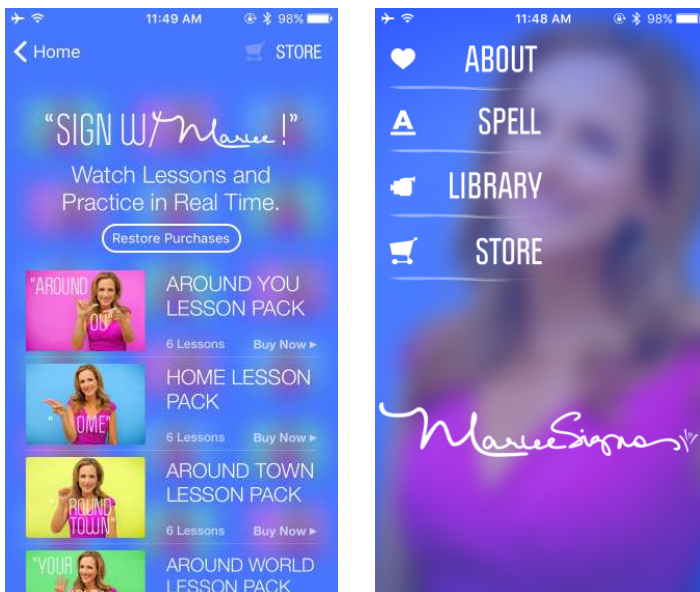
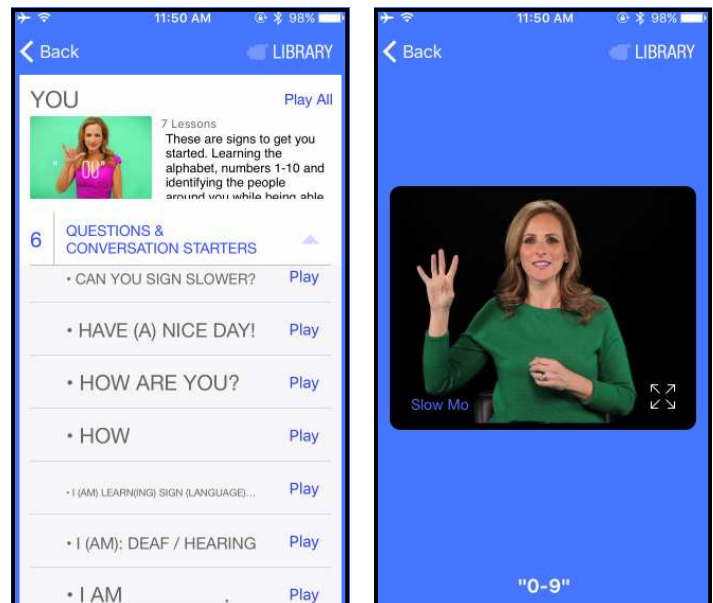
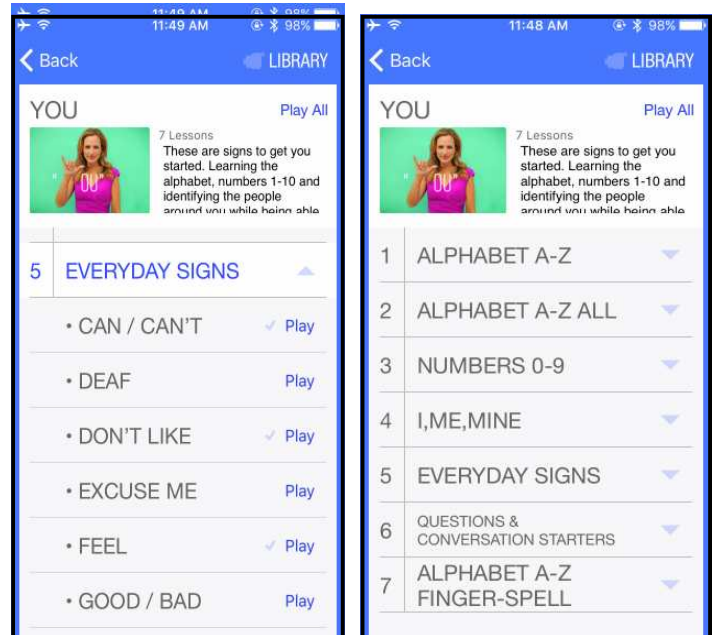
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the translation software right into the phone for use offline.

Taking it a bit farther, you don't even have to speak the same language as the person you are trying to communicate with. An app such as Microsoft's Translator will almost instantly convert your dictation into any number of foreign languages. Just imagine yourself in a foreign country asking for directions and not able to speak the language. You could dictate your question into your iPhone and have the translation appear on your screen for the person to read.

Another app that I would like to mention is called "Marlee Signs". This is an app to help you to study, practice or learn American Sign Language. Its claim is that it is the perfect app for learning to express yourself in ASL. It will teach you the fundamentals of ASL from the signed alphabet and basic vocabulary through to common expressions in everyday life. It employs high-quality video demonstration starring Marlee Matlin herself.

The lessons are broken down into individual videos to help you learn at your own pace. The first lesson pack is free, but further lesson packs, of which there are five, will cost you \$2.79 each.



CHHA—North Shore Branch Programs are funded in part by Municipal Community Grants from the City and District of North Vancouver and the District of West Vancouver.

T-coils and Telephones

By Neil Bauman, Ph.D.

A man explained, "while talking on the phone the other day, I accidentally turned on the T-coil program in my hearing aids and got a boost in volume and since the microphone was muted in that particular program, cut out the noise in the room. I also tried this with my iPhone with similar success. I didn't know about this."

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I have tried to figure out why this works and can only think that since most speakers use some form of a magnetic medium to move the “cone”, so to speak, that that magnetic field wakes up the T-coil in my hearing aids. Or something like that. So my question is this: Why does this work? Once again no audiologist ever mentioned such a phenomenon to me.

Unfortunately, the benefits of T-coils are still a well-kept secret today. Although audiologists know about t-coils and telephones, few ever seem to mention them. Fortunately, that is now slowly changing.

T-coils have been around for a long time now. Would you be surprised to know that the first hearing aid to have a T-coil was 77 years ago--way back in 1938!

Did you know that T-coils were actually invented for the express purpose of helping hard of hearing people hear better when using the telephone? In fact, the “T” in T-coil stands for “telephone”. “tele-coil” or more commonly just “T-coil”.

In the days before digital hearing aids, it was often referred to as a “T-switch” as there was a switch on hearing aids back then often labeled “O”, “M”, “T” for “Off”, “Microphone” and “T-coil” respectively. You flipped the switch to the “T” position to activate the T-coil when you wanted to make a phone call.

You are correct in understanding how T-coils work. Originally telephone earpieces were small loudspeakers. The voice coil moving past the stationary permanent magnet created a varying magnetic field that the T-coil picked up. (If you know how a transformer works, you can think of the T-coil and the voice coil in the telephone handset as the two parts of a transformer, separated by an air core.)

Essentially, when current flows through a wire it creates a magnetic field. An equal and opposite current is induced into any other wire within this magnetic field. That’s how the telephone transfers the sound signal to your T-coil wirelessly.

All was well for a number of years. Then the phone manufacturers wanted to make phones smaller and lighter and less power hungry. (This is especially true in cell phones.) Thus, they embraced a new technology--the piezoelectric crystal. When current flows through a piezoelectric crystal, it caused the crystal to vibrate in unison to the varying voltage. These vibrations push the air molecules and produce the

sound waves you hear in the earpiece.

Unfortunately, by doing away with the voice coil in the phone’s earpiece, the magnetic field generated now was so small that T-coils couldn’t pick it up. Thus the T-coils in hearing aids were useless for use on the phone.

Things would have stayed this way if hard of hearing organizations such as the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) hadn’t petitioned the FCC to require phones to be hearing-aid compatible—meaning that hard of hearing people could once again use their T-coils to hear on the phone.

Eventually the FCC made it a requirement that a certain percentage of the models each phone company carried needed to be T-coil compatible. This percentage is slowly being increased to 100% so eventually, we will be able to hear on any phone via our T-coils.

In order to make modern phones T-coil compatible, phone manufacturers didn’t go back to using miniature speakers containing voice coils. Instead, they just added a corresponding coil in the phone’s ear piece to create the required magnetic field.

Thus, today you should be able to use your T-coils with most phones, whether they are landline, cordless or cell.

However, there is still a problem with T-coil use. You see, T-coil technology is very directional. It’s just one of the laws of physics. This means that in order to transfer a good signal, both the coil in the phone and the T-coil in your hearing aid need to be in the same plane. Since the speaker voice-coil in early phones had to be horizontal, T-coils in hearing aids were horizontal too.

This was (and still is) fine for phone use, but T-coils are useful in many other situations including counter and room loops. The problem is that room loops need to be oriented vertically, and horizontally-oriented T-coils do not pick up a useful signal from vertical room loops.

Some hearing aid manufacturers decided to mount the T-coils at a 45 degree angle. This only reduces the signal by 3 dB (not enough to worry about) so it appeared to be a good solution, but in retrospect, it just introduced a host of other problems related to directionality.

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For example, depending on which way the T-coil was aimed at the 45 degree angle inside your hearing aid (i.e. front to back as opposed to side to side), when using a room loop, you might have to face the wall in order to hear the speaker at the front. (And it's decidedly difficult to speechread someone when you are facing the wall!).

The solution to this is to mount all T-coils vertically, and to mount all corresponding coils in phones vertically. Then T-coils could be used effectively on phones AND in looped venues without directionality problems.

Why don't they do this? As I see it, the phone companies have ALWAYS mounted their coils horizontally and don't seem to want to change--even though there is no reason to mount these coils horizontally since they don't use miniature loudspeakers anymore.

It is up to all of us hard of hearing people to advocate for vertically-mounted T-coils in hearing aids, AND vertically-oriented corresponding coils in all phones so we can have barrier-free communication, which is only fair and right.

Reprinted with permission. The permanent link for this article is on the Center's website at:

<http://hearinglosshelp.com/blog/t-coils-and-telephones/>

Neil Bauman, Ph.D. is a hearing loss coping skills expert and runs a Hearing Loss Help Website at:

www.hearinglosshelp.com

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

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



CANADIAN HARD OF HEARING ASSOCIATION

NORTH SHORE BRANCH

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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Attention: Treasurer

600 West Queens Road

North Vancouver, B.C.

V7N 2L3

Cheque enclosed

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BN 89672 3038 RR0001

I wish to support the aims of CHHA and the North Shore Branch and enclose my \$40.00 annual membership fee. (National \$30.00, Branch \$10.00). Membership is paid annually from 1 October to 30 September.