



# Mountain Ear

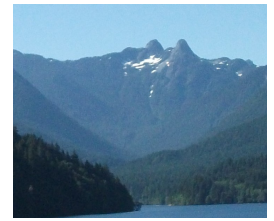
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by **The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association North Shore Branch**  
Address: Lonsdale East P.O. Box 54137, North Vancouver, BC, V7M 2H0  
email: [chhansb475@gmail.com](mailto:chhansb475@gmail.com) website: <https://www.chha-nsb.com>

Tel: 604-926-5222

Charitable Registration No. 89672 3038 RR0001

Editors: Hugh Hetherington and Susan Gelinias

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## From the Desk of the President

*by Hugh Hetherington*

As we are now well into the new year and looking forward to an early Spring, I am happy to report that our North Shore Branch flagship program “Sound Advice” has been going well. As reported in our December Mountain Ear, our in-person and Zoom sessions have been well attended. We’ve structured these meetings to cover all bases with one monthly in-person meeting at Silver Harbour in North Vancouver on the last Monday of the month and one monthly hybrid (in-person and Zoom) meeting on the first Friday of the month at the Seniors’ Centre in West Vancouver. I would like to stress that even though these meetings are held in seniors’ centres they are open to adults of any age. We also host two other Sound Advice evening meetings on Zoom, one in November and one in February. These are to accommodate those who are unable to attend the daytime meetings because of work schedules or do not live close to one on the centres. See ad on page 6 of this newsletter.

The other three evening meetings we hold are in April, June and September, our AGM. At these meetings we invite guest speakers to talk to us about different hearing loss subjects. All evening meetings generally take place at 7:00 PM Pacific Time.

I would also like to draw your attention to other programs run by other entities that may be of interest to you depending on your circumstances.

Rick Waters and Bowen Tang in Vancouver run a peer support group for cochlear implant recipients or for those who are looking into receiving a cochlear implant. They hold meetings, some in-person and some on Zoom each month of the year except July and August. They send out monthly notices for the meetings. To get on their mailing

list for announcements please email Rick at [rwmgtc@gmail.com](mailto:rwmgtc@gmail.com).

Ken Jones runs a monthly support group for those with tinnitus. The meetings take place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month except in July and August. To obtain information you can contact Ken at [kenjones@gmail.com](mailto:kenjones@gmail.com) or phone 604-535-2204. Ken suggests a good website to visit is [www.ata.org](http://www.ata.org), the American Tinnitus Association. This website contains valuable information on your journey to seek help. You can also read a transcript of an interview that Ken Jones had on CBCs “The Current” with Matt Galloway on January 29<sup>th</sup> 2024. The easiest way to find it is with a Google search for “CBC the current January 29 2024”.

CHHA National also have mentorship programs. These are for people who experience hearing loss and often face emotional and practical challenges that affect their relationships, work and daily activities. The program is no cost and can connect you with a personal mentor who has been in your shoes to help you learn new skills and manage your hearing loss in everyday life. You can find all about this program by going to the website [www.chha.ca](http://www.chha.ca) and look under “Programs and Projects” for “Mentorship Program.”

CHHA National have also now initiated a group mentoring program called New Horizons Group Mentoring Framework. To find out more information about this program please send an email to Anne Marie Langlois, Manager Programs & Services, Employment and Accessibility at [alanglois@chha.ca](mailto:alanglois@chha.ca). The info does not appear to be on their website yet but I believe it should be soon.

Whatever your issue, you should find the answer in one of the programs above.

Till next time, Hugh Hetherington.

**CHHA-NSB**  
**Evening Meeting**  
**Monday, April 15, 2024**  
**7:00 pm via Zoom**

**Guest Speaker:**

**Dan Paccioretti, MSc, Aud (C)**

**Topic:**

**“Remote Microphones – What are They and Why Should I Care?”**

The meeting is open to the public and there are no restrictions on the number of people who attend.

The meeting is expected to last one hour: a presentation followed by questions & discussion.

For **information** call: 604-926-5222

To **request** an invitation to join this Zoom meeting, please email:

[chhansb475@gmail.com](mailto:chhansb475@gmail.com)

**Coping and Rehabbing**

*by Rick Waters*

**I feel alone when I'm in a crowd:**

If you have hearing loss, that's a common feeling. And, as you're probably aware, Helen Keller, who was both deaf and blind said it perfectly: “Blindness cuts you off from things, deafness cuts you off from people.”

With normal hearing, we are bombarded with all the sounds of our world. Traffic, wind, aircraft, crowd noise, and of course, all the voices around us. But our brains are amazingly adaptable, and soon learn to “tune out” the

sounds we do not need to hear. In the city, we are surrounded by traffic noise, but soon learn to tune out that noise so that we only hear what we need or want to hear, such as an emergency vehicle siren, or the voice of the person with whom we are walking or driving. And, that works for us in social settings, where we learn to tune out all the voices around us save the one we want to hear.

But, as hearing loss progresses, we lose that ability to “tune in” to the voice we want to hear, and instead, perceive a jumble of sound. And this leads to isolation. I am assuming that this is because our brains no longer have the information that they need to discriminate and pick out the particular voice we need. As time goes on, our brains seem to lose their ability to pick out the sounds we need, and tune the rest out.

Many think that being fitted with a hearing aid, or receiving a cochlear implant will restore our ability to tune out the “jumble” and focus on the sounds we want.

Not so fast!

Recall that the brain has to learn how to do that, how to tune out the unwanted sounds. And that is, in my opinion, the crux of the rehabilitation problem.

Unless you were smart or informed enough to obtain your first hearing aids before your hearing loss progressed, your brain now needs to re-learn how to tune out the unwanted sounds. If you had severe hearing loss before receiving hearing instruments, that means a period of hearing rehabilitation will be needed, and remember, by the time you get those hearing instruments, that brain of yours is older, and may not be able to learn how to do that tuning out as quickly as it did when you were young.

But, fortunately, most of us have had to learn some coping strategies to deal with our hearing loss, and it just so happens that those coping strategies are well-suited to the rehabilitation process. Let's just quickly review those coping strategies.

**When you are talking one-to-one:**

You've probably heard these coping strategies for conversations before, but they are worth repeating: Face the person to whom you are speaking. Arrange the conversation so that the person to whom you are speaking is not in front of a window or other bright light, as this makes it difficult to see their face clearly, and to

speechread them.

Practice self-advocacy. Let the other person know that you have difficulty hearing, but that you do want to hear what they have to say. Ask them to face you, to get your attention first, and to speak slowly and clearly. Let them know that shouting is not the answer, because it isn't.

Try to have the conversation in a space that is quiet, and free from noisy interruptions.

### **When you are at home:**

Making simple changes to your home can make your life, and the lives of those around you, much easier. These changes reduce noise pollution, and echos, both of which make it difficult to hear conversation, the TV, or anything else for that matter.

Start with sources of noise. Buy quiet appliances and fans. Check Consumer Reports to find which are quiet. Make a space in your home, such as a den or conversation room, that does not have a lot of traffic, that can be closed off from the rest of the house. This is where you can have those conversations, and enjoy them.

When it's time to renovate your space, we all know that hardwood floors and tile floors are great style pieces, but they are very poor choices if acoustics are taken into consideration. So, you can have it all! Just choose some attractive area rugs to cover those floors, and you'll make the rooms much easier places in which to hear.

And while we're on the subject of renovations, doing a kitchen reno gives you the chance to put in soft-close doors and drawers, which close without making a sudden noise. Did you know that when you are trying to hear conversation, the first syllable or two are critical. If you miss those sounds, you will struggle to understand what's being said. If that noisy cupboard door drowns out those first syllables, it makes it very, very difficult to be part of the conversation.

I'm sure you can think of other ways to eliminate noise and echos in your house, but I do want to mention that if there are other folks in the household, a separate room for the television, a room with a door that closes, can make the rest of the house much more hearing friendly.

### **When you are at a restaurant:**

There's no denying that our social lives often revolve around food. There's also no denying that restaurants

today are very noisy. The combination of trendy decor (read hard surfaces), loud background music, a noisy kitchen, often right in the dining area, and loads of fellow diners all trying to be heard above the din make this a very challenging environment for those of us with a hearing challenge.

I suppose the first thing you can do is to compile a mental list of establishments that are quieter than the majority. Try to steer the party to one of those quiet places. In the restaurant, try to choose a table in a quiet spot, away from the kitchen and the bar, and, if possible, away from the music speakers. It doesn't hurt to ask the server to turn down the sound system.

Next, choose your spot at the table to your best advantage: facing into the group, probably facing away from the kitchen and bar. Be your own advocate: tell the rest of the dining party that you'd really like to be part of the conversation, and could they try to remember to include you in the conversation, facing you, and speaking clearly. I bet many of them appreciate that you want to hear what they have to say.

### **Out for entertainment:**

Musicals are easier to enjoy than dramas and comedies. (not as much dialogue to follow). Movie theatres often have assistive systems. Phone ahead. Tell them about your needs. And, choose a movie that is easy to follow, with musicals probably top of the list.

When you've done the rehabilitation, and that could take some time, you may no longer feel alone when you are in a crowd. ■

### **Assistive Listening over WiFi**

*by Hugh Hetherington*

For many years the gold standard for assistive listening in houses of worship, meeting rooms, etc. has been inductive hearing loops and still is. Anyone with telecoil equipped hearing aids can take advantage of the system by just switching their hearing aids to their telecoil program and hear direct sound through their hearing aids. Other systems are also available, such as, FM and infrared systems. The disadvantage of these other systems over loop systems is that you have to own or borrow a device to receive the signal and deliver it to you through headphones or earbuds. Often these devices don't work because of dead batteries, lack of

maintenance or people are just reluctant to use them because of health reasons by being used by other people before them.

There is a WiFi system on the market called AudioFetch. ([www.audiofetch.com](http://www.audiofetch.com)) It can be connected to a microphone or sound system and generates a local WiFi signal that can be accessed by your Smartphone and streamed directly to your hearing aids or through your connected earbuds. This will give you high quality sound although with a slight amount of latency (delay) which is probably why it hasn't been taken too seriously by those with hearing loss in the past. And, in addition if you enable live captioning on your Smartphone you are also able to read the text on your Smartphone screen. In a meeting room its like having a loop system in the palm of your hand that can be accessed by anyone in the meeting room who has a Smartphone.

If you were sitting in a looped venue and someone next to you was listening through their telecoil and getting clear sound, wouldn't you, not having a telecoil, like to be able to get the same clear sound and/or real time captions through your Smartphone? This WiFi system can make the difference between hearing and not hearing. Once live captioning is turned on, it can also be used for any incoming speech including phone calls. It leaves a small moveable icon on your screen that can quickly activate captions at anytime. I find this especially useful on those phone calls where you get requested to press 1 for this selection or press 2 for another selection, etc..

The system is very cost effective at \$549 (US) with no other usage costs and a free app that can be downloaded to your iPhone or Android cell phone. It can be used in parallel with an existing loop system or as a completely stand alone system where it is not possible to install a loop system or where it would be too costly to do so. This virtually can give everyone with a Smartphone access to a personal assistive group listening system.

The system is very small, about the size of a walkie talkie and can be carried from room to room. In other words it can turn any room, such as, a meeting room into the equivalent of a looped venue for anyone with a Smartphone. It has multiple inputs including a microphone or line input from an existing sound system. The input can either be analog or digital audio. It can also be connected to an existing WiFi network to

broaden its coverage. Depending on its use it comes in various sizes from a small home system to a large sports bar system with up to 64 inputs. The AudioFetch Express has 2 inputs and can be used in a house of worship and serve up to 100 people. The smaller home version of the system is called AudioFetch Home at \$229 (US) that can accommodate up to 4 people.

The sound quality is excellent and can be adjusted to your own preference. The Smartphone captions are also very accurate and can be adjusted to displaying two or three lines or filling the full screen. The system has been available since about 2017 but seems to have gone largely unnoticed by the hearing loss community. It has been largely employed in venues, such as airports, sports bars and restaurants where they might have multiple television sets around the wall displaying different channels. With AudioFetch you are able to tune in to whichever TV screen you want to watch. It can also be used by tour guides in many types of venues, indoors or outdoors. The field seems endless. It could also be used to provide workplace accommodation for a hard of hearing employee or employees who are required to attend meetings but have difficulty hearing in group settings. Hard of hearing groups could also use it to provide hearing assistance for member, board meetings and the like where a loop system is unavailable.■

### **Travelling with Hearing Loss**

*by Susan Gelinas*

With the hope that Covid-19 is behind us comes the feeling that we should get on with our lives. For some people that means travelling. Travelling requires planning and often comes with a great deal of stress. For the hard of hearing person, there are the extra worries: what if I can't hear? What do I do if something happens to my hearing aids? Here are some hints recent travellers have told me.

Tell people that you have a hearing loss. Staff on trains, ferries, airlines, and public venues are trained to help you get the best experience. Hearing loss is an invisible disability. Self identifying yourself as such is one of the hardest things to do but you have to tell people so that they can "see" you. You can also get stickers that show that hard of hearing symbol, as well as buttons that you can pin on your lapel. There are lanyards that have the



hard of hearing symbol on them.

You can book your airline ticket as a person with a handicap and airline staff will be there to assist you to the gate and with pre-boarding. Otherwise, when you check in at the airport, tell the staff that you have a hearing loss and tell them what you need. Ask what services are available to you. Also tell the security staff so that they know to look at you to give you instructions. We don't want you being whisked away to secondary because you misheard instructions. Speak to the staff person at the departure lounge. Sit where you can see the departure gate and information.

BC Ferries currently has 7<sup>+</sup> ferries equipped with a loop system to help people hear announcements. Visit their site to find other helpful suggestions.

<https://www.bcferries.com/accessibility#>:

I also found the Chief Steward helpful.

Learn how to use your gadgets before you travel. Take those gadgets with you. Include your remote control, your RogerPen or RogerSelect, your Remote mics, any accessory that keeps you connected to the world around you. If you have a Smartphone, check what apps you can download to maximize connectivity. When you go on a tour, check with the tour guide about connectivity to your or his/her mic. Be careful that you get your mic back.

Take all your supplies with you: batteries (lots of them) or battery charger, wax guards, cleaning supplies, a Dry Aid Kit, a small flashlight and a magnifier (if you drop your hearing aids). Organize them before you pack. Have a main supply that you keep at your accommodation and a mini-supply so that you keep some always with you. Zippered pouches are great to use. A small one in a purse or in backpack or secure pocket as you go from venue to venue would be handy and you won't lose the supplies if you are distracted in an unfamiliar environment. I always have batteries and wax guards with me even on a walk— it is too stressful to me not to hear. Check regulations: battery chargers must be in carry-on luggage not checked baggage because of the lithium battery. You'll need a universal adaptor if you are going to a foreign country. Someone I know travels with his own power bar to plug in all his devices.

Get in the habit of checking to see if your hearing aids are in your ears when you put on or take off your reading

glasses, ditto for your sunglasses, as well as your mask. If you are playing tourist, you often go from outside to inside, or you stop to read something or you have to put on a mask when you didn't expect to.

Before you leave home, let your audiologist know and hatch a plan of how to get in touch if something goes wrong with your hearing aids: phone, email, WhatsApp, etc.. Some companies might have a local office that you can use.

Keep in mind that you want to enjoy your trip. ■

### **Laugh at Yourself—It Sure Beats the Alternative**

*by Neil Bauman, Ph.D.*

*Published with the author's permission from his blog at [hearinglosshelp.com](http://hearinglosshelp.com)*

Tammy, a hard of hearing lady, explained, “In spite of the many hardships I've experienced from my progressive hearing loss, I am by nature an optimist and always try to see the silver-lining and humour in situations. I have had countless opportunities to laugh at myself over misunderstood conversations, misheard words, etc.. Over the years of living with hearing loss and tinnitus I have developed a light-hearted list. I think you may appreciate it.

#### 10 REASONS TO LOVE YOUR HEARING LOSS

1. You don't hear mosquitoes buzzing.
2. You have a legitimate excuse not to listen to annoying people.
3. You don't have to sit for jury duty (been there, done that).
4. You don't have to participate in phone surveys.
5. You truly believe you are a genius who has all the answers (not realizing that someone else has just said the same thing).
6. Life is full of surprises—when you finally clue in to something everyone else has known for awhile (i.e. your colleague is pregnant).
7. You don't hear your partner snore.
8. You laugh twice at every joke. The first time when everyone else is laughing. The second time when you finally hear the joke.

9. Your hearing aids prevent earaches when the cold wind is blowing.

10. You always have the last word in an argument (at least, that's what you believe).

You're right Tammy, I love this list. Thanks for sending it. ■

### **Living Successfully with Hearing Loss**

*by Lisa Dillon Edgett*

The Living Successfully with Hearing Loss course continues to provide education, skills, and support for adults with hearing loss and their communication partners. This course is offered through Vancouver Community College both online and in person, often with afternoon and evening sessions. If you would like to know more or find out when the next sessions will be held, please contact the instructor, Lisa at [ldillonedgett@vcc.ca](mailto:ldillonedgett@vcc.ca). Find out more here: <https://www.vcc.ca/courses/dhhe-0618/>

Feedback from students:

"Going on the hearing loss journey alone is a choice, and not a good one. There's real value in sharing the journey, experiences and lessons learned with others."

"Knowing specific things that impact my ability to hear such as the environment have allowed for me to be assertive in making my needs known. previously, my biggest struggle was not knowing what I needed. Others are willing to help, but I need to figure out what is helpful to me first. This class was exactly what I need to move forward in my self advocating and create environments that are sustainable for me."

"The single most important thing that I learned was there is absolutely no better way to learn (especially in a couple's situation) than having a skilled instructor with a well honed curriculum and materials – guide a complex process to extend concepts and actually act as a catalyst for behavioural change."

Please contact me to find out more:

Lisa Dillon Edgett, Ph.D., RAUD, Aud(C)

[ldillonedgett@vcc.ca](mailto:ldillonedgett@vcc.ca)

604-871-7348

## **Sound Advice**

Presented by:

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association  
North Shore Branch

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

Subjects to be addressed include:

Technology;  
Speech Reading;  
Coping Strategies;  
Improving Hearing Environments

We have 2 locations:

**West Vancouver Seniors' Centre** at 695 21<sup>st</sup> St, West Vancouver. These sessions will be held as **Hybrid** meetings to accommodate both in-person and Zoom attendees on the first Friday of each month at 10am.

In-person attendees must register at the front desk of the centre or by phone at 604-925-7280

To receive an invitation to join the Zoom meetings, please send an email to [chhansb475@gmail.com](mailto:chhansb475@gmail.com) to be added to the list.

**Silver Harbour sessions** at 144 East 22<sup>nd</sup> St, North Vancouver. These sessions will be held as **in-person** meetings on the last Monday of each month at 10am.

There are no meetings in July & August

For Information call:

604-926-5222

We look forward to seeing you.

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.