



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 website: <https://www.chha-nsb.com>

Tel: 604-926-5222

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Editors: Hugh Hetherington and Susan Gelinias

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Message from the Acting President

By Hugh Hetherington

Once again we are approaching another year's end. This year went by so quickly that I can hardly believe it happened at all. Changes have taken place in the North Shore Branch. At our AGM in September there were some changes to our Board. Alan Dion has stepped down from the president's job due to health and personal reasons. However, he is remaining on the Board as a director and past president. Ruth Lapointe has left the Board after a long absence after suffering from a stroke some time ago. We have added a new Board member, Dr. Ping Lau who is replacing Ruth. The remaining Board members, I am taking on the role of Acting President for the moment, as well as, continuing as Treasurer, Doug Muir, director and recording secretary, Susan Gelinias, director and website coordinator, Deborah Maloon and Ron Chapman, directors.

When Covid-19 came upon us in 2020, we were forced to rethink our programs and everything went online and has remained there for the past two years. In some ways it was a good change as it expanded our reach to people in distant places who were able to join in our meetings on Zoom. This kept our monthly "Sound Advice" sessions healthy with good attendance each month over the two years. On the downside there were still North Shore people who were unable to use Zoom and they have been left out in the cold so to speak. Going back fully to in-person sessions would not necessarily be a total option right now as we would leave out those who have come to rely on our Zoom sessions. We have, therefore, chosen to adopt a hybrid solution with one in person and one Zoom session of our "Sound Advice" each month.

The first Friday West Vancouver session each month will be held online and the last Monday will be held in-person at Silver Harbour Seniors' Centre. The first session on the last Monday in September was well attended with 12 people taking part.

The evening Summerhill guest speaker meetings will continue to be held online for the present time. This may change in the future, but for now it is easier to obtain speakers for each meeting as they don't have to travel to the North Shore to engage with us. This is beneficial during the winter season.

I also want stress that our CHHA North Shore Branch is here to help people with hearing loss.

We have a website: www.chha-nsb.com and that there is a lot of information there available 24/7. We also have a new email address: chhansb475@gmail.com You can call us on the phone at: 604-926-5222 with questions. Our newsletter is continuing to be published four times a year in March, June, September and December. We would like to hear from you. If you find or would like to write an interesting article that we can publish, we look forward to hearing from you. If you know of anyone who would benefit from receiving our newsletter or attending our meetings, please ask them to contact us and we will be glad to add them to our mailing lists.

All the best for now,

Hugh



Happy Holidays!
Enjoy the traditions of the season. Be
safe, warm, & cozy.

Summerhill September Presentation Recap

By Hugh Hetherington

Following our AGM in September, the attendees were treated to a presentation from Gael Hannan, Author of her new book co-written with Sheri Eberts, “**Hear and Beyond – Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss**”. Gael began her presentation by thanking us for inviting to speak and for being a going concern in our community and a part of the CHHA National and BC family. Gael’s talk was about “**Getting Better at Hearing Loss**”. She stated that just because we have had a hearing loss for a long time doesn’t necessarily mean that we’re good at it. Gael has lived with a hearing loss for most of her life and admits that she sometimes breaks her own rules, the ones she has written about in her book. In writing the book, her goal was to bring things back to the basics, what do we need to do to live well with our hearing loss. It was a book that she and Sheri Eberts wrote during the pandemic, and it was about something they didn’t have and could have used growing up with hearing loss.

Gael mentioned that they didn’t use the term skillfully lightly. As two women with hearing loss they had to learn the hard way and that there is an easier way. We can take charge and be in control of our hearing journey. In other words, not just be bystanders but full, active participants who deserve to hear and be heard. They believe that a skill based approach will help any person with hearing loss, regardless of how long they have had it.

The philosophy expressed in their book and in this presentation is not solely based on their personal experiences, but also on those thousands of other people like them. It is backed up by hearing science and incorporates modern hearing care principles, such as, person-centred care.

In writing the book together, they found through trial and error and through meeting and learning from other people, that they each found a similar set of skills and strategies that helped them live well. The important thing is to practice them. They discovered that when they shifted their goal from “hearing better” to “communicating better”, that is what made all the difference.

In talking about staying sane in crazy times, Gael stated that life had changed a lot in the past couple of years. The pandemic, social isolation, climate change, and

ramped up politics affected us all in many ways, both good and bad, not the least being communication. For example, trying to hear through masks was one of the bad things, but moving to communicating virtually had its good side.

In each of our lives there are a lot of communication challenges:

- Stress and exhaustion
- Too much noise
- Not enough light
- No text interpretation
- Seating arrangements don’t work
- We don’t know how to change things
- We don’t know how to express our needs

Hearing aids are modern miracles. Science is making our lives easier by giving us back sound, or giving it to us for the first time. But hearing aids are not like eyeglasses—they don’t give us perfect hearing and understanding. We need the bigger picture about hearing loss that tells us the possible stages of the hearing loss journey and what to expect. We also need a full spectrum of strategies that will help us communicate better. We need emotional assurance that we are not alone in our journey. Your hearing care partner is the one who needs to work with you on this and we need to be a partner.

Gael talked about what she termed “The Three-Legged Stool”. There are three broad skill sets needed. This is the three-legged stool of communication. The stool never wobbles, even on uneven ground. It’s a solid foundation for our communication. The legs are Mindshifts, Technology and Communication Game changers. Each of these three skill sets is an important component of communication, but together they make magic happen, The place to start is with Mindshift. In quoting from her book “I have the potential to change my journey. The person with the most power in my hearing loss success is me”.

We need to look at hearing loss in a new way. Our attitudes towards hearing loss affect our emotions and our behaviours. This powerful statement means that life with hearing loss can be different—better—just by changing our attitudes. Better attitudes help us create better conversations because we are willing to ask for

the assistance we need. They can also help with our technology because we are more open to experimentation and change. In summary, better attitudes turn into better communications. Transformed attitudes can help you:

- Take charge of your own success
- Try new tools
- Be more assertive in having your needs met
- Improve your working relationship with your hearing care partner

Some other thoughts on attitude that need to be considered:

- Why me?
- Nobody understands what I am going through.
- I want to hear better, the way I used to hear.
- I don't like to advertise my hearing loss. People will think I am old or slow.
- My family and friends always forget about my hearing loss.
- Hearing aids are ugly, expensive, and don't always work.
- I don't want to bother anybody with my hearing loss needs.
- Who would want to hire me? Or love me? Or be my friend?
- I get angry at myself and others when we make communication mistakes.
- Everywhere I go there is no access for people with hearing loss.

If you recognize yourself in any of these statements, realize that these limit us. When we can shift from one of these attitudes to a more positive and actionable statement, this is a mindshift.

Mindshifts are not cures for hearing loss, but when we actively support our hearing aids with other strategies, including an improved emotional attitude, we can communicate better.

Technology helps us to plug into better hearing. Again, quoting from Gael's book, "Technology is my friend. My devices let me hear sounds I had forgotten or had

never heard before. They connect me to other people" and "I want to communicate better, and it takes more than technology to do this. I must use softer skills too." Be honest and tell People. Gael stated that she couldn't emphasize enough how important this is. Hiding that you are having difficulty, will just get you into more trouble, more isolation and more feeling of being out of it. She didn't care how you self-identified, Hard of Hearing, have hearing loss, deaf, or Deaf. Gael suggests you do what she does, call yourself a HoH. Put a label on yourself.

It's also important to know what you need and to ask for it. The important thing is to understand and believe you have the right to participate, to hear and be heard. Practice effective two-way communication strategies. Be assertive in expressing your needs, and practice.

In talking about bluffing Gael suggested that if we are not mentally present, we isolate our self through bluffing. There are some tactics you can use to stay connected:

- Be open about your needs
- Change the environment
- Verify and clarify
- Use speech to text technology
- Keep up with the topic: have people signal topic changes
- Be aware of our bluff patterns
- Anticipate barriers
- Make family and friends our partners in helping us kick the habit
- Find the courage to say "I'm not following"

Final slides included practising self-care, eating healthy, exercise, reducing stress and practising gratitude. Think about even just one thing you are grateful for about your hearing loss. When in unfamiliar places or venues, pick your seat, check line of sight to speakers, reduce background noise, sit back to wall to reduce noise, move away from windows, or move to a quieter spot.

Other "Hearing Hacks" to consider: Self Identify, be prepared (and ask for what you need) arrive early, have spare batteries or make sure your hearing aids are charged, use assistive devices, get a hearing buddy, chose the best seat, use visual information and provide feedback and praise.

Gael's new book can be found on www.amazon.ca or check out the website: www.hearandbeyond.com and you can contact Gael at hannongd@gmail.com. Thank you, Gael, for a very entertaining, informative and comprehensive presentation.

February Presentation

Monday, February 20th, 2023
7:00 pm via **Zoom**

Guest Speaker:

Bowen Tang

Engagement Manager
Cochlear Canada Inc.

Topic:

“When Hearing Aids are Not
Enough”

Are you or a loved one struggling with your hearing? You are not alone. If you are interested in learning about how to manage hearing loss and the available technology – how they work, candidacy and more, we can help.

During this seminar, we will:

- Share common signs of hearing loss in adults (what to look for and how to address it)
- Share the steps you can take to address you or your loved one's hearing loss
- Explain the different types of hearing loss and what solution may be right for you

For information call
604-926-5222

To request an invitation to join this
Zoom meeting, please email
chhansb475@gmail.com

Driving Safely with Hearing Loss

by Neil Bauman, Ph.D.

When my wife (before I ever met her) noticed she was losing her hearing, one of the first questions that worried her was, “will I still be able to drive?”

Apparently, many people seem to think you need to be able to hear in order to drive. (I think a better criterion is being able to see!)

The surprising truth is that we (people with long standing hearing losses) are some of the safest drivers around. Thus, it “bugs” us when people keep asking us if we can drive. Some have come up with some pretty pithy answers to the question, “can you drive since you can't hear?”

For example, “Judy”, when asked by her boss, “how do you drive not being able to hear?” retorted, “I use my hands. My ears aren't able to reach the steering wheel!”

“Beth”, a deaf dentist, when asked, “Do you drive a car?” quipped, “Of course I do! It isn't my ears that turn the steering wheel”.

“Patsy” responds to “Can you drive since you can't hear?” with, “Yes, and I can have sex, too!”

(You gotta love their sense of humour.)

When people wonder if I can drive since I can't hear much, I respond, “I use my eyes when I'm driving. What do you use?”

You see, one of the reasons we are safer drivers than our hearing counterparts is because we have to rely more on our eyes. After all, driving is obviously a visual activity, more than it is an aural experience. Sure we don't hear horns honking, but when you are visually alert, you have already seen the “problem” looming before some driver sounds their horn. Horn honking today is typically just some impatient driver sounding off.

Some of us choose not to wear our hearing aids while driving. As “Anna” explained, “I would rather drive without my hearing aids because there is no noise distraction, and I can go down the interstate with the windows down. Never had an accident.”

I feel the same way. I have a severe hearing loss, yet I seldom choose to wear my hearing aids while driving. As a result, I hear almost nothing—but I do keep visually alert. Like “Anna,” I'm not distracted by extraneous noises, and also like “Anna,” I have a

wonderful driving record.

One of the “problems” people often cite is that we won’t be able to hear emergency vehicle sirens, and generally, that is true—we don’t. But then, many hearing people don’t hear them either. You see, modern cars are so soundproofed, and many people have their car radios blasting—so they can’t hear sirens either—until the emergency vehicle is right on top of them.

Furthermore, studies have shown that it is very difficult to hear sirens coming up behind you if you are barreling down the interstate. That’s just how the laws of physics apply in this situation.

I’ve had experience with emergency vehicles from both sides. First, I’ve had a lifetime of watching out for emergency vehicles as a hard of hearing driver, and second, for 10 years, I used to drive both fire trucks and ambulances myself. Thus, I know first hand just how many hearing people fail to hear sirens!

Because I am visually alert, it is the rare emergency vehicle that can ever get close to me without my seeing their flashing lights—even when they are still quite a distance away. Often, I am the first vehicle to pull over—before the hearing drivers are aware an emergency vehicle is approaching.

The most difficult situation with emergency vehicles is at intersections in the city with tall buildings built right out to the sidewalks blocking our lateral view, and with an emergency vehicle approaching from the left or right.

How do I avoid being hit in such situations? Glad you asked. I have several tricks I use. First, I am always watching for flashing reflections in the windows of the buildings on the opposite side of the intersection. Especially at night you will see the red flashes on glass surfaces as an emergency vehicle approaches the intersection and can safely stop in time.

Second, I watch the traffic around me—especially when the vehicle in front hits the brakes, or pulls to the side for no apparent reason. I do the same. I resist the temptation to swerve around him until I know the reason for this strange behaviour. This has saved me a number of times.

Third, be aware that emergency vehicles often travel in “packs,” so if a fire truck goes whizzing past, watch out for other fire trucks, police cars and ambulances. Be careful. Don’t fall into the trap of thinking they all will be coming from the same direction as the first fire truck.

Some may, but others may be converging and coming from several directions—so remain especially vigilant until you are well away from that area.

In summary, when driving, keep visually alert—use your mirrors—you have three. Make sure you use all of them. Always be aware of what is going on around you—ahead, behind and beside. This is just good defensive driving, and especially critical when you can’t hear. Watch for flashing lights and reflections of flashing lights. Watch what the cars in front and beside you are doing when it is “out of the ordinary” and take appropriate evasive action.

Following these few tips will go a long way towards making you a safe hard of hearing driver too.

Message from ex-President

by Alan Dion

Hi all,

I guess you could call this my ex-president’s message, I hope you don’t mind my intruding into your newsletter one more time.

I thought that now it’s done, you might be interested in the final result of my search for new hearing aids.

At the end of all my investigations, I ended up with a pair of the Phonak Paradise P90, model 13T.

I tried on several models before coming to my conclusion, and I must say that in the final analysis I chose this model over all the others for one outstanding reason. I did not want re-chargeable batteries!

If you forget to recharge your batteries, if you are stuck somewhere unavoidably, if there is a power failure, if anything occurs that leaves you in a position of being “powerless”, you could also become deaf.

When you need to communicate and/or hear instructions you could be at your most vulnerable.

I understand that for those people with significant dexterity problems the rechargeable battery hearing aids could be a godsend, but if that’s not you, a spare pair of batteries in your purse or pocket solve all the above problems.

Using replaceable batteries was what I chose but there are other options such as a battery pack for the charger that will give an extra few charges in the event of a power failure.

Living Successfully with Hearing Loss

Do you want a better understanding of your hearing and communication challenges?

Do you wish you could manage better in noisy listening situations?

Do you want to lipread/speech read better?

Do you wish you could tell others what you need?

Living Successfully with Hearing Loss Level 1 is a course offered through Vancouver Community College.

Currently, the online sessions provide weekly material through a course website and a weekly Zoom (about 90 minutes) to discuss and practice the information and strategies. We meet once a week for 12 weeks. The accessible online sessions are perfect for the winter months when you'd rather stay home or if you live outside the Vancouver area.

Living Successfully with Hearing Loss Level 2 provides a more in-depth look at speechreading and direct practice and debrief sessions on target communication strategies.

2023 Winter sessions are scheduled:

Level 1:

Tuesday afternoon: 1pm from Jan 10 to March 28

Tuesday evening: 7pm from Jan 10 to March 28

Level 2:

Wednesday afternoon: 1pm from Jan 11 to March 29

Wednesday evening: 1pm from Jan 11 to March 29

Friends and family members are also encouraged to register. Everyone can benefit from learning to communicate more effectively! Currently, tuition is about \$295. Financial support may be available.

Worried that the lessons won't help? That Zoom might not be accessible? That you might not understand the instructor? Please register and attend our information session where you can meet the instructor and ask any questions you may have. This session will be held via Zoom on Tuesday, Dec. 6 from 1-2pm. Attend to see how you can learn to communicate more effectively and be more assertive about your needs. Click this link to register for this info session:

<https://www.vcc.ca/applying/apply-now/info-sessionstours/living-successfully-with-hearing-loss/>

Alternatively, please contact the instructor, Lisa Dillon Edgett, Ph.D., RAUD, Aud(C), to ask questions or secure a spot for the Winter sessions: ldillonedgett@vcc.ca

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

West Vancouver Seniors' Centre

Sound Advice sessions will be held as **online Zoom** meetings on the First Friday of each month at 10:00 AM.

To receive an invitation to join the meetings, please send an email to chansb475@gmail.com to be added to the list.

Silver Harbour sessions will be held as **in-person** meetings on the last Monday of each month at 10:00 AM. Silver Harbour Centre is located at 144 22nd Street in North Vancouver.

There are no meetings in July & August

For Information call:

604-926-5222

We look forward to seeing you.