



Mountain Ear

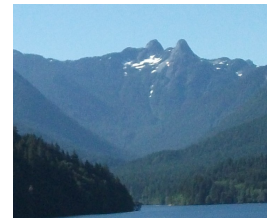
Published four times a year in March, June, September and December
by **The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association North Shore Branch**
Address: Lonsdale East P.O. Box 54137, North Vancouver, BC, V7M 2H0
email: chhansb475@gmail.com website: <https://www.chha-nsb.com>

Tel: 604-926-5222

Charitable Registration No. 89672 3038 RR0001

Editors: Hugh Hetherington and Susan Gelinias

Issue 123 December 2023



From the Desk of the President

by Hugh Hetherington

I am happy to report that our meeting programs are now back to normal following the years of Covid-19 when we were forced to move all our meetings onto a Zoom platform. This did leave a lot of people out of the loop but at the same time we did pick up a lot of attendees at our meetings that did not live in our local North Shore communities but were pleased to be able to get help with their hearing loss issues by attending on Zoom. We saw people from the Fraser Valley, Alberta, and Washington State and at one meeting we even had an attendee from Ghana in Africa.

In getting back to normal we are happy to be able to accommodate our past regular members and guests but we didn't want to shut out the Zoom following that had built up over the last three years. For this we had to adapt our meeting programs to make this happen. Since starting up again after the summer break we were happy to see some old faces again.

The following describes our Fall program and into 2024. For our Sound Advice meeting sessions at Silver Harbour Seniors' Centre held on the last Monday of each month at 10:00 am we have decided that the meetings will be in-person only. No registration is required and you are free to show up. The two meetings held so far have shown that interest has been good with new people showing up at each session.

We have made the meetings at West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre into hybrid meetings to accommodate both in-person and Zoom attendees. The Centre has made their Audio/Visual room available to us throughout the end of this year and 2024. This room is equipped with an excellent loop system which our branch donated to them a number of years ago. It also has a large screen and video projector with internet connection for our laptop computer. This setup allows the people on Zoom to see and hear the participants in the room and vice versa. The first two meetings in October and November identified some technical issues but we now believe that we have these fixed. Registration is required by the Centre if you are attending in-person. You can register by calling the Centre at 604-925-7280 or by visiting the Centre

and registering at the front desk. The Centre is charging a \$3.00 fee if attending in-person. There is no charge to attend on Zoom. I also want to point out that although the two above meetings are held in Seniors' Centres, the adult public of any age are welcome to attend.

For our five evening meetings held on the third Monday in February, April, June, September and November at 7:00 pm, we have decided on the following. These will be Zoom meetings. The February and November meetings will be Sound Advice sessions to accommodate those who are unable to attend our morning Sound Advice sessions due to work schedules and other reasons. The April and June meetings will be guest speaker meetings, where we will invite speakers to give us presentations. The September meeting will be our Annual General Meeting (AGM) which must be held annually before the end of September. The AGM will be followed with a guest speaker.

That is all for now. We look forward to seeing you at our meetings. ■

**Best Wishes for the Holidays
Every Good Wish for the New Year.**

September Evening AGM Zoom Meeting Recap

by Hugh Hetherington

Following our Annual General Meeting on September 18th, Neil Bauman, Ph.D., a hearing loss coping skills expert, gave us a presentation titled "**Seven Effective (and Free) Hearing Loss Coping Strategies**". Neil started out his presentation by explaining that he was born with a severe hearing loss and because of the severe hearing loss he has never heard well all his life. At the time he was in school there wasn't much help for people with hearing loss and the only accommodation he got at school was to sit at the front of the classroom.

What he spoke about at the meeting was not sophisticated theories but practical information on what he had to learn how to do in order to survive in the world. He started out by asking, “**What is the single all-time most effective hearing loss coping strategy?**” The answer to this question is “**Get Close**”. Get as close as you need to be in order to hear effectively. As a person with hearing loss your biggest enemy is increasing distance. If you can’t get close enough to hear and understand what is being said there is no point in listening.

Few people fail to realize just how important it is to get as close as possible to the sound source to hear effectively. Neil asked another question, “if you wear hearing aids what is the ideal distance you need to be in order to hear what is being said?” The answer he gave was 3 to 6 feet. For him, even that distance was not close enough. He also gave four reasons to get close.

1. Sound volume decreases dramatically with increasing distance. Neil explained that if you are speaking right up close to the person’s ear, the sound you are hearing is at full volume. However, if you are just two feet away you are only hearing the sound at one quarter of the volume. This is because of the inverse square law. If you are 8 feet away you would only be hearing at 1/64 of the volume, and at 16 feet away you would only be hearing at 1/256 of the volume. That’s how dramatic increasing distance affects your ability to hear.

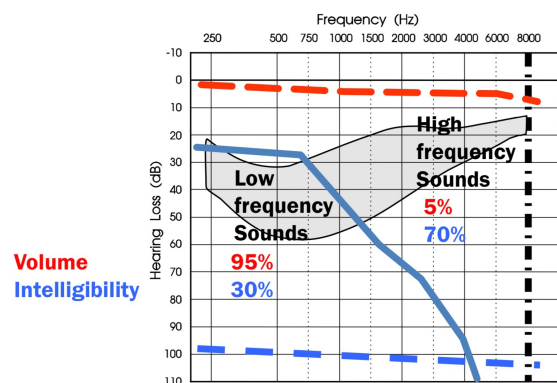
2. Background noise becomes more of a problem as the distance increases. More background sounds become closer to you than the person you are trying to hear. Sounds like coughing, paper shuffling, people carrying on side conversations, air conditioning, or any external sounds coming in through the windows or doors make it more difficult to hear what the person speaking is saying. If you wear hearing aids this means you have to turn up the volume and this amplifies the background sounds more, as well as the person speaking. If you want to hear in these conditions you have to get close.

3. Speech becomes more and more distorted with increasing distance. As sound travels through the air it is affected by the sounds bouncing off hard surfaces. The closer you are to the person speaking, the less distortion you will experience. To eliminate sound distortion you want to get close.

4. Speech intelligibility decreases with increasing distance. This is so important. The laws of physics dictate that even under perfect conditions, the further you are from the person speaking the less intelligible their speech becomes and the more difficult it will be to understand what they are saying.

In explaining this last point, Neil showed us a picture of an audiogram showing what is called the speech banana. That shows where all the speech sounds fall. Low frequency sounds are on the left and high frequency sounds are on the right. The dashed red line across the top shows where a person with normal has his/her hearing. If you are basically deaf your hearing is at the blue line at the bottom of the audiogram. Most people fall somewhere in between. The sloping blue line shows where most people have their hearing loss. They hear the low frequencies but not the high frequencies. The blue line starts at what is the bottom end of normal so a person with this type of hearing loss will only hear the low frequencies up to about 1500 herz but they won’t hear the high frequencies at all unless they are extremely loud. The other point Neil made was that 95% of the power is in the low frequencies and so you would hear the low frequencies quite well. That leave only about 5% of the power for the high frequencies. But 70% of the intelligibility of the sounds is in the high frequencies. So this means that you will hear sounds from a distance but you will not be able to understand what they are saying because you are only getting 30% intelligibility from the lower frequency sounds.

Understanding the Audiogram



Neil also demonstrated this in another way using the alphabet. If you could only see the vowel sounds which are the low frequency sounds, it is hard to figure out what a sentence said. However, if you only saw the consonants which are the high frequency sounds, you could easily figure out what the sentence meant.

o a ui a o i
c me s q ckly s p ss ble

Neil gave a couple of other examples but this one clearly demonstrates how important the high frequency sounds are in understanding speech. He went on to explain that low frequency sounds travel long distances, mid-frequency sounds have less energy so they travel medium distances while high frequency sounds attenuate quite quickly through the air so far away you can't hear them at all. This holds true even if you are wearing hearing aids because the sounds have to reach the microphones in the hearing aids in order to be amplified for you to hear them. This is just an example of the laws of physics in action and even hearing aids cannot defy the laws of physics.

Neil explained a little bit more about getting close. Getting close physically can work well in one to one conversations. In group situations it fails because you all can't get close to the speaker's mouth. The other way to get close is to get close electronically. Getting close electronically means getting your ear up close to the mouth of whoever is speaking. You do this by using assistive technology. For instance, if you are in a meeting room that has a loop system and your hearing aids have telecoils, you will hear the speaker well because your ears are right up to the microphone that is close to the speaker's mouth. Neil said the most important thing you should take away from this meeting today is that in order to communicate effectively it is necessary to get close either physically or electronically.

Coping strategy number 2 is called "Fair is Fair" – Go to the Person. If you are not close to one another or in another room the fair way is to go to the person you wish to talk to. Don't expect to call out and expect them to come to you. They may not even hear you or understand what you are asking them to do. The rule is: Whoever initiates the conversation goes to the other person no matter who is hearing or deaf.

Strategy number 3 is to ask people to get our attention

before beginning to talk. There are 3 ways to do this.

1. Approach in our line of vision.
2. Wave your hand.
3. Touch us lightly on our shoulder or arm.

Often just getting close to us is enough because if we just see you standing there it is hard to ignore you. And another good tip is to give us time to focus on our face before you begin to talk or we will lose the first part of your conversation and you will have to repeat it all over again.

Strategy number 4 is to talk face to face. Getting close is not necessarily the whole answer. Position yourself so that you can easily see the face of the person you're talking to and they can see yours.

Strategy number 5 is to have adequate light on the speaker's face. All hard of hearing people rely on speechreading to some extent whether they realize it or not. Light is very important so we can see your facial expressions, body language and lip movements in order to understand you properly and this becomes more important as we age. Make sure the light is on the speaker's face and not behind them. This means that they don't stand in front of a light or window because this puts their face in a shadow.

Strategy number 6 is cut out background noise. Hard of hearing people can be bothered excessively by background noise. When you are hard of hearing it is hard for the ears to separate out the foreground sounds from the background sounds. They all come to your ears in the foreground. A hearing person is able to hear quite well if the speech level is just 6 dB louder than the background noise. Hard of hearing people need at least 15 dB difference and would prefer to have 25 dB difference. Background noise, like running water, vacuuming, rustling paper, other people talking, radio, and television. They are all enemies to the hard of hearing person.

Strategy number 7: Avoid miscommunication—repeat back what you think you heard. This is so important for people who are hard of hearing. There are four possibilities to consider here.

1. You know you heard the message correctly and you did, so you don't need to ask for a repeat.

2. You think you heard the message correctly, but you have some doubts, so you ask for a repeat.
3. You know you didn't hear it correctly, so you have to ask for a repeat.
4. You know you heard the message correctly, but you didn't and got it wrong, so you don't ask for a repeat—and this is when serious communication problems occur.

This last one is the most dangerous because you treat it like number 1. This means that you must always verify instructions.

5. Only what a hard of person repeats back to us is what he understood you to say.

Never assume a single other word was heard/understood.

In Summarizing, these are the seven effective and free coping strategies.

1. Get close.
2. Go to the person you are talking to.
3. Face the person.
4. Get the person's attention before starting to talk to them.
5. Cut out background sounds.
6. Have adequate light on the person's face.
7. Repeat back instructions & directions.

Neil suggests that we use these seven strategies every day and drill them into our consciousness until they become second nature. If you follow these coping strategies they will go a long way to prevent frustrations, make conversation easier and more enjoyable. You will make less mistakes and that makes it all worthwhile. ■



Dr. Neil enjoys a relaxing, romantic dinner with his wife.

The Center for
Hearing Loss Help

<https://hearinglosshelp.com>

CHHA-NSB Evening Meeting Monday, February 19, 2024 7:00 pm via Zoom Sound Advice Special Edition!!

Haven't been able to join our morning Sound Advice Meetings? Join our regulars and our host **Hugh Hetherington** as we discuss topics related to hearing. This is a Q & A meeting. Ask questions about identifying hearing loss, coping with hearing loss, hearing aids, & technology. You can connect with people who are experiencing the same issues you are. Hear what they have to say. Tell us what your experiences are.

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

Hearing Loss and the Terrible Toll it Takes on Hard of Hearing People at Family Gatherings *by Neil Bauman, Ph.D.*

There is a terrible, yet invisible, toll that hearing loss extracts from many hard of hearing people at family gatherings when family members do not take steps to effectively meet the hard of hearing person's hearing needs.

To help you understand what it is like to be hard-of-hearing at family gatherings, below are a number of stories from hard-of-hearing people who endured a family gathering this past Easter.

One lady exclaimed, "How I hate holidays and having so many people together at once! Too many conversations. My brain gets so tired from trying to listen and figure out

what everyone is saying that I eventually just shut down. It's exhausting and so frustrating. I can't wait until everyone just goes home. I love my family, but I'm already exhausted."

Another lady chimed in, "I feel the same way! I thought it was just me. I love my family, but I just get so lost and overwhelmed trying to keep up with the simplest conversation."

Another person explained, "I know how important it is to have quiet time to recharge your brain. I find myself fantasizing about quiet time when I'm in a noisy environment for too long."

This is how yet another lady felt, "I also feel this way! I've just been told there will be 25 people at our family dinner! I literally feel a stomach ache coming on."

A lady related, "We went to visit my husband's family for the holidays, and I don't think that anyone really understood why the whole thing stressed me out so much. I couldn't even begin to explain. Nothing gets me more frustrated than being in a room with tons of people talking at once! I usually escape to the hallway to hang out with a dog or cat."

Another lady lamented, "It is exhausting to have to hear so much. I usually find myself a little quiet time too. I'll spend extra long in the bathroom or go outside. I've spent time with people's pets to avoid human speech too. After a couple of hours my brain is fried. I don't have a large family so that's usually not my problem. It's other large groups that get me."

Another lady had an unusual coping strategy. She explained, "My Easter was okay until it was time to eat and later watch a movie. I left twice to return home to peace and quiet.. Fortunately, I lived right across the street so I could do this."

Another lady lamented, "This was my first get together with a group of people after getting my new hearing aids. Even though the group was only 7 people, they were all loud. It was overwhelming. I couldn't wait for everyone to leave. And the first thing I did was take my hearing aids out and rest my ears. Very stressful day and I'm so glad it's over!"

One lady sorrowfully explained, "I feel like a burden to my family who either have to talk slower or repeat everything they say. It makes everything so tiring. I have

severe headaches after even a short time of trying to communicate with anyone." Then she asked, "The one question I have is how do you get over the anxiety of being around people."

Unfortunately, there is no easy answer. The ideal solution would be that only one person speaks at a time. To ensure this happens, and so that the person with hearing loss knows who is going to speak next, you could pass around a "talking stick". If you are not holding the "talking stick" you keep your mouth shut. It's that simple.

We would love it if everyone did that, but only in exceptional families will that ever happen.

The reason it seldom happens is that by meeting the needs of the hard-of-hearing family members, it would totally destroy the dynamics of the hearing members conversation.

As a result, people with hearing loss are stressed out, left out and thus often can't wait to get out.

Family members need to put themselves into the shoes of their hard-of-hearing family members and figure out ways to meet their hearing needs while at the same time not totally destroying the ebb and flow of the family conversation.

One lady explained, "I am currently "hiding" upstairs in my husband's childhood room seeking relief. It got to be too much. My head was pounding. Tomorrow there will be 17 people for lunch. I love my in-law family, but I love it more when a couple of us break away for a smaller conversation."

Notice her last sentence, "I love it when a couple of us break away for a smaller conversation." Taking the person with hearing loss to a quiet location away from all the racket of the group and having a one-to-one conversation is an excellent coping strategy. If each family member did this one by one, the person with hearing loss could have a good little chat with each person present without all the strain and stress of trying to hear in a room where their ears just cannot function.

Hearing family members, how about it? Can't you tear yourself away from the main group for a few minutes to chat with your hard-of-hearing loved one? Sure you may miss something. But think of your hard-of-hearing loved one. He/she misses everything! ■

Living Successfully with Hearing Loss

by Lisa Dillon Edgett

The Living Successfully with Hearing Loss (LSWHL) courses, offered through Vancouver Community College (VCC), are now open for student intake for the upcoming Winter term. We invite anyone interested in learning more about hearing loss, effective communication, speechreading, and lessons and strategies to help manage hearing loss challenges to contact us.

We know how important it is for our brain health as we age to maintain social connections; the lessons in LSWHL help provide a pathway to this vital connection to others.

Level 1 and Level 2 courses are available online and, for the first time since 2020, an in-person course will be offered at the Broadway campus of VCC! As well, stay tuned to hear about the exciting addition of LSWHL Level 3 in the near future.

The next term of this course will begin on January 9th, and registration is open. This online course provides material through a course website, in conjunction with a weekly Zoom session with a small group to review, discuss, and practice topics such as speechreading, communication strategies, assertive behaviour, managing technology, understanding your hearing loss and explaining it to others, and so much more.

Participants learn and share tips and strategies and leave the course with a sense of community, a strong foundation for managing the challenges associated with hearing loss and communication, and the knowledge that "I am not alone."

LSWHL Level 1: 2 Zoom options 90minutes

Tues afternoons: 1pm from Jan 9 to Mar 26

Tues evenings: 7pm from Jan 9 to Mar 26

LSWHL Level 1: In-person at Broadway VCC

Wed afternoons: 1:30 to 3:30 pm Jan 10 to Mar 27

LSWHL Level 2: 1 Zoom option 90 minutes

Wed evenings: 7pm from Jan 10 to Mar 27

Please email me to get more information, ask questions, or reserve a spot for January.. The current cost of the course is \$301. Financial support may be available. Please contact me to find out more:

Lisa Dillon Edgett, Ph.D., RAUD, Aud(C)
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 21st 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 to be added to the list.

Silver Harbour sessions at 144 East 22nd 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.