



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 110 September 2020

Mountain Ear

From the Desk of the President

Hi Everyone,

I'm typing this message to you wearing a mask to keep you all safe while you read my lips, Oh, you can't see them, yes, it's a problem, isn't it?

So easy to forget all the little things that can make life difficult for those of us who may be amongst the very Hard of Hearing. Of course, it's so easy to take so much for granted, and this pandemic is certainly showing us all how much we do take for granted, all of those little things that make our lives so worth living. But, while we are doing this, we ought to spare a thought for those of us who are so much less fortunate (and I'm talking of much more than only our group in the Hard of hearing) around the Province and our Country, and in fact, around the world.

This is a time to spare some time, whether it's helping a family member or all the way to volunteering in your community. And, if you can't do that then think about the areas where a donation may be of immeasurable service to the needy recipient. There's lots we can all do to help those around us who need some help.

Speaking of help, please help us. We have our AGM coming up on September 21st, and members will now be receiving their AGM package and membership renewal notice. Please make sure that Hugh has all your correct information, particularly with regard to

e-mail addresses. Also, please ensure that your membership is renewed. You'll now be able to do this online, as well as, by mail and the instructions are on our new website (www.chha-nsb.com). Also, we need to have a quorum present, and here's the fun bit.

We'll be holding the AGM online via ZOOM, so if you can attend, want to attend, intend to attend, we NEED your RSVP so that we have your email address. After the business portion of the meeting, we intend to hold our first on-line "Sound Advice", and you are welcome to stay for that also.

As previously mentioned, the date of the AGM is September, 21st at 7:00 pm, just like normal, and if you fall into the "I'm coming category" please let us know as soon as possible to ensure you get your email invitation and instructions from Hugh our ZOOM master who will be managing the protocols.

So, on to other things. Summer has finally arrived, let's hope that it tries to overstay its welcome, it can't be here long enough as far as I'm concerned. How about you, have you had the opportunity to get out and play a little bit, it has been lovely lately, but it's still so difficult with the need to "socially distance" ourselves.

My biggest challenges are understanding someone muffling through a mask from a mile away, AND, not dropping my hearing aids on the ground when removing my mask and my glasses get caught. Have you had that problem? Does anybody out there have

a solution to this problem? Glasses, hearing aids and masks all demanding space behind my ears, luckily my hat stays up on its own.

If you have any solutions to this, please let us know, and if you have any funny anecdotes, I'm even more open to hearing (no pun intended). You will find two articles in this newsletter on this subject. We can't say too much about this subject. It is just too important to the hard of hearing.

We are also planning to start up our "Sound Advice" sessions again in September. West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre have advised us that they are opening up to in-person meetings. They will, of course, be on a smaller basis and certain protocols will have to be adhered to. As class sizes will be limited, you will have to pre-register with the Centre in advance to ensure that there is space. This can be done in person or by phone 604-925-7280. The meetings will again be on the first Friday of each month starting September 4 at 10:00 AM.

Silver Harbour Seniors Centre while not yet ready for in-person meetings would like us to host a Zoom meeting each month. These will be on the last Monday of each month at the regular time of 10:00 AM. Watch for the regular email notice that you will be receiving if you have attended in the past. These will be sent out for both Sound Advice meetings, as usual.

So, the sun is now out, again, and I'm going to use that as an excuse to finish. I'll write to you again for the winter, and in the meantime, I hope to see many of you on ZOOM at the AGM.

All the best,

Alan

Face Masks & The Hard of Hearing

by Susan Gelinas

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought many changes and challenges to each and every one of our lives. One of those challenges is THE MASK. Initially there were few options. Now we are faced with so many options that picking out a mask can be over-

whelming. What kind do you get? Where do you get one? How do you take care of one? It is not as if you can try one on before you purchase it! I am hoping this article will generate feedback and ideas from our readers, as well as, give some suggestions. Unfortunately, there is no solution that fits all and the process does require some trial and error and patience—not always a fun thing.

People with hearing issues have some extra challenges where masks are concerned.

- ◆ A mask muffles sound and it is difficult for **any** person to hear clearly what the mask wearer is saying, but for the hard of hearing person it is exponentially more difficult.
- ◆ Many hard of hearing people rely on lip reading to understand speech from others. If that other person is wearing a mask, the hard of hearing person cannot read his/her lips.
- ◆ The elastic around the ears can interfere with the hearing aid in terms of positioning the hearing aid properly as well as interfering with the microphone.
- ◆ Putting and taking off the mask can dislodge the hearing aid and can result in misplacement or loss of the hearing.

The most important guideline I have for you is that you must advocate for yourself. If you cannot hear someone, you must let them know. As a HOH person, you must identify yourself.

Carrying a card identifying that you have a hearing issue and showing the person goes a long way to avoiding frustration for both parties. Some people do step back and lower their masks so that a HOH person can read their lips, but as the Covid-19 pandemic lives on, will it be acceptable to do so?



An alternate suggestion is a button that clips to the HOH person's mask that identified him/her as HOH. Here's an example from the Etsy website. You will find the searches for it below.

There has been a lot of media buzz on "clear masks

for the hard of hearing”. These are masks with a see-through insert around the mouth. A fabulous idea but those masks are only useful to the HOH person if the **other** person is wearing it.. We are hoping that the media buzz will raise awareness of the difficulties HOH persons face in talking to a masked person. When the ads first came out, I felt that it was my responsibility to buy clear masks for each person I dealt with but that is not a realistic task. If public awareness could be raised so that clear masks were readily available for front line workers like cashiers, receptionists and anyone who communicates with a HOH person. That would go a long way in easing the stress for HOH persons.

In terms of choosing a mask:

- Consider ones that go around your head instead of over your ears.
- Some masks come with ties.
- Some come with clips.
- My audiologist suggested that I wrap the elastic from the mask around my ponytail to keep the mask from slipping. That works well for me and can work for someone with a bun or man-bun or hair clip.
- There is a trick with a pipe cleaner: loop a pipe cleaner through the loops of the mask, then twist the pipe cleaner around itself.



- I found a website called Nurse Minder and watched the video “11 Surgical Mask Hacks to save your ears” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6AtRbph2L> and she had suggestions that used household items—beware of all the ads, just skip them all. One suggestion was similar to the pipe cleaner trick but used Velcro strips instead. She also had a video on 7 hacks to stop glasses from fogging up.

The website www.etsy.com is an on-line marketplace for selling and buying vintage or handmade goods.

- Search on it: search “hearing impaired face mask” and you will see the masks with the clear inserts.
- Search on it: “face masks for hearing aid users” and there a number that are shaped differently. It’s worth a look.
- Search on it: “face masks for the hearing impaired” and you will find some with printed words about lip reading on the mask itself.
- Search “hearing impaired face mask buttons” and you will find the clip-on mask buttons.
- I also found “ear savers for face masks” and “face mask ear straps”: extra pieces of fabric with buttons that you can hook the elastic of the face masks onto.



The Como Foundation out of Barrie, Ontario designs and manufactures lip reading masks for the deaf & hard of hearing: <https://www.thecomofoundation.ca>. Here’s an example of one of their masks.



There are some bandana type masks available: I was given a “Multi-purpose bandana neck gaiter with filters”. It’s a one-size fits all so I have to hook it over my ponytail, but it works, and it will be great in cool weather.

In these times of self-isolation and social distancing it is critical to all of us that we maintain our contact with friends, others and what is working for them. The MASK is going to be with us for a while. Experiment with masks. Find something that you are comfortable with. For those of you who are not hard of hearing but associate with a HOH person, keep in mind that she/he has to be able to see the lips of the person they are communicating with. Consider buying a mask with a clear insert. Please let us know what your experiences have been and if you have any ideas that you would like to add. Remember that CHHA-NSB is here to help and support the community.

COVID-19: The Ultimate Game of Trust

by Bowen Tang



Imagine, just imagine when you are no longer able to see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. Having any of these senses impeded is enough to shake anyone's confidence in navigating the world around them. For people with disabilities, this is an every-day reality which has recently become a nightmare with the arrival of COVID-19. The barriers and challenges presented by the pandemic have eroded the skills people with disabilities worked so hard to develop. In addition to being a global health crisis, COVID-19 is like the ultimate game of trust where we do not know if there is someone to catch our fall.

As a person with profound hearing loss living in Canada, I have the privilege of being able to access quality hearing care and services where I learned to listen and speak. Complemented using hearing assistive technology, I am able to effectively communicate in my daily interactions. There are still situations where listening is difficult (e.g., background noise) so I rely on visual cues such as reading the speaker's mouth and facial expressions. With the prevalent use of face masks, I find myself struggling to access information when visiting public places like grocery stores, medical clinics, and restaurants. While face masks keep the virus particles out, they also keep the sound in, thus distorting the speaker's

speech clarity. Not only am I now faced with reduced sound quality, I can no longer use visual cues as they are completely blocked off by the face mask. This created several instances of miscommunication leading to the feeling of frustration and helplessness seeing the tower of confidence I built throughout my life collapse in rubble.

I pride myself in being a resourceful person to solve various problems encountered in life, using the skills I learned from past experiences. Since the start of COVID-19, these skills were thrown out the window when the cashier at the grocery store stared at me during checkout. I did not understand what she was asking, so I tried to anticipate what the question could be and gave random responses: "I am paying by credit card" or "I don't need bags". It turns out she asked if I wanted to redeem my points for the eggs I purchased. Initially I did ask her to repeat, but even then, I still could not understand, hence I started panicking and went for the alternative which ended up in me making a fool of myself. Upon reflecting on this experience, I realized that my impulsiveness stems from not wanting to hold up the line as there were other people waiting and I also made assumptions about people's level of patience. Even in the "good old days," there had been negative encounters where people dismissed me for clarifying information. I then generalized those experiences to the situations I face today, believing that it is a futile attempt in establishing clear communication, particularly during the time when everyone is in a high state of anxiety. Rather than utilizing the strategies that



have proven effective before, I became frozen like a deer in the headlights, standing there at the checkout aisle, wishing this nightmare would be over.

As advocate for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, I always strive to educate others about the impacts of hearing loss and promote the value of accessible communication. I am ashamed to admit that I am a hypocrite when I did not once think of self-disclosing my hearing loss in the situation I mentioned and in other challenging ones. It is as though the phrase "I have a hearing loss" stopped short at the edge of my mouth. I particularly remember a time when a receptionist at the medical clinic asked

the screening questions. Her voice was barely audible that I did not pick up a single word. Instead of stating that I could not hear her, I bluffed my way through the questions answering no to all of them. (A disclaimer: I knew what the questions were because this was my second visit to the clinic). Nonetheless, I unnecessarily put myself in a risky place where I could potentially be giving misinformation. As I ponder why I chose to be reckless, it all comes down to my desire to maintain as much independence as I possibly can. This mentality is clearly not sustainable. So, in order to

rebuild my tower of confidence, I need to shift my mindset: one that involves me learning to trust myself and more importantly, trust others.



We live in such a fast-paced world that we never stop to think about the impacts of each choice we make. COVID-19 is the speeding ticket we needed to slow down and look at how we can navigate the journey to the future in a safer manner. For myself,

it is about listening to that inner voice telling me to make each challenging encounter an opportunity to shine the spotlight on people with hearing loss and model to others how they can make the experience accessible and inclusive (e.g., use of clear face masks or shields, text communication).

For others, it is about giving them a chance to learn from us, to enhance their life experiences through meeting us. By making them aware of our hearing loss, we open the possibility of gaining new allies. Even though people's reactions will vary, we must not let past experiences define future interactions. Let us take a leap of faith in the hopes of transforming the negativity into feeling empowered. It does not take long to reap the benefits, which I yielded in my recent visit to a pharmacy. Once I indicated that I have a hearing loss, the pharmacist was kind enough to write down what she needed from me. The interaction went smoothly and I thanked her for her help. It is that simple.

In closing, I would like to take a page from one of my favorite childhood stories, The Tortoise and the Hare. The tortoise was underestimated for its ability to finish the race and was quickly left behind by the hare. The hare unexpectedly became the loser because of its ego and overconfidence. The common lesson we learned from the story is that slow and steady wins the race. In the context of the real world, COVID-19 is the race we are in, the tortoise represents people with disabilities who are left behind, and the hare represents everyone else. If we do not know how to trust one another, we are all losers. If I may propose an alternative ending to the story, the hare would pick up the tortoise, the tortoise would then guide the rabbit through the path and both of them make it to the finish line together. Let us be the tortoise and the hare, let us all be the winners in life!

Author's Note: I would like to thank God for the inspiration and courage to share my story. In doing so, I continue to grow stronger in the face of adversity. Thank you to my friends, particularly Keegan and Nicole, for their time in editing the piece.

CHHA North Shore Branch AGM

Monday, September 21, 2020

7:00 PM Via Zoom

**Members will receive
AGM Notices and must
RSVP via email to receive
the information to join
the meeting**

**“Sound Advice” Session will
follow with Flo Spratt and
Hugh Hetherington**

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.

Living Successfully with Hearing Loss

VCC is running 4 classes, beginning in September, and there are still spaces available in 3 of them.

Living Successfully with Hearing Loss (formerly called "Speechreading") is now accepting registrations for the Fall semester. This Vancouver Community College course is being held online. The majority of the course content will be shared on a course website, and a weekly Zoom video call is scheduled to discuss, review, and practice the information. These calls usually last about 60-90 minutes. The course runs for 12 weeks. The classes have a maximum size of 8. Tuition and fees total approximately \$270. Senior tuition fee waivers and applications for low-income support are available.

The Fall course times are:

Monday, 9am, Sept. 14 to Nov. 30
 Tuesday, 1pm, Sept. 15 to Dec. 1 (course full)
 Wed., 1:00 pm, Sept. 16 to Dec. 2
 Wed., 7:00 pm, Sept. 16 to Dec. 2

Please email the instructor, Lisa Dillon Edgett, to register or ask for more information:

ldillonedgett@vcc.ca

CHHA BC Chapter Annual General Meeting

**Thursday, September 24, 2020
7:00 PM to 9:00 PM**

The BC AGM Webinar will be held online via Zoom and will be followed by an informal town hall style meeting

**For Information email:
info@chha-bc.org**

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. We look forward to seeing you there. Bring a friend, a family member, they are welcome too.

**On Friday, September 4th
from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM at
the West Vancouver Seniors'
Centre's Social Rec Room. Number
of attendees will be limited. Please
call 604-925-7280 to register.**

**A second session will be held on
Monday, September 28th at
10:00 AM via Zoom.**

**To attend please email:
chha_nsb@telus.net to receive
an invitation to join the meeting.**

**Subjects to be addressed include:
Technology;
About Speechreading;
Expert Coping Strategies;
Improving Hearing Environments**

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