

The joy of reclaiming a lost sound

Gael Hannan, *Hearing Health Matters*
May 2, 2023

Recently, on a walk in the woods, I sensed a half-forgotten fragrance. It was the smell of tall cedars, firs and undergrowth warming up after the winter – earthy, sweet, green.

I hadn't smelled it for a long time, and it came with a jolt of pleasure. Over the next couple of days, I experienced similar smells that I felt were from "before Covid".

Two years ago, I had a month-long bout of Delta, the Big One. I was spared the respiratory problems, but besides making me feel miserable, it caused some hair loss, worsened my tinnitus, and played havoc with my senses of smell and taste.

It took a long time for the parosmia (distorted sense of smell) and taste issues to improve. Sometimes I even experienced fantosmia, the perception of an awful smell (think, garbage) that had no source. Even today, products containing chemicals such as hand sanitizer or cleansers don't smell right. Coffee no longer offers the smell of joy although at least I can tell it's coffee. Wine is tasting better these days, but I need a robust chardonnay rather than a more delicate type.

So last week when I sensed these distinct, beautiful smells, I was thrilled. I realized I had just come through another, very mild and short bout of Covid: had covid #2 reversed or improved my lingering parosmia?

It's too soon to tell, but my delight in those reclaimed smells is the same as when I hear long-lost sounds that have been returned to me after receiving my cochlear implant.

The ticking of an old-fashioned clock

Birdies fluttering in the bushes

Leaves falling on pavement

Hot air coming through the vents

Rain on the roof

High-frequency speech sounds – s, t, k, d – that make words more understandable

It is difficult to describe to a 'hearing person' how wonderful it is to hear these sounds again, and some of them perhaps for the first time. I can't remember hearing the subtleties of speech before. It's a joy even when some sounds actually irritate me; someone playing with a bag of chips is high-frequency annoyance!

I ask the Hearing Husband, "What's that sound?" He'll ask me what it sounds like, or he'll describe the many things he's hearing. We whittle down the possibilities; a leaf blower in the distance could also be a truck driving by. Bird calls are harder to identify, but at least we confirm that it's actually a bird!

Sounds that had been long lost to me, I hear them now with gratitude.

And that's all this little article is about – appreciating and being grateful for the wonders of reclaiming the lost sounds and smells of life.

<https://hearinghealthmatters.org/better-hearing-consumer/2023/the-joy-of-reclaiming-a-lost-sound/>

Join us on June 8 for our monthly social meeting

Join our friendly monthly meeting at the Los Altos Hof's Hut. We've reserved space on the patio, away from street noise.

Bring your news, questions, or concerns about hearing loss, or just come to eat and visit. We hope to see you!

4:00 pm, Thursday, June 8

Hof's Hut, 2147 Bellflower Blvd., LB

Free parking in the lot behind the restaurant

Chapter Calendar

June 8 at 4:00

Chapter social meeting at Hof's Hut

June 11

Walk4Hearing in Long Beach

June 28 Board does not meet in June and July, resumes meeting in August.

June 29-July 1

HLAA National Convention in New Orleans

Lip reading: Wednesdays, 9:00-11:30 a.m. at Weingart Center.

Register for Zoom meetings from our sister HLAA chapters

HLAA Downeast Chapter

Our Hearing Loss Challenges, Questions, and Successes

Thursday, June 8, 4:00-5:30 pm

Do you have questions, answers to inquiries, or success stories about living with hearing loss? Have you encountered challenging situations due to the hearing loss of yourself or others?

For this meeting we will use the advice and expertise of us - the people with hearing loss. This is your opportunity to ask questions and to share your experiences with the folks of the HLAA Downeast Chapter in Maine, USA.

Examples of questions:

- What to do in a noisy restaurant or noisy party?
- Should I let people know I have a hearing loss - with my friends or business?
- Is there a smoke detector or alarm that I'll be able to hear at night?
- What is Auditory Fatigue, i.e., why do I get so tired when I have to do a lot of listening?
- What to do when we ask people to look at us when they talk and they forget?
- Why do audiologists sometimes ask us to bring a friend or relative to speak the test words at various distances?
- Have you noticed issues with your balance, e.g., going down stairs?

Anyone can attend and Captions will be provided. RSVP optional. Zoom link to be determined.

For more information, email meeting organizer Pat Dobbs: Pat@CoachDobbs.com

HLAA Peninsula Chapter

Ménière's Disease Support Group

Friday, June 9, 12:00-1:30 pm

Answers and assistance in coping with this chronic disease.

To get the meeting link, email rghall4@icloud.com



HLAA Mission Viejo Chapter

Encore Presentation

Tuesday, June 13, 11:00 am

Popular researcher Michelle Kaplowicz, Ph.D. from UCI Center for Hearing Health, returns to share her findings from her research and studies that impact hearing loss.

[Pre-register for Zoom meeting](#)

Made for iPhone (MFi) hearing aids will now pair directly with Mac computers

Karl Strom, May 16, 2023

Apple today announced a suite of improvements for accessibility in its devices, among those being that Made-for-iPhone (MFi) hearing aids will soon be able to pair directly with Mac computers.

Bluetooth streaming for iOS is now offered by many hearing aid manufacturers, allowing users access to streamed audio, like music, podcasts, Siri, and video, including Facetime calls. However, before now, iPhones, iPod Touch, and iPad tablets were the only devices that could pair directly with MFi hearing aids without workarounds or accessories.

The news of direct streaming from a Mac is mentioned in just one bullet point in Apple's news release, so details about how the new function will work are still forthcoming:

Deaf or hard-of-hearing users can pair Made for iPhone hearing devices directly to Mac and customize them for hearing comfort.

The fine print says, "Users will be able to pair their Made for iPhone hearing devices with select Mac devices with M1 chip, and all Mac devices with M2 chip."

The announcement is part of the lead-up to Apple's Worldwide Developer's Conference (WWDC), which will be held June 5-9, where the company is expected to provide its developers a first glimpse at the new iOS, iPadOS, macOS, watchOS, and tvOS updates.

Apple also announced several new features for cognitive accessibility, Live Speech, Personal Voice, and vision enhancement features. For details see the [Apple newsroom](#).

Gail Morrison found this old article about language development in children. The author talks about how his interest in early language development began when he started the cochlear implant program at University of Chicago. While the research cited talks using rich vocabulary and having conversations with children, as I was reading it I began to wonder about how we as hard-of-hearing older folk begin to pull out of conversations because it just gets too hard. Do we begin to simplify our vocabulary? Do we talk less? Do our families treat us as conversational partners? I hope the article gives you food for thought.

- Katie Wright, editor

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Thirty million little words

Britt Peterson, Ideas columnist

About 10 years ago, Dana Suskind, a pediatric neurosurgeon and cochlear implant specialist at the University of Chicago, started noticing something about her patients, infants born deaf and fitted with cochlear devices that allowed them to hear. Some quickly succeeded at connecting sounds with words and concepts and learning to speak.

For others, the struggle was much, much harder, even years after implantation. Stepping “out, of the operating room,” as she puts it in her new book, “30 Million Words,” Suskind began studying the effect of language on the developing infant brain. She read the work of Betty Hart and Todd Risley, groundbreaking child psychologists whose study of achievement in the 1960s showed massive quantitative and qualitative differences in the “language environment” of lower-income and higher-income infants, including a gap of 30 million words spoken over the first three years.

This study, among others, has catalyzed a generation of researchers and policy makers, from Washington, and policy makers, from Washington, D.C., to Providence and Cambridge, as programs to close the “language gap” in early childhood have become increasingly common. The approach has its critics, who worry that the focus on numbers could easily turn into meaningless or stressful word-blather, or point out the small sample size in Hart and Risley’s research (later studies have found smaller but still significant gaps, and there’s plenty of variability within classes).

For Suskind, the research was galvanizing, and she founded the 30 Million Words Initiative in 2009. The initiative is currently working with the City of Chicago on a five-year research grant to test whether the

approach, applied early in Head Start programs, could help with the elusive goal of getting children ready for school down the road.

Suskind spoke with Ideas by phone from Chicago. Below is an edited excerpt.

IDEAS: How did you first get interested in language and development?

SUSKIND: It was probably nine years ago, when I started the cochlear implant program at University of Chicago. And pretty early on, I started having patients, little babies, all with equal potential to learn how to talk and to learn, but I could see pretty tremendous differences in the outcomes. Some would be learning how to talk and learning how to learn on a par with their hearing peers. And others, the same time out, would barely be able to communicate. And that difference would really fall along socio-economic lines.

IDEAS: What’s the research behind the 30 million words concept?

SUSKIND: The Hart and Risley study is the best known, but only one of many, many studies that demonstrated that what was happening in my patients and their differences in outcomes really had little to do with their hearing loss but the world in which they were born. Their study demonstrated that a critical factor in a child’s ability to learn was his or her early language environment. Specifically, their study shows that by the end of the age of 3, children born into poverty will have heard 30 million fewer words than their affluent peers. What gets glossed over in their study is they found huge qualitative differences. The 30 million word gap is more of a metaphor for the impact of the early language environment on the developing brain.

By the end of the age of 3, children born into poverty will have heard 30 million fewer words than their affluent peers.

IDEAS: So what’s the impact? What are some examples?

SUSKIND: Your heart and lungs come out fully developed when you are born, but the brain is completely dependent on what it encounters on its ride to full development, and especially in the first three years there is a huge amount of brain development that occurs. 80 to 85 percent of the physical brain will be developed in that time. And that brain is absolutely dependent on the language

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It's here!

Our Long Beach Walk4Hearing will be held on Sunday, June 11 at the beautiful [Shoreline Park](#) in Long Beach, with registration starting at 9 a.m.

Please consider donating to our Chapter Team, Maxine's Marchers. 40% of your donation comes back to our Chapter.

To donate online [click here](#), then click on the green "Donate Now" button.

If you prefer to send a check, mail it to:

Katie Wright
7802 Kingbee St
Downey CA 90242

Your check will be turned in at the Walk on the morning of June 11.

thirty million little words

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input, parent talk, and interaction, which is the key catalyst for creating those neural connections. A lot of people think of parent talk as just a way to build children's vocabulary. But in truth, because it has such a fundamental impact on all the brain wiring, parent talk impacts all of the brain function, from memory, emotion, to stability, [self-regulation], [to] spatial and math [skills].

IDEAS: How do you balance quantity of speech and quality?

SUSKIND: Both are so important. Quantity drives quality. Going back to our research program and our curriculum development, we've culled it down to what we call the Three 'T's, which is Tune In, Talk More, and Take Turns. So Tune In is really following your child's lead, seeing what your child is interested in. Talk More is talking more about it using rich vocabulary, narrating your child's day. Take Turns is really viewing your child as a conversational partner and having a conversation back and forth.

IDEAS: What kinds of results have you been seeing with your Chicago program?

SUSKIND: We were able to show that parents understood more about their children's language development, and that they talked more, had more conversations, used richer vocabulary, even

increased their math and spatial talk, were more responsive to their children, and their children were doing better. But even more important, we brought the parents back, asked what did you like, what didn't you like, and they gave us lots of input. This is their curriculum.

IDEAS: Critics of Rhode Island's "Providence Talks" language-gap initiative have argued that it doesn't account for variability within classes and could be stigmatizing or unhelpful to lower-income parents, many of whom do talk often to their children. How do you address that with your program?

SUSKIND: There are certainly many high-income parents who don't talk and many low-income parents who do talk. Our program is not about telling parents what to do, it's about partnering with them and explaining the science. What parents do is up to them.

IDEAS: What's the end goal of your work?

SUSKIND: We need to really think about what education in this country looks like. We need to align our policy with our science. And science is pretty clear that learning begins on day one, not the first day of school. The only way we're going to even move this needle is starting from day one.

Britt Peterson is an Ideas columnist. She lives in Washington, D.C. Follow her on Twitter @brittkpeterson.

Bills requiring captions on all public TVs fail; Advocates eye 2024 legislative push

Hearing Health Matters, April 28, 2023

SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO — Loop New Mexico has reported that HB 288, the legislation that would have required “captions always on” on public TVs failed to get placed on the agenda for the Senate before this year’s short session of the legislature adjourned. The bill had gotten “do pass” recommendations by two state House committees and then by the full House.



The New Mexico bill would have required captions be turned on at all times during business hours on what are considered public TVs—including at restaurants, bars, gyms, etc.

The bill was an initiative of the Committee for Communication Access In New Mexico (CCAnm) and was patterned after that group’s ordinances that were previously passed by the city councils of Albuquerque and Santa Fe. As with the two ordinances, if the bill had passed and been signed into law, it called for statutory fines of up to \$250 for a first offense and \$500 for each subsequent offense.

Similar legislation was introduced in the Indiana legislature, sponsored by the Committee for Communication Access in Indiana. (CCAI) This bill

also did not get out of committee. In both instances, it is planned to try again when the legislatures meet in 2024. A group in California is reportedly also working on a similar piece of legislation.

Though thought of as primarily benefiting the 48 million hard of hearing and the deaf people in this

“Captions Always On” laws have successfully been passed in a number of cities that include Boston, Portland, San Francisco and Seattle. Captioning advocates are following the lead of Washington and Maryland in adopting such a statewide regulation.

country, captions have also been found to be beneficial for second language learners and even to people to with so called normal hearing in extremely noisy environments such as sports bars and gyms. They also help all people watching the TV in environments where it must be quiet such as medical waiting rooms. Closed captioning makes TV programs, whether news coverage of an emergency or a network drama, more accessible for all those groups.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that captions be turned on in public venues when requested but, because of inadequate enforcement procedures, it is routinely violated. State laws, like the proposed one in New Mexico, change the requirement to be “captions on” whenever the TV is viewable to the public and enforcement would be handled by the NM Attorney General’s office. In the case of New Mexico, if the bill had passed and been signed into law, there would statutory fines of up to \$250 for a first offense and \$500 for each subsequent offense.

Source: [Loop New Mexico](https://loopnewmexico.org/)

<https://hearinghealthmatters.org/hearing-news-watch/2023/bill-caption-require-fail-new-mexico-indiana/>



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