

Do you ever “fail” at hearing loss?

Shari Eberts, *Living With Hearing Loss*
June 7, 2022

Educators tell us it is okay to fail. That is how we learn and grow. And I agree. But what about at hearing loss? Is it okay to “fail” sometimes?

I recently got an email from the head of my son’s school talking about the importance of failure. Truth be told, it got my attention because it mentioned Wordle. I am obsessed with Wordle and try to play it every day. I love to compare my results with the family—yes, we are a competitive bunch. We debate who used the best starting word and try to be the first one to sneak the word of the day into our dinner conversation.

But sometimes I fail at Wordle. We all do. More often than we care to admit. Sure, we solve it most of the time, even getting it in two tries a couple of lucky times. But sometimes we don’t solve it. It’s frustrating and exasperating, but it doesn’t keep us from jumping in and trying again the next day. Failing is just part of the Wordle process.

It’s the same thing for hearing loss.

Bumps in the road are part of the hearing loss experience

Hearing loss is a journey, and for many of us it has twists and turns and ups and downs. There are great hearing days and not so great hearing days. When we ask for captions on a Zoom call,

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Join us on August 10 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, August 10

Hof’s Hut, 2147 Bellflower Blvd., LB

Free parking in the lot behind the restaurant



Miryam Fernandez receives DRC award for service

As Gail writes in this issue’s President’s Column, our Chapter member Miryam Fernandez received the Jerry Stein Memorial Independent

Living Award from the Disabled Resources Center (DRC) in Long Beach.

Miryam emigrated from Peru to Long Beach at the age of 5. After 4 years in the Air Force, she became a teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District. She lived and worked in Long Beach for many years, but is now retired and resides in Seal Beach.

Miryam is very involved in the community. For several years she served in various positions on the Long Beach Memorial Hospital Board. In Leisure World Seal Beach, she teaches Spanish and Computer classes and actually kept these classes active via Zoom during the pandemic. She is involved in the Latino Club, Low Vision/Hearing Club, and Sunshine Club, all in Leisure World. Miryam recently stepped in as Secretary of her Catholic Parish while their priest and officers were away attending a convention.

For our HLAA Chapter, Miryam served as Secretary for four years. When our Chapter Treasurer resigned, Miryam stepped into that position. She hosts our Board and Chapter Zoom meetings and volunteers to drive our members to our Chapter meetings.

She is a dedicated leader and states that she just wants to help people, with and without hearing loss. We, as a Chapter, are so grateful for her service to us and proud of her commitment to her community as a whole.

Chapter Calendar

August 10 at 4:00

Chapter social meeting at Hof’s Hut

August 23 at Noon

Board meeting on Zoom

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

Register for Zoom meetings from
our sister HLAA chapters

HLAA Diablo Valley Chapter

Moritz Leber

Saturday, August 5, 10:00 - 11:30 am

Learn about the latest hearing restoration research using brain computer interface (BCI) technology.

Presenter: Moritz Leber of
Blackrock Neurotech, HearAgain Auditory Nerve Implant

[Pre-register for Zoom meeting](#)

HLAA Veterans Across America Virtual Chapter

Virtual Chapter Meeting on Zoom

Tuesday, August 15, 8:00 - 9:00 pm

This will be an open meeting. Join us on your computer or mobile device. Sponsored by Starkey.

Contact: Carla Beyer-Smolin, (301) 657-2248,
email chapters@hearingloss.org

[Pre-register for Zoom meeting](#)

Study Participants Needed

My name is Isaac Alter; I am a medical student in the department of Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery (ear, nose, and throat surgery) at New York-Presbyterian Hospital (Columbia and Weill Cornell). I am also a Bay Area native and a former professional Broadway musician, with a lifelong passion for music and the effects that it can have on people.

I am conducting a study with Dr. Anil Lalwani and Dr. Alex Chern (who is a hearing aid user and HLAA member himself) examining the effect of hearing loss on music enjoyment. We are actively recruiting a) individuals with bilateral hearing aids (a hearing aid in each ear) and b) individuals with at least one cochlear implant to complete a 20-30 min. online study; if you have two hearing aids OR a cochlear implant, we would love to have you participate. The study involves listening to musical clips on your computer and answering questions about them. No headphones or other special equipment is required.

Please contact me directly at ila2111@cumc.columbia.edu if you are interested. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Isaac L. Alter (he/him)

M.D. Candidate, Class of 2026



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

from **Gail Morrison**

Saluting a chapter member

We honored Miryam Fernandez at Disabled Resources Center, Inc. Annual Awards Event at The Grand in Long Beach Thursday, July 27, 2023. Unfortunately, Miryam was in isolation with COVID and unable to attend. However, many attended to support her as recipient of The Jerry Stein Independent Living Award, DRC's highest honor for her volunteer work as a person with hearing loss. Miryam's sister Lily, accepted the award for her.

Those who attended were her sister Lily Vargas; Lily's husband Tobi Vargas; Miryam's best friend Aide Ruvalcaba; Nancy Kawamana, Miryam's friend from teaching days; and our HLAA members Katie Wright, Ellen Mathis, Linda DeGuire and myself. Two other invitees of Miryam's were unable to attend: Bea Almada and Suzie Torres.

Each year DRC holds this Annual Awards Event to honor people who are helping people with disabilities. Former Senator Alan Lowenthal was honored with the Civic Leadership Award. Senator Lowenthal related how he became aware that people with disabilities were not being represented in education and the community. Together with former DRC Executive Director Jeanette Nishikawa and Steve Anderson, he paved the way to assist people with disabilities to reach their life goals. While a Psychiatric Professor at CSULB. Senator Lowenthal was instrumental in making the connections in his position as a U.S. Senator. I recall Jeanette telling me how much Senator Lowenthal encouraged and supported her. She was eventually honored when Lowenthal was California Senator, and she traveled to Sacramento to receive this distinction. Jeanette was quadriplegic, with an undiagnosible diagnosis. Her twin brother was completely healthy.

DRC is an independent living center, one of 22 in California, that seeks to assist people with disabilities to live independently in the community. I have served as a Board of Director's Member since 2011.

We were proud to have Miryam to represent HLAA Long Beach/Lakewood Chapter with this honor.

“fail” at hearing loss?

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sometimes the host enables them and other times they forget.

We struggle. We triumph. And we struggle again. But we keep going—one foot in front of the other down the hearing loss road—because giving up is not an option. Communication is too important to ignore.

This is why understanding the Big Picture of hearing loss—that it is a journey, not a puzzle with a finite solution—is so important. If you don’t know that bumps in the road are part of the process, they could derail you. (We discuss the Big Picture in detail in *Hear & Beyond*.)

For example, if you don’t know that hearing aids are not like glasses—they don’t work perfectly right out of the box—you may see your struggle to adjust to them as a failure. It is not. In fact, it is a normal part of the process.

Training Yourself to Try Again Tomorrow

People with hearing loss must learn resilience. We need the fortitude to pick ourselves up after a difficult communication situation and try again. To shake off the disappointment of a poor accessibility experience and get back at it tomorrow. To calmly remind our communication partners to face us and keep their mouth uncovered for the millionth time even when we want to yell, “Why can’t you remember what I need you to do?”

But how can we learn to be more resilient? Some of it comes down to attitude.

If we believe we deserve to be part of the conversation (and we do!), we will take steps to make that happen. And if we understand that our own self-advocacy helps other people with hearing loss too (it does!), we will be more motivated to ask for better communication access. It takes practice to retrain our negative self-talk, but it is worth it. And it is an important part of skillful living with hearing loss.

So punch up that new Wordle puzzle and fail all you like! It may be good training for your next difficult hearing loss experience.

<https://livingwithhearingloss.com/2022/06/07/do-you-ever-fail-at-hearing-loss/>

Study links higher omega-3 DHA levels to reduced hearing difficulties in middle aged and older adults

American Society for Nutrition (ASN)

July 17, 2023

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS — A new population-based cross-sectional study conducted by researchers highlights an intriguing association between blood levels of the omega-3 fatty acid docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and age-related hearing issues.

According to the findings, middle-aged and older adults with higher DHA levels were 8-20% less likely to report hearing difficulties compared to those with lower DHA levels.

Dr. Michael I. McBurney, a senior scientist at the Fatty Acid Research Institute and an adjunct professor at the University of Guelph and the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, emphasized that previous studies have already linked higher DHA levels to a lower risk of heart disease, cognitive impairment, and death.

“Higher DHA levels have previously been found to be associated with a lower risk of heart disease, cognitive impairment, and death. Our study extends these findings to suggest a role for DHA in maintaining auditory function and helping reduce the risk of age-related hearing loss”

—Michael I. McBurney, PhD

Diet and Hearing Health

Using data from the UK Biobank, the researchers examined self-reported hearing status and blood DHA levels in over 100,000 people aged 40-69 years in the United Kingdom. The analysis, accounting for potential confounding variables, revealed that individuals with the highest quintile of blood DHA levels were 16% less likely to have difficulty hearing and 11% less likely to struggle with conversations in background noise, compared to those with the lowest DHA levels.

Dr. McBurney, however, emphasized that while the results indicate a significant association between DHA levels and hearing, the study’s cross-sectional design cannot definitively prove that DHA preserves auditory function or that inadequate DHA levels contribute to hearing loss. Nonetheless, the findings add to mounting evidence of the importance of omega-3 fatty acids, particularly DHA, in maintaining

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Omega-3 DHA study

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overall health and safeguarding against aging-related declines in various body functions.

Omega-3s, including DHA, may potentially protect inner ear cells or mitigate inflammatory responses triggered by loud noises, chemicals, or infections. Earlier studies conducted in older adults and animals have also suggested that higher omega-3 levels could be inversely related to age-related hearing loss and potentially provide protection against it.

Since our bodies have limited ability to produce DHA, its presence in blood and tissues mainly relies on omega-3 intake. Regular consumption of seafood or dietary supplements can elevate DHA levels.

DHA Levels and Hearing Loss

Hearing loss affects around 20% of the global population, exceeding 1.5 billion individuals, and this number is expected to rise with the aging population in the coming years. Hearing impairment can vary in severity, impacting communication, social interactions, education, job opportunities, and various aspects of daily life.

Apart from genetic predisposition and medication, environmental factors contribute to hearing loss. Preventive measures include protecting the ears from loud noises using protective equipment and seeking appropriate medical care for infections.

The research will be presented at NUTRITION 2023, the flagship annual meeting of the American Society for Nutrition, held from July 22 to July 25 in Boston.

However, it's crucial to note that while abstracts presented at NUTRITION 2023 underwent evaluation and selection by experts, they have not yet undergone the rigorous peer-review process required for

publication in scientific journals. As such, the presented findings should be regarded as preliminary until a peer-reviewed publication is available.

<https://www.newswise.com/faseb/upping-your-intake-of-omega-3s-may-help-protect-your-hearing>

About NUTRITION 2023

NUTRITION 2023 is the flagship meeting of the American Society for Nutrition and the premier educational event for nutritional professionals around the globe. NUTRITION brings together lab scientists, practicing clinicians, population health researchers, and community intervention investigators to identify solutions to today's greatest nutrition challenges. Our audience also includes rising leaders in the field – undergraduate, graduate, and medical students. NUTRITION 2023 will be held July 22-25, 2023 in Boston. <https://nutrition.org/N23> #Nutrition2023

About the American Society for Nutrition (ASN)

ASN is the preeminent professional organization for nutrition research scientists and clinicians around the world. Founded in 1928, the society brings together the top nutrition researchers, medical practitioners, policy makers and industry leaders to advance our knowledge and application of nutrition. ASN publishes four peer-reviewed journals and provides education and professional development opportunities to advance nutrition research, practice, and education. Since 2018, the American Society of Nutrition has presented NUTRITION, the leading global annual meeting for nutrition professionals. <http://www.nutrition.org>



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Or call for more information: (301) 657-2248

For more information about our chapter, visit hlaa-lb-lakewood.org

Questions? Contact us!

Email: info@hlaa-lb-lakewood.org

Phone: (562) 549-3086

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