

My least favorite things about hearing loss

Shari Eberts. livingwithhearingloss.com
September 26, 2023

There are positives and negatives to almost anything—including hearing loss. Today's post highlights the downsides, but don't worry, next time we will highlight the silver linings.

The Downsides of Hearing Loss

Listening fatigue

With hearing loss, communication takes work! It's like playing a game of Wheel of Fortune. Some of the letters are filled in while others are blank. We must use context clues, speechreading cues, and anything else we can think of to transform the incomplete sounds we hear into words or phrases that make sense in the context of the conversation. It's not easy and requires a lot of processing power. No wonder we are tired after a long day of listening!

Appearing rude or unfriendly

When you have hearing loss, sometimes you don't know when people are speaking to you. For example, if a person behind me says, "Excuse me," I won't always move out of the way. They may think I am being rude, but the reality is that I didn't hear them. Because hearing loss is invisible, people often assume the worst.

Getting our hearing tested

It's hard taking a test you know you'll fail, but even so, I get my hearing tested at least annually. Accurate data helps me choose the best hearing aid and assistive listening technologies for my particular hearing loss. When combined with a can-do mental attitude (we call this a MindShift in Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss) and behavioral changes like identifying as someone with hearing loss, communication becomes much easier.



Join us on October 12 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, October 12

Hof's Hut, 2147 Bellflower Blvd., LB

Free parking in the lot behind the restaurant

Chapter Calendar

October 12 at 4:00

Chapter social meeting at Hof's Hut

October 25 at Noon

Board meeting on Zoom

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

Missing the punchline of the joke

Everyone bursts out laughing, but I missed the final word—the one that contains the humor. It's never as funny on the second retelling, even if I can get someone to stop laughing long enough to repeat it. It may seem like a small thing, but missing the punchline of the joke makes us feel disconnected from others and can add to feelings of social isolation.

Drowning in rapid speech

Are people speaking more quickly? Or maybe my processing capability is slower? Either way, the rapid fire delivery of news anchors, restaurant servers and almost every teenager is hard to swallow (and hear!). It can make it

Register for Zoom meetings from our sister HLAA chapters

HLAA East Bay Chapter

Impact of Hearing Loss on Music Enjoyment

**Saturday, October 14, meeting opens at 9:30 am,
presentation at 10:00 am**

Kay Tyberg will speak about the broad landscape of hearing assistive technology (HAT) in the home, in public and beyond. She will discuss useful tools, devices and apps, where to find them and how to advocate for HATs to meet your needs, whether for the theater, traveling, church, emergency situations or other needs.

Kay Tyberg is a very active member of HLAA who has experienced life long hearing loss. She is President and co-founder of her home Blair County Pennsylvania chapter in Altoona, and previously led and founded at least two other HLAA chapters in Pennsylvania. She has volunteered in many capacities serving Deaf and hard of hearing people in and outside of HLAA, including as Chairperson of the Telecommunications Relay Service of the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission. Kay was the recipient of the HLAA National Outstanding Award.

[Pre-register for Zoom meeting](#)

HLAA Diablo Valley Chapter

Hearing loss, hearing devices, and all that jazz: Effects on music perception and enjoyment

Saturday, October 7, 10:00–11:30 am

Alexander Chern, MD, is a fellow in otology, neurotology, and skull base surgery at Johns Hopkins University.

Dr. Chern will discuss the effects that hearing loss and hearing devices (including hearing aids and cochlear implants) have on music perception and enjoyment.

Dr. Chern completed his residency training in otolaryngology-head and neck surgery at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital (Columbia/Weill Cornell) and received his M.D. from Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and his B.S. in Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry from Yale University. He is the author of numerous peer-reviewed publications, book chapters, and articles educating the public about hearing loss. His research interests include music perception and appreciation, cochlear implantation, and the effects of hearing loss on the brain.

[Pre-register for Zoom meeting](#)



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

from **Gail Morrison**

**Weingart meetings?
Nope, not quite yet.**

You may have wondered when we will have regular meetings at Weingart again, with speakers and new information about hearing loss. Our last meeting there was in June 2022 and no one came. This disturbed us a great deal as two of our members worked very hard to prepare a program on Preparation for an Emergency. At the Board meeting this past June, it was decided to start up meetings at Weingart in September. However, it was brought to our attention that many of you might be traveling in September, so we tentatively planned to hold a meeting in October. Again, we had our doubts that people would actually come. The Board has been discussing this continuing problem.

The Long Beach/Lakewood Chapter is a support group that provides education and information on hearing loss to our members and guests. Sadly, COVID changed all that when we weren't allowed to have in-person meetings. To invite guest experts to speak, and have no one show up is too embarrassing when our speaker expects 50 or more attendees. So instead we are meeting for casual socializing every month at Hof's Hut. This has been hugely successful and I thank those of you who have attended!

Last month, our Board again discussed meeting in-person at Weingart. Until we sense a desire for that from our members, we will continue with the Hof's Hut get-togethers.

We hope that you will find that you've missed meeting in-person at Weingart and hearing the many different programs and information to help you to hear better. There's so much information to help you. If you have questions or ideas you'd like to discuss, please contact me at my email: gail7go@gmail.com.

Thank you and I hope we will see each other soon at Weingart!

least favorite things

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challenging to keep up and adds to the listening fatigue described above. The same goes for mumblers and low-talkers. Slow down, please, you talk too fast.

Movies, media and conferences without captions

Hearing loss continues to be seen as an afterthought for disability access. Ramps are a necessity in all modern spaces. And they should be. Why aren't captions? Progress is being made—movie theaters provide captioning devices and most video platforms offer them—but there are snags. Devices don't consistently work well and Zoom, the most popular of all the video conferencing platforms still requires the person who sets up the meeting to enable captioning in the main account settings—not always easy at a large institution. More work remains.

'Never mind' and other dismissive behavior

"Never mind" or "it wasn't important," or similar phrases uttered in response to a request for a repeat are demeaning and cruel. They are a dismissal and insulting. It says that the listener is not important enough to the speaker to repeat what was said. If I hear that from somebody enough times, I don't bother to interact with them any longer. It's not worth my time.

Hearing loss stigma

Even with earbuds of all types drooping from almost everyone's ears, hearing loss stigma remains. Often associated with being old or out-of-touch, hearing aids have not evolved into fashion accessories the way glasses have. Many people continue to hide their hearing loss for fear they will be mocked or excluded. Mainstream media has embraced the Deaf (signing) experience, yet people with hearing loss remain misunderstood or are used as the brunt of the joke. Our documentary, *We Hear You*, aims to shine a light on the lived hearing loss experience too.

Being met at the airport with a wheelchair

Has this happened to you? How about being offered braille information cards on board a

plane? Or provided with an ASL (American Sign Language) interpreter at the hospital when you do not sign. The general population misunderstands hearing loss, but I hope that continued advocacy will help bridge the gap over time.

Links with other health problems

Hearing loss is more than a sensory disorder. It is associated with other health problems too. Studies show that hearing loss is twice as common in people with diabetes and there is a high correlation between hearing loss and cardiovascular disease. It is also associated with a higher risk of falls. Most alarmingly, untreated hearing loss is linked to a higher risk of dementia, although additional studies show that using hearing devices lowers the likelihood for those most at risk.

Readers, what are your least favorite things about hearing loss?

<https://livingwithhearingloss.com/2023/09/26/my-least-favorite-things-about-living-with-hearing-loss/>

The two most painful words (still)

Gael Hannan. hearinghealthmatters.org

September 19, 2023

The following article, written by Lauren Sherwood in 2014, almost 10 years ago, is the most widely viewed article ever on HHTM. Her words still resonate with people who have hearing loss and their communication partners. Thank you, Lauren.

I am one of an estimated 3.5 million hard-of-hearing Canadians.

This doesn't mean I don't hear people. Every day, I hear conversations and arguments and lectures and cussing all around me. And of all the words that stream past, the most hurtful aren't swear words.

Like almost everyone else, I swear. But the two words that I would never say to someone else and which I can't stand hearing are "never mind."

Why you should never say "never mind" to someone with hearing loss

Of course, I'm going to miss things during a conversation. Sometimes I'll let it go, but other times I want to be included, so I ask, "Sorry?"

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2 most painful words

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What was that? Can you repeat yourself?” And when I hear, “Oh, never mind. It wasn’t that important,” it shuts me down.

I was born with a moderate to severe hearing loss in the high- and mid-range frequencies. It wasn’t until I was five that they discovered I was hard of hearing and needed hearing aids. I went through elementary and high school using an FM system — a receiver boot that attaches to the hearing aids and a transmitter mike that the teacher wears. Most of my classmates were curious about my hearing aids and the FM system, and I was always happy to answer questions. At one point, I may have had a classmate believing I could get radio on the system.

At university, I used the FM system, note-takers and a fantastic program called Typewell. Transcribers would come to my classes and type on their computer what the professor was saying. It would show up on my computer and I would receive a copy of the transcript after class. Typewell brought my learning up to a whole new level, even though sometimes the keyboard shortcuts act up, showing “priests” for “parasites.”

Outside of school, I’ve had jobs ranging from cosmetician at a drugstore in Osoyoos (a town in the interior of British Columbia) to front-desk attendant at a resort in Fairmont Hot Springs. I’ve volunteered for many events and organizations such as Best Buddies, Desert Half Triathlons, and the Society of Geography Students.

In August 2013, I was crowned one of three British Columbia Ambassadors. The program promotes self-esteem, motivation, volunteering and post-secondary education for young adults. Competitors are judged on their public speaking, a B.C. knowledge exam, talent and an interview with the judges. As I don’t have any “extraordinary” talent, I performed a comedy monologue about my hearing loss and the hilarious situations I find myself in sometimes (such as my brother unplugging the vacuum and waiting to see how long it took me to notice).

So why am I telling you my life story? To show that I’m the same as you. I sleep in on weekends, procrastinate on my assignments, and binge on Netflix. The only difference is I’m hard of hearing.

Hearing loss gives me a unique perspective

Through all my experiences, I’ve found my hearing loss helps me to stand out, gives me a unique perspective on issues and is a great topic for an icebreaker (I’m never at a loss when the game is “What’s one unique thing about you?”).

My hearing loss is something I was born with and I have no idea what “normal” hearing is like — but I imagine it’s loud!

One of my favorite things to do, after a long day of active listening (when you’re hard of hearing, passive listening doesn’t exist), is take off my hearing aids and let silence descend around me. It’s similar to taking off tight shoes when you get home after being on your feet for a long time.

I work every day to hear what is going on around me and it is only when I’m at home that I can fully relax.

I’m a social person. I like knowing what’s going on around me, being part of what’s going on, and it hurts when someone is unwilling to repeat themselves. It makes me feel as if I’m less than them, or that they can’t be bothered to make that little extra effort.

Being hard of hearing means you live in two worlds. Every day, I balance these two worlds and do my best to catch what everyone is saying and take part in conversations. There will always be times when I just can’t hear what was said and I will ask someone to repeat themselves.

So please, don’t mutter: “Never mind.”

I mind.

<https://hearinghealthmatters.org/better-hearing-consumer/2023/the-two-most-painful-words-still/>

Greater hearing loss awareness creates options

Shari Eberts, hearinghealthmatters.org
July 13, 2023

We were in triangle pose—a challenging posture where you bend the body sideways over straight legs. One arm extends upwards towards the sky while the other reaches down for the floor. Reaches is the key word, because depending on your flexibility, the hand aiming for the floor may not get there. Or even close. And that is ok.

“If your hand doesn’t touch the floor, use a block to raise the floor up to you,” my yoga instructor advised the class. She often explains how the postures work so we can adapt them to our particular body types. “When you have greater awareness,” she continued, “you have more options.”

And something clicked. As is often the case, wisdom from my yoga practice translates directly to my life with hearing loss. Whether it is yoga or hearing loss (or anything else), greater awareness breeds a wider range of options for success.

Greater self-awareness helps boost success

The more we understand about our own hearing loss, the better able we are to ask for the specific assistance that we need. People are not mind readers which means [self-identifying](#) as having hearing loss is often not enough to create [good communication](#).

It is up to us to understand the technologies and other accommodations that work best for us, so we can ask for them.

How do we develop this knowledge?

Hearing care professionals provide some of it, but often the day-to-day, nitty-gritty details of living with hearing loss come from other sources. Trial and error is a terrific teacher. As are hearing loss peers who have likely experienced the same challenges.

Find [hearing loss peers](#) on social media (my [Facebook group is Living With Hearing Loss](#))

or through support networks like [Hearing Loss Association of America](#) (HLAA). [Books](#) and [films](#) about hearing loss can also bring new insights.

***Bottom line:** the more you know,
the more options you will have for
communicating successfully.*

General awareness creates better accessibility

The same holds true for the population at large.

The more check-out clerks and waiters and flight attendants understand about the needs of people with hearing loss, the more readily they can serve our needs. Ditto for our colleagues at work and our friends and family. The more they know, the better they can not only meet our needs, but anticipate them. And the easier it will be for them to do so.

We expect health care providers to understand hearing loss, but many do not take it seriously. Mumbling support staff and frazzled technicians can make quality healthcare challenging to achieve. Much education is needed about [captioning](#), [hearing loops](#) and other assistive listening technologies so that theaters, schools, hospitals and other public venues can build them into their standard operating procedures.

Individual advocacy benefits us all

Advocacy and more advocacy is needed, both by large consumer organizations like HLAA, but also by individuals with hearing loss like us. Constantly advocating for our needs can be exhausting, but the payoff is great, not only for ourselves, but for all people with hearing loss.

Each time we advocate for ourselves, we educate others, so they are better prepared to meet the needs of the next person with hearing loss they meet. It is a virtuous circle where we all benefit.

And so, the work continues...

Original article:
<https://hearinghealthmatters.org/findhearing/2023/hearing-loss-awareness-accessibility-options/>

Neosensory's hearing technology now available for US veterans nationwide

September 26, 2023

SILICON VALLEY, CALIFORNIA — Neosensory has announced that its advanced hearing technology has been approved for Department of Veterans Affairs clinic locations across the country. This arrangement allows audiologists and other medical providers to distribute Neosensory's hearing loss and tinnitus solutions to millions of American veterans.

Hearing problems are the most common service-related disability reported by veterans to the VA — specifically, chronic ringing in the ears, known as tinnitus, and hearing loss. Serving near loud machinery, gunfire, and explosions can damage the delicate structures of inner ear and lead to the development of tinnitus, hearing loss, and even deafness. Neosensory offers help for all these conditions through different programs on their innovative wristband, which uses haptic technology (patterns of vibration on the skin) to help users experience sound, understand conversations, and provide relief from tinnitus symptoms.

Tech Now Available to Veterans

Neosensory Duo uses bimodal stimulation (two forms of sensory input) to teach a user's brain to ignore the phantom noise caused by tinnitus. Its effectiveness has been demonstrated in a double-blind, peer-reviewed study published in the International Tinnitus Journal. In eight weeks users find significant relief from tinnitus by

wearing the band and listening to tones from Neosensory's mobile app for 10 minutes per day.

Neosensory Clarify listens to speech and translates high-frequency sounds into specific patterns felt on the wrist. Over a period of weeks users begin to more clearly hear what is being said. Clarify users report needing their hearing aids less or not at all after using the band.

Neosensory Sound Awareness allows a user to experience all sounds around them, which is especially useful for those who are Deaf or profoundly hard of hearing. The wristband uses millions of unique vibrational patterns to identify specific sounds around the wearer. After an adjustment period, those who cannot hear with their ears can easily identify sounds such as cars, a baby crying, door bells ringing and much more.

All of these innovations can be accessed on the same wristband and are available for VA doctors looking to offer their patients new options for their hearing health. Audiologists who are interested can contact Neosensory at audiology@neosensory.com to learn how they can carry these devices to offer to their patients.

More information at Neosensory.com

Neosensory was founded by Stanford neuroscientist David Eagleman in 2015. Dr. Eagleman has aimed his laboratory research toward ways to expand human sensory abilities. This led to the invention of the company's novel haptic feedback wristband, which is being used by wearers, audiologists and scientists around the world.



Join Hearing Loss Association of America — Your membership supports our chapter

Join HLAA to become part of the one organization that represents the interests of 48 million people with hearing loss in the U. S., providing information, education, support and advocacy to people with hearing loss.

Individuals \$45/year • Couple or family \$55/year

Read about the benefits of membership and join online at <https://www.hearingloss.org/make-an-impact/become-a-memberrenew/>

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

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

Questions? Contact us!

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