Connection or Isolation?

Cathy Kooser
MSW, LISW
Hillcrest Hearing Aids
& Balance Center
Connection or Isolation

Community – living in vital connectedness with others – is absolutely essential to human life! Consequently, relationships are crucial to our human existence.
Psychologists find that human beings have a fundamental need for inclusion in group life and for close relationships.
Connection or Isolation?

Eve Nickerson’s Quote
Missing Words:
The Family Handbook on Adult Hearing Loss
Research strongly supports people with hearing loss often feel isolated from their loved ones, friends and co-workers. This sense of isolation can lead to depression, poor self-esteem, self-pity, feeling disconnected from or the actual loss of relationships, and loss of love.
Connection or Isolation?

Why do humans have such a strong need to connect with others? How does this connection maintain our physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing?
Connection or Isolation

We were created with a strong need to connect with others, to feel loved and understood by them. Communication is critically important for connection to occur.
Connection or Isolation?

What happens when we have poor, or even worse, disconnected relationships with our loved ones?
Hearing loss, left unchecked, can lead to poor communication, causing isolation. Isolation can lead to death – death of relationships, death of emotional health, even premature physical death.
Connection or Isolation?

Death of Relationships:
- Higher incidence of divorce
  - Loss of love
  - Loss of trust
- Disconnected familial relationships
- Loss of friendships
Connection or Isolation?

- Death of Emotional Health:
  - 1.5 times more likely to feel left out
  - 25% higher incidence of loneliness
  - 1.46 times more likely to experience mental problems
  - 28% more likely to find overall mental health fair or poor
People with hearing loss are more likely to experience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>increased anger</td>
<td>discontentment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frustration</td>
<td>depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paranoia</td>
<td>being temperamental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insecurity</td>
<td>being more fearful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instability</td>
<td>being more self-critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nervousness</td>
<td>suffering from a sense of inferiority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tension</td>
<td>social phobias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anxiety</td>
<td>being perceived as confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irritability</td>
<td>disorientation or the inability to concentrate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Connection or Isolation?

Premature Physical Death – serious toll on health as a result of isolation and increased stress:

- Eroding arteries
- Increased incidence of high blood pressure
- Undermines learning
- Memory – cognition
Connection or Isolation?

In other words, we are built for social contact. There are serious—life-threatening—consequences when we don't get enough. We can't stay on track mentally. And we are compromised physically.
The connection between 2 individuals is the glue that holds the relationship in place. Without a personal connection the relationship can wither and die…….
Connection or Isolation?

One of the most serious consequences of poor communication is feeling and/or experiencing a sense of isolation. The use of poor coping strategies harm our ability to effectively communicate and therefore connect with one another.
Connection or Isolation?

- Poor Communication Strategies:
  - Bluffing – pretending to understand
  - Dominating the conversation – if I talk all the time I’m in control
  - Withdrawing – withdrawing so there is no miscommunication
Connection or Isolation?

However, it’s important to understand and recognize our loved ones also experience feeling disconnected, isolated and unloved if we choose to withdraw.
Connection or Isolation?

My hearing loss does not just impact me, but everyone who communicates with me and in particular, my loved ones!!
Connection or Isolation?

- Why does isolation occur as a result of HL?
  - Self-inflicted as person with HL chooses to withdraw.
  - Inflicted by others as they choose to not make the effort to communicate.
Why do we choose to inflict isolation upon ourselves by withdrawing?

- Fatigue
- Easier
- Avoid embarrassment
- Habit
- Lack of education/understanding
Connection or Isolation?

- Why do others choose to inflict isolation upon us?
  - Fatigue
  - Easier
  - Avoid embarrassment
  - Extra time necessary
  - Lack of education/understanding
Connection or Isolation?

How can we reduce/eliminate isolation resulting in improved connection and improved relationships?
Connection or Isolation?

- Understand the need to connect – gender differences
- Make the choice to connect – don’t isolate yourself physically
- Take responsibility for your HL and communication
- Educate yourself regarding effective communication strategies
- Utilize effective communication strategies – rules of communication
Connection or Isolation?

- Improved communication helps to create and maintain healthy and loving connections!
- Living in vital connectedness with others is essential to human life!
Connection or Isolation?

Make the choice to connect with your loved ones!

They need you!
Connection or Isolation?

- References: