



I Survived the Holidays... Barely!

Alison Freeman, Ph.D.
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“Blindness cuts us off from things,
but deafness cuts us off from people.”

- Helen Keller

— “Hearing loss does not just affect an
individual, but also one’s family and friends.”

- Michael A. Harvey, Ph.D.,

psychologist, author of

Listen with the Heart:

Relationships and Hearing Loss



What? ...Me Stressed??

- Hearing Loss is a major, ongoing stress
- The best coping skill in dealing with stress is

EDUCATION and

SELF- ADVOCACY!!



Stress...is it just me or...?

Hearing Loss is a constant stress that doesn't just affect us - it affects our:

- Marital Relationships
- Sibling Relationships
- Child/Parent Relationships
- Social and Community Involvement and/or Participation level

The sooner we accept this, the wider our circle of support will be.



Holiday Stress- Aacckk! or what did we learn from the holidays?

- More people, less control
- More people = “I don’t want to be a bother”
- More people = More anxiety and depression
- More people = More exhaustion in concentration and communication



It is my responsibility.....

- I see myself as an “educator” and assume the following:
 - Others are embarrassed and don’t know what questions to ask
 - People know little, if anything about hearing loss
 - Therefore, the responsibility for good communication is up to me, not the other person

Factors Contributing to Shame and Denial

- Embarrassment - symbol of being “old”
- Financial Burden
- Lack of insurance and Medicare coverage for hearing aids
- Would you rather be called “stupid” or hard of hearing?
- “Fakery” / “bluffing”
- Cultural factors - certain cultures view hearing loss as shameful, more resistance to wearing hearing aids





Physical Strategies

- Setting the “stage”
- Lighting and Windows - do not sit in front of windows
- Pick rooms/restaurants with carpeting/upholstery/drapery to absorb sound
- Reduce background noise - go into another room if necessary
- Enunciation and Eye contact -use of non verbal cues
- Pacing and speed - speaking slowly as naturally as possible
- Use of visual materials - drawing, technological aids I.e. cell phone apps



Psychological Strategies for better Communication

- Educating yourself before educating others
- Getting Past Denial and Bluffing
- Assertiveness of needs
- Responsibility for telling others what you can and cannot hear/understand



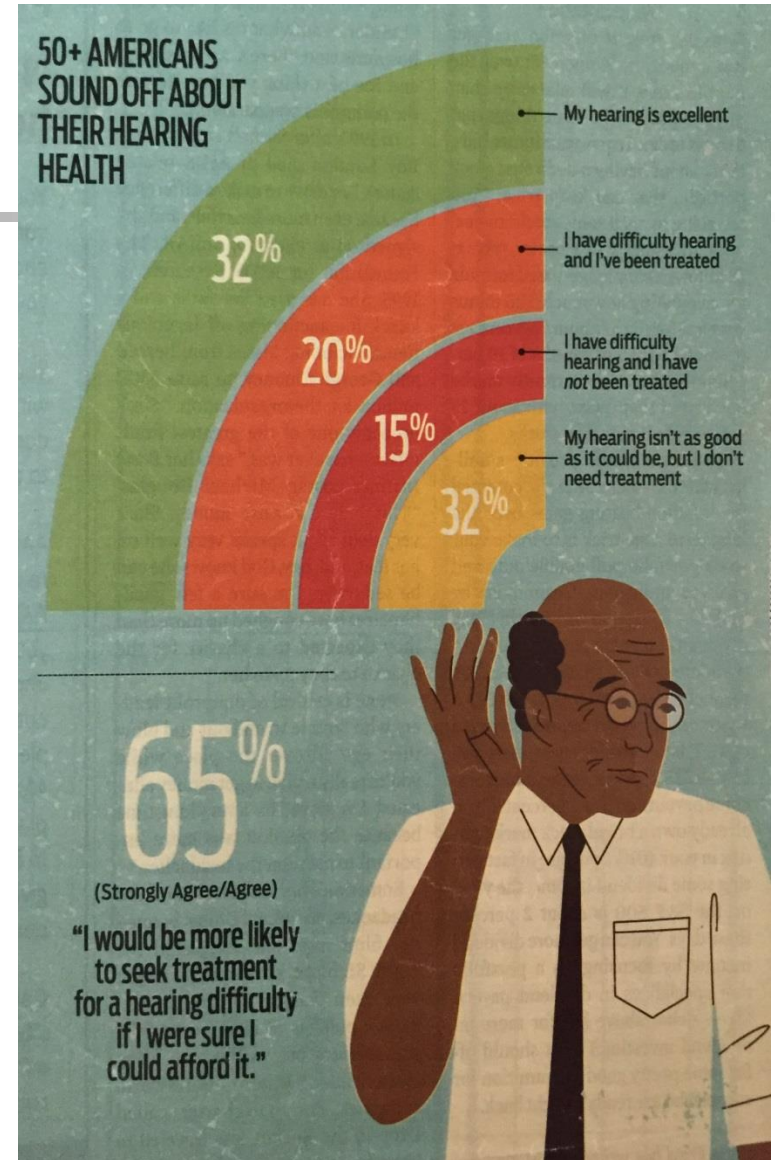
“Cloak of Invisibility”

- Hearing loss is an invisible disability, especially in those that lose it, adventitiously (later in life).
- The primary disability of hearing loss is a communication disability rather than just not being able to hear.
- Struggling to understand conversations, music or professional meetings is a constant stress everyday.

.....SO, let's make it more **visible** (unlike Harry Potter!) to help others share in the responsibility of good communication

Journey of Denial to Acceptance

- Typical time from diagnosis to treatment is 7 years due to denial, shame and/or financial inability!
- CHOOSE to make a different choice



**To bluff, or not
to bluff?**



No-Bluff Pledge

I have the **RIGHT** to understand and participate. In my life, I will not bluff! I will not pretend to understand when I do *not*. Instead I will do all that it takes to engage, interact and communicate! I will reclaim my life. Ban the bluff.

Gael Hannon



7 Key Pointers for Easier Communication

1. Educate yourself on what YOU need
2. Tell people what you need i.e.
 - * “Please face me..”
 - * “Don’t need to change how you speak..”
 - * “Please don’t cover your mouth so that I can lipread you..”
3. Identify what you can and cannot control



Take charge!

4. Take charge where to communicate i.e.
 - * quiet room at a party
 - * choose restaurants with carpet, fabric furniture

5. Avoid windows and bright light behind the speaker— the contrast and glare makes it hard to read lips and facial cues.



Three “A’s” of Coping

6. Recognize that you have **choices** –

- * **A**lternative – suggest a quieter restaurant
- * **A**voidance – decide not to go and be okay
- * **A**cceptance – decide to go and know that you will miss out on some things

Recognition of our choices gives us some power v.s. feeling like a victim without choices.



Last, but not least!

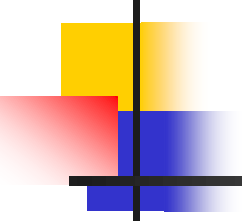
7. Have realistic expectations – and decide what is most important at the moment...

- * social connectedness

OR

- * taking care of oneself

(it is ok to be “selfish” and do this!)



The *Journey* of accepting
one's hearing loss
is a *gradual* and
continual process...

Goats, shoes, cherry pop..?

- What does a conversation sound like with a hearing loss?





Resources

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Contact Information

Alison Freeman, Ph.D.

dralisonfreeman@gmail.com

www.dralisonfreeman.net

310-712-1200 voice mail

424-238 7988 videototherapy/message