



Chicago North Shore Chapter Newsletter

February 2021



Dear Readers:

Our Chapter will resume weekly support groups and monthly meetings following the North Shore Senior Center reopening of on-site activities. In the meantime, be sure to check out the following on-line meetings:



You Are Invited to These Upcoming Meetings

“Fireside Chat with Pat Clickener and Richard Meyer”

February 8, 2021, 11 am

Enjoy the stories of the early days of SHHH (Self Help for the Hard of Hearing) which is now HLAA, and Rocky Stone, the retired CIA agent who founded SHHH.

To register for this Zoom Chapter meeting copy and paste this link into your browser.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAvc6vqD4uG9Ma8gR7hxOZI45x5rxXNl5c>

The link for the Zoom Meeting will then automatically be sent to your email address.

“How Do You Hear”

March 8, 2021, 11 am

All are welcome at this Open House to get acquainted with members of the HLAA Chicago North Shore Chapter and to learn how the group helps people with hearing loss. There will be open discussions on such topics as: How Would You Describe Your Hearing Loss? Do You Use Hearing Aids and/or Cochlear Implants? What Assistive Technologies Do You Prefer? What Strategies and Tricks Do You Use to Help You Hear? What Challenges Do You Have? We hope to see you there!

To register for this Zoom Chapter meeting copy and paste this link into your browser.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwkD0-tqT8uGNDnFoAbmxWtPg8yowqZH0my>

The link for the Zoom Meeting will then automatically be sent to your email address.

847.784.6040 between 9 am - 5 pm, Monday through Friday.



Shop at smile.amazon.com/ch/27-3871624 and Amazon will donate to the Hearing Loss Association of America Chicago North Shore Chapter.

Need Assistance to Zoom?

For those of you who have not yet Zoomed with us, please consider the benefits. We are able to have weekly conversations and exchange of ideas such as face masks, strategies for remaining safe, things that make our lives easier, etc. We have the advantage of practicing speech reading as masks aren't worn. We've taught each other strategies for use of technology, such as Otter.ai and speech to

text apps or using Bluetooth while Zooming. We enjoy each other's company and would like you to join us.

You can join most Zoom meetings a few minutes early to test out your Zoom features.

Contact me for more information at ElaineCMcCaffrey1@gmail.com

North Shore Senior Center Virtual Support Groups

These support groups are open to new members. If you or someone you know could benefit from some group support, please consider dropping into one of our meetings.

For additional information about North Shore Senior Center's various support groups, outreach efforts and caregiver services, please call

Hearing Loss Support Group

During the pandemic, the Hearing Loss Support Group, sponsored by the North Shore Senior Center, meets virtually, virtually every Monday from 11 am to noon. To join this group, please contact Ana Pinshower at apinshower@nssc.org or 847.784.6079.

2020 - 2021 Chapter Sponsors

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We are very grateful to these Sponsors for their generosity and support of HLAA Chicago North Shore Chapter. **NOTE:** if your name or business is not listed correctly, please let us know.

Zoom Zoom

As enabling as products such as Zoom or Google Meets can be, like using any power tool, some caution is required, and we would like you to know of what to beware.

Zoom-Pooped: Virtual Hearing Loss Exhaustion

When the pandemic sent us into isolation, whether forced or voluntary, we were rewarded with the beyond-amazing capabilities of modern technology.

Through Zoom and Google Meets and other platforms, we were able to connect virtually in online meetings with family, friends and business associates. Soon we were zooming for other activities: choir practice, attending church services, playing games with our family in other parts of the country, and even medical and audiology appointments! The use of such platforms rose dramatically; in April 2020, Zoom enabled 300 million calls a day!

But too much of a good thing comes at a price. “I’m exhausted!” one says. “It’s one Zoom meeting after another, all day long, and it is a total energy-drain. But the other problem is that I spend so much time on virtual meetings, when it comes to communicating with ‘live’ people, especially if there are two or more, I can’t follow the conversation as well. I’m so used to the sound coming directly through my sound processors, so I hold my MiniMic like a reporter’s mike towards their mouths, one at a time, to understand what they are saying.”

‘Hearing people’ are discovering what people with hearing loss already know: the intense focus required to understand people for significant periods of time consumes a great deal of energy. For people who depend on visual cues to understand speech, the meeting’s visual quality and sound aren’t always at the quality we need. We then have to work harder to get information from lipreading, facial expressions, tone and pitch of the voice, and body language.

Multi-person meetings are especially challenging, because the faces became thumbnails, unless you’re in ‘speaker view’ which shows a closeup of the person speaking. Frequently, participants are not sufficiently lit in their home environments, or they are over-lit. During live, in-person conversations, we have much better access to a person’s facial

expressions, lip movements, hand gestures and body movements – powerful cues that combine to help us understand.

Captioning of some sort is crucial for full communication access in virtual meetings.

There are other issues stemming from extensive computer use. People are reporting dryer eyes which can be uncomfortable and interfere with our vision. Many people are experiencing tinnitus, in meeting aftershocks.

There is enough stress in our lives thanks to the pandemic and politics. We don’t need more from the virtual access that has been a lifesaver for millions of people around the world. So, how do we carry out our virtual life so that we don’t become “zoom-pooped”?

Take as many zoom-breaks as you can, preferably getting some exercise.

1. Limit the number of daily virtual meetings to allow enough break time.
2. Keep the Zoom meeting as short as possible to achieve meeting goals.
3. Stream to hearing devices or use headsets that deliver sound crisply.
4. Keep volume down at a level that you don’t need to strain to hear.
5. Do eye exercises and use eyedrops to keep your eyes lubricated.
6. Use captioning if provided, or a speech-to-text app such as Otter to provide visual information.
7. Avoid multi-tasking, such as working on other documents, or answering email during your zoom call. Staying ‘present’ and in the moment will reduce the mental effort required when switching around on your computer
8. Let other people know what you need: plain background for better visual contrast, sufficient lighting, clear speech and fewer background distractions.

-Gael Hannan





Check It Out!

HLAA Chicago North Shore Chapter would like to remind you of our new **Lending Library!**

Chicago North Shore Chapter's Lending Library is now taking names of those who wish to borrow the Personal Hearing Loop.



Great for conversations between two to four people who use their telecoils, sitting 3-4 feet away from the loop allows them to understand each word that is spoken by the others. Imagine your own loop in your living room to watch TV or at the dinner table to understand conversations

Plus, we have a new addition to the Lending Library: a Phonak mini-mic compatible with Phonak hearing aid users who have a Roger X Receiver.



Contact Elaine McCaffrey to place your name on the list to borrow the Personal Hearing Loop or Phonak mini-mic.

Coping with Masks

When NYC resident Gregory Scott started to wear a mask over his behind-the-ear hearing aids during the COVID-19 pandemic, he ran into a major problem. The straps on the mask were destroying his hearing aids' tubing. "I had to visit an audiologist to fix my hearing aids because of the constant pull of the straps on them,"

Masks can sometimes make hearing aids uncomfortable to wear, increase the risk that they'll fall out, and impact the efficiency of the devices. People who wear them during this global health crisis must balance two essential needs: protecting themselves from the new coronavirus and being able to hear.

Here are some tips for smoothing the situation. This advice is primarily for people who wear behind-the-ear hearing aids, though many of these ideas can make masks more comfortable for all.

Try the Flip Trick

If you are wearing a mask and need to have a quick conversation, a simple hack is to flip up the main body of your hearing aids, so they are adjacent to your ear rather than resting behind the ear. After the speaker is finished talking, he/she simply returns the hearing aid to its original position. This trick works especially well for those with custom earmolds that are firmly fitted in the ear.

If you're wearing behind-the-ear hearing aids without earmolds, flipping the hearing aid body off your ear might cause you to lose the hearing aid altogether, so instead, you might want to try slowly lifting your mask strap from the front to the back.

Wear a mask with adjustable straps or extend the straps. Another solution for this dilemma is to buy or make mask extenders. When attached to the elastic loops of your protective face covering, extenders allow mask straps to be wrapped either under the ear or further over it.

Pair up Your Hearing Aids and Eyeglasses

For those who wear both hearing aids and glasses, a mask can be especially problematic. Keep your hearing devices from falling out with a rubber-band fix. dislodge your hearing aids, the bands prevent them from tumbling to the floor.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nY2d83tbZfE>

Slow Down

One person emphasized the importance of taking “the mask off very carefully and making sure the aids are properly in the ear afterward.” While it’s hard to take a moment and be mindful about doing this, it’s a habit worth learning. As a wearer of hearing aids, I have found this a very helpful step when removing or changing my mask.

This new normal of wearing masks with hearing aids is a challenging one, but it looks as if it is here for a while. By trying the suggestions above, you’re likely to come up with a solution that solves the issue for you.

*-Julia Métraux
Hearing Tracker*

Misconceptions About People with Hearing Loss

Misconceptions about people with hearing loss are commonplace – some are antiquated stereotypes, while others just incorrect assumptions. It’s easy enough to get the wrong idea, as hearing loss can be an invisible disability – unlike the wheelchair that

signals a mobility challenge. Whether it’s a total stranger trying to make small talk in sign language or an over-articulating coworker or relative, it’s time we initiated a conversation. This list of the more common misconceptions and be a good starting point for that conversation to correct misconceptions and remove the stigma associated with deafness and hearing loss:

1. Everyone with hearing loss uses sign language and reads lips.

Not all people with hearing loss communicate the same way. Communication depends on a variety of factors, such as the degree of hearing loss, whether a hearing aid or cochlear implant is used, the age at which the person lost his hearing, the level of auditory training received, and the nature of the listening situation.

2. Talking louder will help a person with hearing loss to understand.

Increasing the volume is only part of the solution; clarity is also important.

3. Hearing aids and cochlear implants restore hearing to normal.

While highly beneficial in their impact, hearing aids and cochlear implants cannot restore hearing to “normal.”

4. People with hearing loss are stupid, mute, and unsuccessful.

People with hearing loss have the same range of intelligence as the general hearing population.

5. People with hearing loss tend to be older adults.

Of the 48 million people with some form of hearing loss in the U.S. only one-third are 65 or older.

6. People with hearing loss are defined by their hearing loss.

Hearing loss is a characteristic, like the color of one’s eyes. It does not define a person

7. Having hearing loss is shameful.

This assumption at least partly explains why many people with hearing loss will not purchase or use hearing aids. According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders,

“Only one out of five people who could benefit from a hearing aid actually wears one.”

8. When people with hearing loss miss something, it’s OK to tell them, “It’s not important,” or “I’ll tell you later.”

It’s frustrating to people with hearing loss not to have something repeated when they miss part of the conversation.

9. People with hearing loss are rude and pushy.

If a person with hearing loss interrupts a conversation, it is probably because they didn’t hear the speaker, not because they are rude.

10. people with hearing loss mostly hang out with other people with hearing loss.

Hearing loss can affect anyone and does not discriminate.

11. Everyone who needs an assistive listening system can use earbuds or headphones.

Earbuds and earbud-style headsets require people with hearing aids to remove their hearing aids. Headsets typically do not work for people who wear behind-the-ear hearing aids nor for many people who have more than mild hearing loss because the sound output is insufficient.

12. The wheelchair symbol represents universal access.

The wheelchair symbol does not represent people who are deaf, hard of hearing, visually impaired, or who have cognitive disabilities.

13. Hearing access isn’t needed because it’s so rarely requested.

Many people with hearing loss are so accustomed to there being no accessibility accommodations that they don’t inquire about it unless it is publicized. Access, when made available and publicized, is usually used.

14. People with hearing loss read braille.

People who are blind read Braille.

15. Providing access for people with hearing loss is very expensive.

Hearing access is less expensive than most people think.

16. “Deaf,” “Hearing impaired,” or “Disabled” – one is as good as the other.

The umbrella term for the category is “people who are deaf or hard of hearing.” “Hearing impaired” is not a preferred term.

17. Companies or accessibility experts with no background with hearing loss can know what best meets the needs of people with hearing loss.

When hiring an access coordinator, it is critical to investigate the person’s experience. Hiring a person with hearing loss does not guarantee that the person has knowledge of effective access for people with hearing loss or for the full range of hearing loss.

Janice Schacter is a hearing loss advocate and founder of Hearing Access & Innovations. This article originally appeared in Hearing Health magazine.



-Janice Schacter



HLAA2021 Convention in San Diego

June 24-26, 2021

Future HLAA Conventions

2022: Tampa, June 23-25

2023: New Orleans, June 27-July 2

Editors’ note:

We frequently publish website links. If you have a problem with a link, please let us know and we will attempt to provide a printed copy of the reference.

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