

Better Hearing Australia (Sydney) Inc.

Information Kit

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Our services:

- Your Privacy
- Your Rights
- Feedback and Complaints
- Anti-Discrimination

Thank you for your enquiry.

If you have a hearing impairment, by joining Better Hearing Australia we hope we can assist you to improve your communication skills and help you with any other problems associated with your hearing loss.

If you have not consulted an ear specialist, we urge you to do so to have your hearing assessed. If a hearing aid is recommended, do your utmost to acquire one. Never buy a hearing-aid without a specialist's advice – you could be wasting a lot of money.

Lip reading will help you, even if you are able to wear an aid. For the totally deaf, or those for whom an aid is of little use, lip-reading is a necessity.

We welcome anyone with a hearing loss, their families or friends to come along and discuss any problem, all discussions are treated with confidentiality.

If you are not hearing impaired and joined to assist those who are, then you are more than welcome. We are always in need of helpers and people interested in the services we provide.

Our hearing loss management sessions are led by trained volunteers and they work to assist people with a hearing loss make the most of their residual hearing.

WHAT DOES BETTER HEARING AUSTRALIA DO?

Better Hearing Australia is a self-help, consumer-led, community based organisation and is the only national organisation catering specifically for the needs of people with a post-lingual hearing loss.

The aims of our organisation are to:

- Encourage the preservation of hearing of all people.
- Encourage the use of preventative measures to lower the prevalence of deafness and hearing impairment in the Australian community.
- Improve the communication of hearing impaired people, their families and friends.
- Provide assistance to hearing impaired people, their families and friends.

To fulfil these aims, we undertake the following:

- Co-operate with relevant authorities in research and action directed towards the preservation of hearing and the prevention and alleviation of deafness and promote public awareness of the problems associated with hearing loss.
- Encourage all people to have regular audiometric tests.
- Serve as an information centre on all problems of impaired hearing.
- Establish programs for the rehabilitation of people with impaired hearing.
- Obtain and disseminate information and advice about hearing aids and assistive listening devices.
- Encourage hearing impaired people to participate in social interaction.

THE STRUCTURE OF BETTER HEARING AUSTRALIA:

There are Branches in all States and one in the ACT. In association with these Branches, there are over one hundred groups and information centres throughout Australia.

At a National level the governing body is the National Council which meets every year. This Council is comprised of Branch Representatives and a National Executive. The members of the National Executive are elected by the Branches and most are volunteers.

The National Office acts as a coordinating centre for B.H.A. efforts in developing services, disseminating information and advocating on behalf of people with a post-lingual hearing loss. These services are funded by a membership affiliation fee.

Each of the affiliated Branches is fully autonomous and each has an individual constitution and membership. Services are organised at a Branch level, according to the human, physical and financial resources of the individual Branch. Each Branch undertakes the training of volunteers and tutors.

BETTER HEARING AUSTRALIA INC CORPORATE VALUES

Purpose: Better Hearing Australia's purpose is to help people in Australia with hearing impairment to live well.

Mission: Better Hearing Australia is the national voice of all people in Australia with hearing impairment, promoting good communication and life solutions by the provision of education, support and advocacy.

Strategy: To equip the person with hearing impairment with the necessary information and skills to permit successful management of their social, education and occupational environment.

To raise community awareness, concerning issues of importance for people with hearing impairment.

To provide opportunities through advisory and support services for people with hearing impairment to deal with the effects of hearing loss and restore confidence and self-esteem.

To submit briefs and make representations to any private or governmental organisation to ensure the specific needs of people with hearing impairment are met and to identify any discrimination with regard to hearing impairment in the workplace and to seek to enforce compliance with the requirements of any anti-discrimination legislation.

Core Values - Better Hearing Australia's Core Values are Care, Respect, Understanding, Integrity and Commitment.

SOME INFORMATION ABOUT SYDNEY BRANCH:

Membership fees: Currently \$40.00 per annum for Individuals, \$30.00 per annum for Concessional or \$60.00 per annum for a family membership. These fees fall due on 1st January each year.

Hearing Loss Management sessions— there are four terms in the year and the groups are led by trained volunteers to work and assist people with a hearing loss and make the most of their residual hearing.

Class Fees are \$35 per term for Full members and \$30 per term for Concession members.

Whispers is our Branch newsletter and is distributed quarterly, via email, to members who elect to receive it electronically. Hard copies are posted to members who have elected to receive a printed version. The cost is included in your membership.

Costs: The fees we charge are not sufficient to cover costs of administration etc. The balance is met by:-

- A small grant from the N.S.W. Government based on membership numbers.
- Donations, bequests and fundraising activities.

Branch Office: We have at least one of our voluntary staff in our Branch Office on Monday and Tuesday between 10.00am and 2.00pm. Our office is closed Wednesday to Friday and on Public holidays.

We are always happy to welcome new volunteers and if you would like to volunteer your services please let us know.

Resignation: Should you, at some time in the future, decide to leave us, please forward a letter of resignation as it helps us to keep our records in order.

Assistive Listening Devices: Due to ever changing technology we no longer stock assistive listening devices for sale but we can point you in the right direction to get help about the various devices available to help you with the Telephone, Television, and Alarms etc.

Speakers and Lecturers: Promoting community awareness is such an important part of our activities, we provide speakers for Service Clubs, Churches, Nursing Homes, Educational Institutions and Community Groups.

Affiliated Groups: We share an affiliation with other kindred organisations and work closely with the DeafBlind Association (NSW), Tinnitus Association, Meniere's Association, Hearing Matters Australia (formerly SHHH) and (CICADA) the Cochlear Implant Club & Advisory Association

We hope that you will join our Branch, be a member for many years and join us in our activities to assist you and all the other hearing impaired people in our community.

HEARING LOSS MANAGEMENT SESSIONS AND IMPROVING YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Losing your hearing can be devastating. Whether you lose it suddenly through illness or trauma, being exposed to loud noise or as you age the effects on your life are the same. Feelings of isolation and insecurity, fears for the future, grieving for the loss of sound, and frustration at not being able to communicate easily are all normal experiences you may go through as you try to come to terms with your hearing loss. Learning to lip read is a positive way in which you can help overcome some of the problems associated with hearing loss.

Although we cannot restore your lost hearing, we believe we can help you to supplement your remaining hearing by developing or improving your communication skills and your ability to follow and understand speech.

Our class sessions cater for people with all degrees and types of hearing loss and we focus on many things such as support for each member as almost all have a hearing impairment and know the difficulties.

A person with a hearing loss has many problems to face. The chief one of these is the difficulty in communicating with family and friends. We live in a hearing world and communication is very important to us all. We can help you with most of the problems that a hearing impairment can bring.

Hearing rehabilitation takes time. A hearing-impaired person should make lip-reading a way of life. It is not done in "six easy lessons". To gain the greatest benefit you must be prepared to practice, have patience and perseverance.

Remember that nothing of importance is gained without practice.

It is wise to start learning when your loss becomes apparent as the longer you leave it, the harder it will become.

You have nothing to lose, and everything to gain!

While it is difficult to quantify lip reading ability, most people who attend lip reading groups develop skills which increase their ability to control situations where lack of hearing may present a problem. As they develop these skills their confidence increases and their quality of life improves. Gaining confidence is a positive step you can take in learning to live with hearing loss.

LIMITS TO LIPREADING

Lipreading itself cannot take the place of hearing but it does assist you to hear the word spoken. It is not possible to lip read every word. Normal speech is too fast to lipread word for word and many words cannot be seen on the lips at all. Lipreading will, however; help you understand the overall context of conversation by allowing you to recognize some words in each sentence.

There are many things which can affect your ability to lipread over which you may have no control. e.g. People speaking to you may cover their mouths or mumble, or the lighting may be too poor to see their faces clearly. You may not be able to position yourself where you can see the person speaking, or several people may speak at once.

It is important to recognise and accept the limitations placed on lipreading in some situations. By ignoring these limitations and enjoying the instances when lipreading does enhance communication you can avoid disappointment.

HEARING LOSS MANAGEMENT SESSIONS consists of various parts or segments:

Speechreading or lipreading and speech movements: This is the art of understanding speech from its visible image, as well as its audibility. In conversation, you will learn to look for every visible clue; the lips for movements, the whole face for facial expression and the complete visual situation for clues.

Auditory Training: This is always a listening exercise. Everyone (except an isolated few) has some residual hearing, however; many people with a hearing impairment do

not use their residual hearing to its fullest effect because listening is such hard work. Through auditory training, you will learn how to listen more effectively.

Speech conservation: Very often, a hearing loss is accompanied by deterioration in the quality of speech. It is important to develop the habit of feeling every word as you say it. Through speech conservation exercises, you will learn how to avoid speech faults.

Visual Retention and Memory Stimulation: Training in habits of observation, alertness, memory and concentration is very important for anyone with a hearing loss. Speech is on the lips for a fleeting second, and then it is lost. Through memory and visual accuracy exercises, you will develop your visual sensory span and thus your communication skills.

Everyday Situation: The idea of exercises in this segment is to teach you to try and anticipate what is likely to be said to you in everyday situations in your daily lives. When you anticipate what maybe said, you get set as it were, ready to hear and so you are more likely to understand what is said.

Incidental Work: This is practice in lipreading. Short stories are very good for this, for conversation is really a series of short stories. When you are lipreading a story, you realize how the association of ideas helps you to lip-read. In this segment as well as stories we have talks about current affairs, for to keep up with other people's conversations you must keep up with the events of the day in the world around you. In this segment we may use games, puzzles, extracts from books, in fact any material that we think will be interesting to our students.

Relaxation: Hearing loss can cause many stressful situations and stress can have profound effects on the body. Relaxation exercises counteract the ill effects of stress and fatigue. Communication is facilitated when you are in a relaxed state of mind.

Listening tactics: These are dynamic approaches in coping with hearing problems. You will learn how to manipulate the environment to assist your loss, how to explain your hearing loss, how to look for clues, how to best ask for assistance etc.

General Information: Practice lipreading with everyone that speaks to you. When people speak to you, remember to focus your eyes on the speaker's lips. At the same time, let your peripheral vision take in every other aspect of the person, their stance, their gestures etc for all these are clues to aid you in lipreading. This all sounds a rather formidable task but you will be surprised how it will fall into place with practice. Do not try to read every word used by the speaker. Your mind can usually fill in the words that your ears have missed.

Remember it is only your ears that are not functioning well your brain where all the sounds you hear are analysed is still working as well as ever. In fact, the mind of the hearing impaired person is often more alive and active than that of a person with normal hearing. This is because the hearing impaired person is concentrating more and is using their brain more than the person with normal hearing!

FOR THE PERSON WITH A HEARING LOSS AND FOR THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

It is difficult for a person with normal hearing to understand a hearing loss, for this is an invisible handicap. Actually, a hearing impaired person suffers from two handicaps. The first is the difficulty in communicating; the second is the attitude of the hearing person towards deafness.

WHAT CAN YOU, THE HEARING IMPAIRED PERSON, DO ABOUT THIS

1. Own up to the fact that your hearing is affected. Never be afraid to tell people that you have a hearing problem. When you are at a party or any other social gathering, try to get into a spot where the light falls on the face of the person speaking; you will tend to “hear” more if you can see the speaker’s face.
2. Have patience with your family. They are just as worried about your condition as you are.
3. You must learn –
 - To relax. Tension will not help the situation.
 - To anticipate. Your mind will then be ready to understand what may be said.
 - To be observant. Watch gestures, frowns, smiles, etc. These help you to understand what is said.
 - To size up a situation in order to know, almost before the speaker opens his mouth, what he is going to say.

WHAT CAN THE FAMILY DO?

1. Have patience.
2. Practice clear speech. Avoid shouting, for shouting leads to confusion, embarrassment and increased distortion of the sounds heard. Remember, the hearing impaired person is still hearing sounds (unless they are totally deaf). The impairment is in the interpretation and discrimination of those sounds.
3. Make sure you have the listener’s full attention. Look at them directly; do not talk behind their back or from another room. Speak clearly, at first a little more slowly than usual but still keep the natural flow and rhythm of speech. This is most important.
4. If, after repeated attempts, you cannot get your message understood, change the wording of it, or, especially if the person is severely deaf, write down clue word/words.
5. Many hearing impaired people suffer from tinnitus (head noises) these can be very annoying. The busier a person is, the more they will tend to disregard them, however if they become unbearable, medical advice should be sought.

HINTS FOR SPEECH READING (LIPREADING)

1. A Speechreader should always stand or sit with their back to the light, so that the light falls on the face of the speaker.
2. Try to grasp the thought of the sentence; don’t try to lip-read every word. If you are in doubt about the thought, ask for or look for a clue to the subject. Sometimes, clues are available from the situation, or from the expression on people’s faces or from their gestures.

3. Look and listen together. Eyes and ears help each other. Some sounds, difficult to hear, are often easy to lip-read, and some sounds, easy to hear, are often difficult to lip-read.
4. Hearing aid users can still confuse some speech sounds. Remember, a hearing aid is an amplifier, and amplifies what you are hearing, not necessarily what you desire to hear. If you are suffering nerve deafness many words will be distorted and will remain distorted even though they will be louder. The wearer, when he or she first acquires a hearing aid, must allow themselves time to adjust to it. They have to learn to discriminate between sounds and speech they wish to hear, and background noises they wish to ignore.
5. Ask your friends to speak more slowly, without shouting, or exaggerating their lip movements, but most important not too slow or exaggerated, for this will spoil the rhythm and flow of speech and their purpose will be defeated.
6. Become aware of the movement and shapes of speech on your own lips. Feel the shapes and patterns of speech on your own lips.
7. Try to develop keener listening habits. Listen to television, radio talks, records, people and ordinary sounds at home and try to identify them.

A Thought for the Hearing Impaired

Into the life of every hearing impaired person there comes a zero hour – a time when you stop using the thread-bare alibi of friends bad voices and relatives mumbling and honestly admit that your own ears are at fault – and do something about it, instead of brooding and pitying yourself - this dark hour can be the turning point.

What was apparently the end is really the beginning for no-one can help the hearing impaired person until they acknowledge their own need for help.

LISTENING PRACTICE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

REMEMBER TO LISTEN IN EVERY POSSIBLE SITUATION:

1. Sounds around the home. Try to analyse each one, e.g. is that the phone, doorbell?



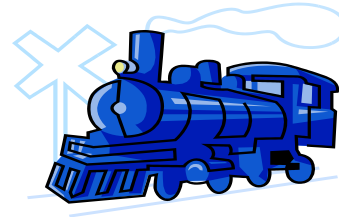
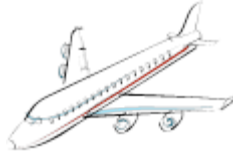
2. Whose dog is barking, is that a car starting. Is that a motor bike?



3. Sounds in your own environment. At work, traveling, in shops



4. Any public address system such as at Railway stations, airports,



5. T.V. and radio programmes. Repetitive advertisements give good listening practice.



6. Church services. Usually the hearing-impaired person can follow a familiar service. When the service is unfamiliar, try to follow with the help of the prayer book.



Meetings usually follow a familiar procedure.

7. Records, CD's, Ipods, MP 3 players, DVD's of music and speech - Play them more than once and see how much more you hear on each repetition.

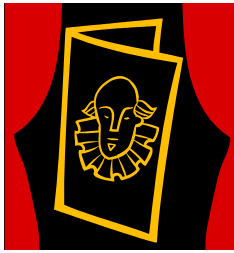


8. Listen to someone reading aloud.

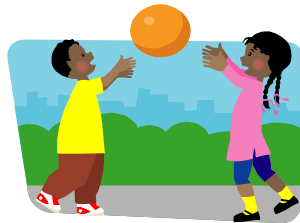
9. Ask a friend to phone and say something that is known to you, or ask him to read something from the daily paper, while you have a copy of the same paper.



10. Go to a familiar play, either drama or musical. If you go to an unfamiliar play, ask to be given a copy of the script, if this is not available, before seeing the play, read criticisms of the play.



11. Go to rehearsals of local plays, for the script is repeated in rehearsals, and listening to the repetition is good listening practice.
12. Listen to children at play, for children love to repeat themselves, and many of their games contain well-known repeated expressions.



13. If you have a tape recorder/CD Player – play it over and over and listen



Listen to the same material and try to speak with the recorded voice so that feeling and listening are integrated.

Most important – do not pretend to have heard if you have not – it may be costly. Tell the person you have a hearing loss, ask them to speak clearly and not loudly.



HOW YOUR HEARING LOSS MAY AFFECT YOU – THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF HEARING LOSS

There are many psychological effects of hearing loss, however not all people who lose some, or all, of their hearing will experience these effects.

It is important to remember that the effects of hearing loss are as many and varied as are the personalities of those people who are hearing impaired.

People who lose part or all of their hearing may pass through the normal process of grieving. The stages of which are shock, denial, anger, bargaining, depression, mourning and acceptance.

SOCIAL ISOLATION: When people no longer hear well they tend to socialize less for fear of embarrassment and humiliation caused by incorrect communication. Others feel they no longer enjoy company and so a cycle of withdrawal begins. Older people particularly can experience this and hearing loss is a great source of isolation in residential aged care. Hearing loss can isolate a person in their family and in the community.

Social conversation keeps us in the picture. The person with a hearing loss may find that they are unaware of what is common knowledge to others in the home, the community, the workplace etc.

The loss of sound may cause a person to feel that they are not part of the environment and not involved in life. The effort to keep up with and to understand local and world news is too great and the person may feel that they want to withdraw. Understanding with a hearing loss can be hard work. The hearing impaired person may become fatigued from listening and looking. Understanding is usually greatly decreased with fatigue or illness.

RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS: The hearing impaired person may find that they experience communication difficulties with their partner or family and that the level of their communication changes from in-depth sharing to a need-to-know type of communication. Thus, spontaneity in the relationship is lost.

ANXIETY: A hearing impaired person may feel anxious about hearing in certain circumstances and unrealistic expectations can be put on the hearing impaired by hearing persons and also by the hearing impaired themselves.

LOSS OF WARNING SOUND: As hearing acts as an early warning system, those with hearing impairment may experience feelings of personal insecurity in some situations, e.g. crossing the road, being in the home alone and travelling. Driving can become more stressful since the person will feel very aware of the lack of auditory warning. In such cases driving fatigue will increase greatly.

OTHER LOSSES: A hearing loss can have a major effect on life choices, educational opportunities, job prospects and can lead to financial insecurity. A person who develops a hearing loss may no longer be able to enjoy music, either by itself or as a background. Such losses will make it difficult to understand and enjoy films, TV, radio and the ever-vital small talk.

Communication may be reduced to information level. Sharing thoughts and feelings may be very difficult, phone conversations, even if possible, may no longer be enjoyable.

Whilst all these possible effects may seem negative, many can be worked through and satisfactory outcomes achieved.

Better Hearing Australia tutors will be able to assist the hearing impaired person to understand these problems, and from that understanding, be able to take positive steps towards their alleviation.

For more information on your nearest Better Hearing Australia Hearing Loss Management program, contact:

Sydney

29 Burwood Road, Concord NSW 2137

Phone: (02) 9744 0167 Fax: (02) 9744 7492

TTY: (02) 9744 0124

E-Mail: bhasyd@ozemail.com.au

Website: <http://www.betterhearingsydney.org.au>

Other Branches in NSW

Central Coast

P.O. Box 3717, Wamberal NSW 2260

Phone: (02) 4321 0275

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Newcastle

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