

## How To Talk So People With Hearing Loss Can Listen

When her father was in need of end of life care, Marianne Oundjian was surprised and dismayed at the way his caregivers struggled to communicate with him. Her father's interactions with health professionals often included distorted or strained facial expressions, shouting and frustration for everyone.

*"Without some basic communications guidelines, most verbal attempts to interact with my father contributed to his anxiety and often resulted in his withdrawal. In Dad's case, many friends stopped visiting and family events often left him sidelined. Of particular concern were the efforts of medical staff requesting my presence to assist with his care. The isolation experienced through hearing loss led to depression, which when further deprived of music and all external stimuli, resulted in my father's once vital personality shutting down. I knew dad was bright – he just didn't hear properly"*

- Marianne Oundjian

Marianne wanted a different scenario for her father, so she developed a list for his caregivers on how to communicate more effectively with him. Her



*Marianne Oundjian (above) reflects on her father's hearing loss: "I knew dad was bright – he just didn't hear properly."*

suggestions were extremely successful and anyone who speaks with those who are hard-of-hearing may benefit from the Oundjians' experience.

### **People with hearing loss deserve respectful, clear and empathetic interactions.**

We are grateful to Marianne for her unfailing support of The Hearing Foundation of Canada and for sharing her experience with us, and we, along with her, hope this will help others to be heard when speaking to people with hearing loss.

Here are Marianne's simple guidelines for communicating with people who have some form of hearing loss:

- Initiate and maintain eye contact
- Smile. Put on a pleasant face.
- Relax your body so that you don't frighten them. People who can't hear can suffer from anxiety.
- Speak slowly, and pause when you speak. Let them process and put together the words they did get and confirm recognition.
- Lower the pitch of your voice (don't speak at high octaves). Higher pitch frequencies are more difficult to hear.
- Articulate – whether or not they can fluently lip-read, they will try. Use simple words (no point in saying "exhibition" when you can say "show").
- Don't shout! Most people think that in order to be heard you have to raise the decibel level of your speech, but speaking loudly can distort your mouth and sounds, making you harder to understand.
- Animate your face so that they can use your eyes and facial expressions to help interpret.
- Reduce ambient noise.
- Have a writing pad handy.

***It is only because of your support that THFC is able to do the work it does. Thank you for all that you have done for hearing health in Canada!***

## There's More Than One Way To Give!

Brendan Scaldwell, an 11-year old boy from Unionville, Ontario, had a dream to help raise awareness of hearing loss as a health issue. The best way he could think of to do it was to launch the B-Hear! Ride for the Hearing Impaired. Brendan, who was born with hearing impairment, rode 100 kilometres across Peel and Durham Regions in an effort to raise funds for The Hearing Foundation of Canada (THFC). Huge thanks go out to Brendan, his family, his fellow riders, and all those who donated to the B-Hear! ride.

Brendan settled on a bike ride as his fundraising activity because of his enjoyment of the sport. He watches cycling, including the Tour de France, and decided it would be a fun way to raise money for THFC. Using hearing aids since he was sixteen months old, he understands both the need for awareness and medical research into hearing loss, but remains practical about his situation. Krista Scaldwell, Brendan's mother, noted, "He just sees life as get up and go, each day. Doesn't let anything get in his way of doing things!"

When asked about his experience with hearing loss, Brendan was matter-of-fact,

and wanted to make sure people knew that hearing loss doesn't have to be considered a handicap, stating, "It doesn't [have to] get in the way of anything you want to do." And it didn't get in Brendan's way, as he raised approximately \$7,500 for THFC!

*If you would like to join the B-Hear! Ride for the Hearing Impaired next year, or would like to host your own fundraiser or event on behalf of THFC, contact Jessica Rode at 416.364.4060 x1, or via email at [jrode@hearingfoundation.ca](mailto:jrode@hearingfoundation.ca).*



*Brendan and his riding buddy before starting his charity ride.*

## Heading Out to Halifax!

On November 5 – 8, 2015, The Hearing Foundation of Canada is hosting the Canadian Interdisciplinary Hearing Sciences, Otology, & Audiology Consortium in Halifax, Nova Scotia. This multidisciplinary group of medical researchers is coming together to identify key areas for research attention, and to develop a road map for a pan-national coalition on hearing research. Hearing health is important for all Canadians, and thanks to donations like yours, we can make sure all Canadian voices are heard!

*If you're in the area, **please join us on Thursday, November 5th** for a donor reception. For more information, contact Andrea Swinton, 416.364.4060 x2.*



## Navigating a Noisy World

Going out for a quiet, candlelit dinner is getting harder and harder these days. Restaurants are noisier, and for those with hearing loss, the mix of background music, high ceilings, dishes clanking, others talking loudly to be heard over the ambient din...well, it can be difficult. According to Zagat's Restaurant Guide, noise is the second most common complaint about restaurants, following poor service. Even those with perfect hearing can find conversation challenging against that backdrop of noise. But why is it so much harder to understand speech when you're in a noisy environment? And why does it seem

to get harder with age? Through your donations, two research teams are asking those very questions.

Dr. Stephen Arnott, at the Rotman Research Institute, and Dr. Steve Aiken, at Dalhousie University, are leading studies investigating why our hearing tends to deteriorate with age, and what can be done to treat this loss. Dr. Aiken's research focuses on the difficulties that the elderly have when listening to conversation in a noisy environment, while Dr. Arnott is using innovative techniques to determine if age and background noise can affect how your brain processes information. The results of these studies will help us to understand the hearing problems that older adults often experience, and could provide insight into new ways to prevent and treat hearing loss.

Since 2001, you and people like you have provided approximately \$1.3 million in hearing research funding. Your gifts have directly supported research that has been published in scientific and medical journals, and contributes to the body of knowledge that may one day lead to the restoration of hearing. "Our donors continue to fund important research that works toward eliminating the devastating effects of hearing loss," THFC's Executive Director, Andrea Swinton, notes. "Investing in medical research will allow millions of Canadians to live longer and healthier lives!"

*For more information about the medical research program your gifts made possible, please visit [www.hearingfoundation.ca](http://www.hearingfoundation.ca) or call 416.364.4060.*