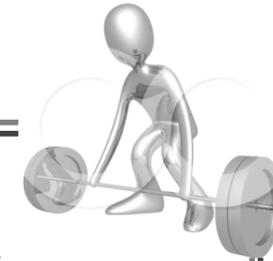




## Newsletter Autumn 2012



### Listening Effort

Communication difficulties are common and experienced by most during daily life. It can be very frustrating when we can't hear and/or understand someone in a busy restaurant, in a meeting, or on the telephone. Listening becomes more difficult when there is background noise, a foreign accent, distance between the speaker and the listener, or when environmental factors degrade the quality of the sound e.g. echoes off walls. In these difficult situations, a person uses more mental effort to follow and understand speech. This is called **listening effort**.

- ☞ It is tiring to put in the effort to listen, especially when you deal with all kinds of people all day long
- ☞ I go to bed with nothing left; it takes so much energy to participate in conversations all day that I'm asleep within minutes and I don't really rest well.
- ☞ At the end of every day, I am physically exhausted and my ears ring.

Listening and understanding what you have heard can be very tiring. The recurrence and severity of these communication difficulties are much worse for people with a hearing impairment, as they need to work harder to listen and understand speech. This is further intensified for older adults, as they require more effort to process speech, for clear understanding, than younger adults do.

Hearing and listening are not the same things. Listening effort is not related to how much hearing loss a person has. It varies widely between people. For example: two people with similar hearing losses, listening to the same thing, may report varying degrees of listening effort needed to understand what is being said. These differences may be due to different cognitive abilities as well as individual measures as to what constitutes something to be "effortful" or difficult.

However, there is a link between listening effort and the ability to understand speech. As listening conditions get worse and our ability to recognise speech decreases, our listening effort increases.

This increased listening effort may lead to other significant consequences such as exhaustion, stress, tension and fatigue. This is because people with a hearing impairment need more concentration, attention, and focus during listening. They therefore use more energy and thus tire more easily. Furthermore, the amount of energy required for listening can interfere with the person's performance during simultaneous tasks. One may become disorientated and confused when there multiple sound signals to process and interpret.

Some of these difficulties can be reduced through the use of hearing aids or assistive listening devices (ALD's), combined with an Auditory Training Program. Hearing devices are fitted with the goal of making sounds audible, restoring how volume is perceived and improving speech understanding. These goals can take months to achieve through continuous hearing aid use and during this familiarisation stage, many new hearing aid users grow frustrated and discontinue using them. However, with the continued and determined use of these devices, a person's listening effort is reduced and speech understanding is improved. Through the use of ALD's competing sounds can also be reduced making listening easier and thus improving speech perception. Auditory Training can also ease the way to ensure that the least amount of effort is required to hear clearly.

***Please check the replacement value of your hearing aids annually and specify them on your all risks insurance for loss or damage!***

***This is our 20<sup>th</sup> newsletter!*** From its humble beginnings as a pet-project to something that patients look forward to, it has grown on us. We appreciate feedback with regard to suggested topics or articles on specific needs. Also, have a look on our website, [www.hearingclinic.co.za](http://www.hearingclinic.co.za) for all past articles.

This year the practice will also join forces with Fanie du Toit who works for The National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities in South Africa (NCPDPSA). We're including his pamphlet here to detail what he does as well as all his contact details. He will be available at our Tokai rooms on certain Mondays and its best if you contact him directly for appointments or advice. With more attention being given to equal access to services, including people with disabilities, he will be most useful for those who train, employ or offer services to the public.

### World Travel and Trends

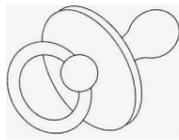
What exciting times we live in! Francis and Celeste have just attended the "Audiology Now" Congress in Boston and the Siemens Manufacturing Plant in New York. Francis is a seasoned International Conference attendee but this was Celeste's first experience of one of these eye-opening (and exhausting!) events. The academic input is superb and the training level is world class. New products and emerging technologies are launched and explored while new inventions are introduced and made available. We were lucky enough to bring all the presentations home with us so that we can share it in the practice and all get up to speed on what's new.

So Celeste was asked to do the insert on "Listening Effort". Not only has she gained vast experience in the year that she's been with us but she has now received up-to-date training at the Congress. As our Rehabilitation specialist, she is most qualified to address these issues and attend to your needs in this regard. On these trips there are always a few key elements, and among the most significant were that Auditory Training should be given to each hearing aid user – without exception – and that there is more to hearing loss than hearing aids. The value in learning how to the amplified world, in addition to using the hearing instruments successfully, is more useful than the technology built into these smart devices. Clever as they are, they don't replace the brain.

Since we launched our Auditory Training Clinic last year, we have been delighted with the positive results and feedback. New hearing aid wearers are receiving the support they need in making the most of and adjusting to their new hearing world. Experienced wearers already know that hearing aids can't do it all, and so the clinic has helped them learn new skills & techniques and investigate alternative assistive devices. We find that people need between 3 and 10 sessions of 1 hour each to learn what they need to make life easier, the 1<sup>st</sup> session being an assessment appointment where their Auditory Skills are measured. From there individual programs are tailored to suit personal needs and progress. We charge the sessions at normal consultation rates, so if you have day-to-day benefits available from your medical aid, the sessions should be covered in full.

Further more, at these International events, we get firsthand experience of the latest gadgets. Some brand new hearing aid ranges are to replace old product lines while others are updating their current mind-boggling technology. New accessories and ALD's are demonstrated and with the only ALD's resource centre in the Western Cape, Francis kept an eye open for new exciting advances. From TV-Listeners, telephone amplifiers and personal listening enhancers to room improvement systems and emergency alerting devices. All equipment that aim at reducing listening effort, improving speech understanding in noise and facilitating independent living. Pay a visit to the Tokai rooms if you want to know more about ALD's. Other new developments have to do with practice and system management which will make our lives, behind the scenes, much simpler!

### In the Practice



Just when we thought we were baby free for a while, Nadine has revealed that she is expecting an addition to her family round about September. We can't wait to see the newcomer, but it will mean a bit of shuffling to accommodate her maternity leave. More on that later with details on who will do what when and where. We will try and minimise any disruptions to our normal services to you although it will be tough coping without her! Elisha is still in full swing, all be it only till 14h00 everyday, but you can still find her in Claremont on Mondays and Wednesdays. Krysia has moved on to bigger and better things, but we've introduced Yvonne at reception with her lovely Scottish accent and while we were at it, we added Julanda, who will be in charge of all incoming and outgoing parcels. Our first year without Janet in the rooms to keep us in line went without incident and during the coming year, the practice will be changing its name to Francis Slabber & Associates. There will be no changes to our banking details or services though – its just academic.

<i>Wynberg</i>	<i>35 Waterloo Rd</i>	<i>Monday to Friday</i>	<i>8h30 - 17h00</i>	<i>021 - 797 7948</i>
<i>Tokai</i>	<i>Tokai Village</i>	<i>Tuesday &amp; Thursday</i>	<i>8h30 - 16h30</i>	<i>021 - 715 5623</i>
<i>Claremont</i>	<i>19 Belvedere Rd</i>	<i>Monday &amp; Wednesday</i>	<i>9h00 - 14h00</i>	<i>021 - 797 7948</i>
<i>Fish Hoek</i>	<i>Valyland Centre</i>	<i>Mon, Wed &amp; Fri</i>	<i>8h30 - 16h00</i>	<i>021 - 782 3322</i>
		<i>Tuesday &amp; Thursday</i>	<i>8h30 - 13h00</i>	

**FRANCIS SLABBER & NADINE JOOSTE & ELISHA BERRIDGE & CELESTE LEVESON**