Savvy Hard of Hearing Consumers

How to Be One; How to Serve One

- Growing Pains
- Seeds of Revolution
- Becoming a Savvy Consumer
- Serving Savvy Consumers

Permission is hereby granted for anyone to present this presentation to promote the interests of people with hearing loss. The PowerPoint and the PDF of it are both available at www.nchearingloss.org/programs.htm

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Ancient History

Until a Couple Hundred Years Ago

- **Good news**
  - Most people didn’t live long enough to lose much hearing.
  - No Boom Boxes or IPODs
  - Hearing Aids were Cheap and didn’t need batteries

- **Bad News**
  - Early Death was a primary fallout from hearing loss.
  - If the SaberTooth Tigers didn’t get you, your “Friends” would stone you as a witch.

- **Vanity**
  - Not really a problem compared to the tigers and witch thing.

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19th Century

Between 200 - 100 Years Ago

- Good News
  - Manufactured Hearing Aids
  - Shells are out
  - New technology is all the rage!

- Bad News
  - They were expensive
  - The didn’t work well
  - You still had to keep a wary eye on your “Friends”.

- Vanity
  - Crude attempts at hiding and fashion
  - Some built into canes
  - One built into a chair for a king

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Early 20th Century

Starting About 100 Years Ago

- **Good News**
  - First Electronic Hearing Aids

- **Bad News**
  - They were expensive
  - They were somewhat bulky
  - They didn’t work well
  - They were rare

- **Vanity**
  - Some were table models
  - Later they were body worn and “concealed”.

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Mid-20th Century

Starting About 50 Years Ago

- Good News
  - Electronic Hearing Aids
    - Smaller
    - Fashionably hidden?

- Bad News
  - They were expensive
  - They didn’t work all that well

- Vanity (aids badly hidden in)
  - Pens
  - Rings
  - Barrettes
  - Glasses
  - Hair-Dos
  - Tie Clips
  - Bras

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50’s Through 1990

Analog Moves to Ear Level

- **Good News**
  - Behind The Ear
  - In The Ear
  - In the Canal
  - Completely In The Canal
  - Telecoils and the Dawn of ALDs
  - SHHH is Born

- **Bad News**
  - Technology Still Limited
    - Still largely linear amplifiers
    - “Two Screw” adjustments
  - Few Know about Support Groups

- **Vanity (Hiding is still the Rage)**
  - Flesh Colored
  - So Small; No One Will Know

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Why 10 Pages of History?

The Themes of Our History

- Not A Whole Lot You Could Do, Really
- Denial
- Vanity
- Hiding (badly)
- Nobody Cared (even us)
Revolution?

What are the Seeds?

- Large Numbers of people *(whose needs are not being met)*
- A Potential for Improvement
- Technology
- Resources/Communication
- A Few People *(who believe they can make a difference)*

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Seeds of Revolution

Large Number of People

- About 30 Million People in the US
- Growing Numbers Growing Percentages
  - Noise Pollution
  - Living Longer
  - “Born Deaf” → “Hard of Hearing”

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Seeds of Revolution

Potential for Improvement

- Beginnings of a “Community”
- Hearing Assistance Works Better
  - Hearing aids and features
  - Connectivity and Accessibility
- Manufacturers Finally Focusing on Fashion
- Hearing Assistance is Common Place
  - Rock Stars, and Presidents
  - Two Recent Miss Americas
  - People with Normal Hearing
    - Cell Phone users
    - Music Players
- Strength and Confidence in Numbers

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Seeds of Revolution

Technology

- Digital Hearing Aids
- Cochlear Implants
- Bone Anchored
- Implantable
- Features, Features, Features
- ALDs
- Computers
- Special Phones/Blackberries/CapTel
- Captions

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Seeds of Revolution

Resources/Communication

- SHHH → Hearing Loss Association of America
- Internet
  - Web
  - Listserves, Chat
  - IP-Relay
- Telecommunications Act
- ADA
- State Services Expand to Cover the HH in their Names

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Seeds of Revolution
A Few Committed People

- 30 Years ago, there was
  - nothing like SHHH
  - No leaders
  - No followers

- Now we have a “community”
  - Hearing Loss Association of America
    - Several State level associations
    - Hundreds of Chapters
  - Internet breeds leaders and volunteers
  - Hard of Hearing Specialists
    (State Services Expand to Cover the HH in their Names)

Are you a
George Washington?
John Handcock?
Benjamin Franklin?
Thomas Jefferson?
Thomas Paine?

Now is the Time!

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Seeds of Revolution

Acceptance

- Beginnings of a “Community”
- Hearing Assistance Works Better
  - Hearing aids and features
  - Connectivity and Accessibility
- Manufacturers Finally Focusing on Fashion
- Hearing Assistance is Common Place
  - Rock Stars, and Presidents
  - Two Recent Miss Americas
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Where Are We Now?

Not There Yet

- Vanity Still Has a Grip
- Avoidance Still Reigns
- Ignorance is widespread

**Skit!**

- But, the Revolution is Underway!

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The Revolution is Underway

Why I Think That’s True

- Technology has bounded ahead
  - Hearing Aids are dramatically better
  - Cochlear Implants are effective
  - ALDs are fairly common
- Information is Everywhere!
- Hearing Loss Association of America
- Everyone’s got something in their ears
  - Cell Phone users
  - Music Players
  - Bluetooth
- Fashion (Manufacturers finally focus on design not hiding)
- Hearing Loss Population Explodes
  - People are Living Longer
  - Noise is Multiplying Us (Music Players, Auto Stereos, Concerts)

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Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Participating in the Revolution

- Preaching to the Choir
- Helping Yourself
- Helping Others

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Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Get Beyond Destructive Behavior

- Vanity and Denial
  - Get Over It!
  - Nobody Else Cares
- Your Attitude Matters
- Confidence and Determination Inspires
  - Admiration
  - Support
- Corrected Hearing Loss $\rightarrow$ Strength
- Uncorrected Hearing Loss $\rightarrow$ Weakness
- Insecurity and Weakness are Self-Inflicted

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Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Learn How Hearing Works

- What’s on your audiogram?
  - Ski Slope
  - Reverse Slope
  - Cookie Bite
  - Speech Recognition
  - Tympanogram

- How does sound travel?
- Why is noise important?
- Why localization is important?
- What’s with vowels vs. consonants?
- What is recruitment all about?

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Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Understand Your Needs

- TV?
- Phone?
- Meetings?
- Restaurants?
- Cars?
- Work?
- Relationships?

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Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Learning from People Who Know

- Hearing Loss Association of America
  - Conferences
  - Hearing Loss Magazine
  - Chapter Meetings
- Internet
  - Yahoo Groups and Listserves
    - Beyond Hearing
    - Better Hearing News
    - Hearing Loss Association
  - Web and Google
- State Agencies and Services

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Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Learn and Use Effective Strategies

- Don’t Bluff
- “I heard ..., but missed ... ” vs “HuH?”
- “Let’s Move so I can hear you better.”
- Fools Rush in and Get the Best Seats!
- Choose restaurants carefully
- Know when to override automation
- Help People know what works
- Put Others at ease (It’s not their problem, it’s yours)

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Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Get Professional Help

- Get a real Audiological Evaluation
- See an Ear Doctor
- Choose a Fitter
  - Audiologist vs. Hearing Aid Dealer
  - House Brand vs. Multiple Brands
  - Knows what they are doing
  - Willing to listen and help

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Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Choosing Hearing Aids

- Put Hearing Better as your FIRST PRIORITY
- My Thoughts on
  - Styles
  - Brands
  - Features
- Shop around
- Understand your rights
  - Trial Periods
  - Return policies
  - Warrantees

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Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Features Worth Knowing About

- Volume Control
- Directional Microphones
- Multiple Programs
- Windnoise and Feedback Management
- Remote Controls
- Open Fittings and Vents
- Telecoils
- FM

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Helping Others Become Savvy

Advice and Advocacy

- The world desperately needs
  - Volunteers
  - That know what they are doing
- Join Hearing Loss Association of America
  - Get involved with a local chapter
  - Start one if there isn’t one nearby
- Answer questions on Listserves
- Get on Boards, Committees, Councils
- Support Hearing Issues in Health Fairs

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Helping Others Become Savvy

What needs to be Improved

- Accessibility
  - Make Loops more available
  - Encourage captioning
  - Ask for ALDs or captioning and praise providers
  - Speak up when what you need isn’t there
- Help state agencies understand Hearing Loss
- Promote shared interests among other groups
- Write or Encourage Articles about Hearing Loss

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Serving Savvy Consumers

Expect to Encounter Them

- People have more resources now
  - Hearing Loss Association of America
  - Internet
  - News
  - State Services
- People are getting beyond
  - Denial
  - Vanity
- People are becoming savvy shoppers

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Serving Savvy Consumers

Advise Them Accordingly

- Set expectations on Hearing Aids
- Sell hearing better not hiding
- Explain how ALDs overcome limitations
- Hearing Loss Association of America
  - Become a Professional Member Yourself
  - Display your membership in your waiting room
  - *Hearing Loss* Magazines in your waiting room

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Serving Savvy Consumers

Beyond Hearing Aids

- Accessible Waiting Rooms
  - TV in waiting room looped
  - Public Address System looped
  - Signs Advising use of Telecoils in waiting room
  - Pamphlets explaining accessibility options

- ALD Demonstration and Settings
  - Wired ALD
  - FM/IR
  - Bluetooth
  - Telecoil/Neckloop/Silhouettes/DAI
  - HAC Phones

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Serving Savvy Consumers

Rehabilitation/Consumer Education

- Provide Rehabilitation Options
- Use a newsletter to educate, not just sell
- Cover Technology/Strategies/Partnerships
- Encourage appropriate patients to
  - Join Hearing Loss Association of America
  - Give your Best Patients a Free Membership
  - Get involved with a local chapter
- Offer to answer patient emails
- Add informative material to your web site

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Savvy Consumers

The world Is Changing

- There’s never been a better time to have a hearing loss.
- We’re living in Revolutionary Times
- We’re growing
  - Numbers
  - Percentages
  - Willingness to Do Something About It
  - Knowledge
  - Power
- Consumers: Sign Up Now
- Professionals: Get Ready, We’re Coming

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