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Almost all of my patients complain about understanding dialogue on TV. Some shows or speakers are crystal clear while other speakers sound like they have marbles in their mouth!

There are various reasons why TV isn't as clear now as it once was. First of all, flat screen TV's often do not have very good audio systems. The picture is great but in order to have a good looking set, the speakers are often located on the back or sides of the set.

Another reason for the variability is the sheer number of stations available today. In the olden days (thirty years ago!) when there were 10 channels, they came through in a relatively uniform fashion. Now with hundreds of channels to choose from, the broadcasting quality varies widely with some channels leaving a lot to be desired.

Finally, the style of programming has changed. In the past, shows were often on a set with fixed cameras. The characters spoke one at a time without a loud soundtrack. Now, shows are filmed all over the place including outside on busy streets. The soundtracks include background music and other noises to add a "realistic" flair to the audio. Actors speak over the top of one another and cameras are not necessarily fixed in place so they don't always film the actors head on.

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HELP! I CAN'T UNDERSTAND THE TV.

With all this in mind, there are various solutions that can be beneficial. First of all, figure out where the speakers on your TV are. If they are located on the back or sides of the TV then you may have to think about placement (not inside a cabinet for instance). Many patients find that connecting an external speaker or speakers is helpful. This can vary from a less expensive sound bar purchased at a store like Fry's to a fancy multi speaker system by a company such as Bose. **[Cost: \$100-\$1000+]**

All of the main manufacturers have proprietary TV listening systems that will work with their newer hearing aids. These systems typically have a receiving piece worn around the neck with a transmitting piece that is plugged into the TV. The audio of the TV is delivered right into your hearing aids resulting in a much clearer sound. **[Cost: Around \$350]**

There are non-proprietary TV listening systems that our patients can use with their TVs with or without wearing their hearing aids. These systems have some kind of receiving piece worn either around the neck or as earphones and a transmitting piece plugged into the TV. An example of this is TV Ears. **[Cost: \$100-\$350]**

Finally, there are some free things you can do including sitting closer to the TV, minimizing background noise while watching TV and using the captions. The captions are available on all new TVs and can be accessed through the menu system on your remote control. All TVs are different so you'll have to look at your user manual. **[Cost: FREE]**

The next time you are frustrated watching TV, know that you are not alone. If you struggle with TV, at your next follow up appointment ask your audiologist which of these options is available to you.

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Calendar of Events for 2014

Need a Speaker for your Group?

Leigh Kjeldsen, Au.D.

Several times a year I do educational talks for community groups. I speak at churches, social groups, senior centers and medical offices. I love getting out into the community and teaching people about hearing loss and how to communicate with those with hearing loss.

If you are part of a group that has regular speakers, please call me at the office to discuss your needs. I have several prepared talks that I can tailor to your groups needs.

The following are things we have planned for remainder of the year.

Sept 16th- Hearing Success Class! Communication Strategies. Call the office for times.

Sept. 22 & 24 - New Hearing Aid Technology. A representative of Oticon will be in our Concord office to demonstrate new hearing aid technology for our patients. See article on page 3.

Oct 16th - Hearing Success Class! Speechreading. Call the office for times.

Oct 7th and 8th- New Hearing Aid Technology. A representative of Oticon will be in our Walnut Creek office to demonstrate new hearing aid technology for our patients. See article on page 3.

Nov 20th - Hearing Success Class on Prolonging the Life of your Hearing Aids. Call the office for times.

First week of December - Battery Sale. The favorite event of the year! Batteries will be half price. Stock up on your yearly supply.

NEW TECHNOLOGY: CAPTION TELEPHONES

For years we have been working with the California Telephone Access Program to get free amplified telephones for our patients. Anyone in the state of California that has a home phone line and has hearing loss can qualify for this program. (If you don't have an amplified phone and want one, make an appointment at our office to discuss your options.)

However, for some patients, even a loud amplified phone is still too difficult to use. There is a product called a captioned telephone available through a company called Caption Call that has become available over the past several years. If you have a home phone line, high speed Internet and a significant hearing loss, you qualify to receive this telephone for free.

Previous captioning services had to go through operator relays. This phone service uses voice to text software to translate the spoken word into the words you see on

the telephone screen. You make calls and receive calls the same way you would with a regular telephone.

You speak normally into the telephone and so does the caller, but everything the caller says is also typed onto screen on the telephone. In practice, we've seen that the voice to text software isn't 100% accurate. However, many patients are so happy to be able to use the phone again that they can put up with the occasional error.

We have forms in our office we can complete to sign you up to receive a free telephone. The Caption Call staff calls you to set up an appointment to install the phone and train you and your family members in how to use the system. You need only a small amount of technical skill to operate the phone. Other family members can use the phone without using the captioning service.



COMMUNICATION REMINDERS

During my appointments with patients I often talk about good communication and how making just a few changes in communication style along with well fit, good quality hearing aids will promote the best hearing ability possible. Here are the tips I give most frequently:

1. Get close to the person you want to hear. That means if you want to speak to your spouse you need to go find them and vice versa.
2. Ask your friends and family members to get your attention before they begin speaking. If you are ready to listen you will have a much better chance of hearing what is said.
3. Ask the person speaking to speak more slowly if you are having trouble understanding. If you only get part of what they said, repeat the part you heard so they can just add in the missing words.
4. Minimize background noise. Mute the TV to have a conversation or move away from the crowd if you're having trouble hearing.
5. Don't be afraid to tell the person speaking you have a hearing loss. A small step on your part can make communication much easier.

Current Hearing Research

Many types of hearing loss involve the thousands of hair cells in the inner ear. Once those are damaged or destroyed in humans, they don't recover. However, birds do regenerate their hair cells after damage. What allows this to happen and how we can transfer this function to humans is a large area of research. I see published studies almost monthly on this subject and while we are many years away from a 'cure' for hearing loss, every day we are a little closer.

Another study recently published shows the connection between the auditory and visual centers of the brain. Subjects were blindfolded and listened to various sounds. The visual center of the brain lit up on MRI testing presumably because subjects were "picturing" the objects in their minds. This study emphasizes the interconnectedness within the brain and the need for regular sensory stimulation.

VALLEY AUDIOLOGY FALL EVENT: DEMO DAYS

It is always our goal to provide the highest quality hearing aids to all patients. I can say without a doubt that the current aids are the highest technology that I've ever fit thereby giving excellent benefit to the wearer. If you are considering upgrading your hearing aid technology or if you've never worn aids before, you will have a chance to test out the new aids at our fall events.

On September 22nd and 24th in our Concord office and October 7th and 8th in our Walnut Creek office we will have a representative from Oticon in the office to work with us fitting the new technology hearing aids.

We've been fitting variations of this technology for the past year and our patients are commenting that the sound quality is much more natural than they've experienced with previous aids and they feel they hear better in background noise. It is common for me to put a pair of Oticon Alta Pro aids on a patient and

because they have such good sound quality, the patient doesn't even think the aids are turned on.

In addition, research has shown there are significant differences in how people experience sound. For the first time, Oticon's technology is able to key into the unique differences so that their devices can be programmed to match personal needs and listening preferences more accurately than ever before.

If you'd like a demonstration of this new technology, please call our office to see if you are a good candidate for our event. We will provide a free hearing screening, a free consultation and listening demonstration of the new Oticon products.

If you aren't available on the days of the event or you want an appointment with Leigh or Robert on another day, we have demo Oticon units in the office and we are happy to accommodate your schedule. We look forward to hearing from you.