Topics of 2023

Protecting Your Hearing
By: Maddie Rolf
Exposure to loud sounds can damage the hair cells and nerves in the ears. It is important to wear appropriate hearing protection, especially when you are exposed to sounds above 85-90 dB HL for an extended period of time.

Communication Strategies
By: Sydney Hancock
When communication is impaired, it can increase fatigue and frustration in both parties. Facilitative strategies are ways of making communication easier for you and those around you by making small but impactful changes to your behavior.

Hearing Aids and Tinnitus Relief
By: Rachel Sussman and Kendell Adson
Hearing aid selection goes far beyond a patient’s audiogram – a number of different factors must be considered to ensure a patient gets fit with the hearing aid that best suits their needs.

Learn to Quiet Your Brain
Guest Speaker: Dr. Jutta Bretschneider, OTD, OTR/L and GCFP

Resources
The American Tinnitus Association (ATA) is a wonderful resource for those with tinnitus and sound sensitivity.
The website has up-to-date topics relating to hearing loss, tinnitus, and sound sensitivity.

Need Help?
Call or text 988 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.
This service is confidential, free and available 24/7/365

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A special thanks to Alyssa Pasta, B.A. for her creativity in assembling this newsletter!
### Protecting Your Hearing

By: Maddie Rolf

Over time, exposure to loud sounds can damage the hair cells and nerves in the ears, causing hearing loss and tinnitus. Exposure to loud noise, either a single traumatic experience or over time, can damage the auditory system and result in hearing loss, and sometimes tinnitus as well. When noise exposure causes hearing loss, it’s called “noise-induced hearing loss” which is a permanent condition.

Noise levels above 85-90 dB HL over a prolonged time may start to damage your hearing, so it is important to wear appropriate hearing protection when you know you will be around loud sounds.

So how do you know if noise is too loud? One example is if you need to raise your voice to be heard by someone. Another example is if you are unable to understand someone three feet away from you.

If you are exposed to loud noise for an extended period of time, you may experience external sounds to be muffled and/or a ringing sensation in your ears – the ringing is called **tinnitus**. This sensation is likely to dissipate after exposure.

Tinnitus is generally the result of changes in the auditory system and these changes may be temporary or permanent. When tinnitus is measured in the clinic, we often find that the tinnitus is matched to where there is the most hearing loss or where the hearing loss starts.

In conclusion, it is recommended that everyone wears appropriate hearing protection devices when exposed to hazardous noise levels and/or moving away from the loud noise to reduce the effects of noise exposure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noise Level (dB)</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>105-110</td>
<td>concert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>sporting events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>motorcycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-85</td>
<td>lawnmower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>washing machine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>normal conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>soft whisper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### New Release

Dr. James A. Henry’s new release, *The Tinnitus Book: Understanding Tinnitus and How to Find Relief*, is now available on Amazon in paperback ($19.99) and Kindle ($9.99).

"In this book, you will learn:
- What tinnitus is, how and why it affects people, and how to find relief.
- Distinguish tinnitus problems from hearing problems and how they may be treated.
- The methods of tinnitus treatment that have the strongest evidence for being effective.
- How to start with lower levels of treatment and progress to higher levels if necessary.
- How to knowledgeably interact with healthcare professionals concerning tinnitus".

Be on the lookout for his next release!

Love the book? Click the link below to leave a review for the author!
[https://www.amazon.com/Tinnitus-Book-Understanding-Find-Relief/dp/B0C9S3H772](https://www.amazon.com/Tinnitus-Book-Understanding-Find-Relief/dp/B0C9S3H772)
Hearing aid selection goes far beyond a patient’s audiogram -- a number of different factors must be considered to ensure a patient gets fit with the hearing aid that best suits their needs. Most prescription hearing aids come equipped with tinnitus relief programs, such as broadband sounds, nature sounds, or even tonal melodies. Each hearing aid manufacturer has a different name for their tinnitus feature, including Oticon Tinnitus Sound Support, Widex Zen Program, Phonak Tinnitus Balance Portfolio, and ReSound Sound Generator feature.

It should be noted that wearing hearing aids alone (amplification only without a tinnitus feature) has shown tinnitus benefit (i.e., reduce tinnitus perception). While manufacturer offers tinnitus support, the question remains: what hearing aid is the best at providing tinnitus relief? The answer is simple -- the hearing aid that you will wear!

You and your hearing care professional can discuss your tinnitus and communication needs in order to determine which device is best for you. A listening demonstration of hearing aids with the tinnitus feature may be demonstrated in the office. Other tinnitus relief options can include external sound generators or low level noise and can be implemented in addition to hearing aids. Talk to your hearing care professional to find the best way to manage your tinnitus!
Learn to Quiet Your Brain

Guest Speaker: Dr. Jutta Brettschneider (jutta@themovementclinic.org)

When trying to process sound, your body turns to the senses for clues. Our eyes help us read lips, our sense of movement keeps us balanced, and we listen with our BRAIN. It is because of this that Dr. Brettschneider suggests three awareness techniques to focus on what you can control. Rather than trying to control tinnitus itself, she suggests focusing on your emotional response, thoughts, posture, breathing, muscle tone, and environmental factors.

For more information about Dr. Brettschneider's methods click the computer on the right!

Hearing with the Whole Body: Practicing Awareness at Home

Exercises discussed during Dr. Brettschneider’s session

Exercise 1: Vibrations

Just 5 minutes of your time!

At home, lie on a wooden floor in a relaxed position. Play your favorite music over speakers rather than headphones. Did you feel the vibrations through the floor? Try placing your hands on your ribs as you listen to the music. Did you hearing and/or listening change?

Exercise 2: Breath

While listening to a lecture, podcast, television, etc., check in with yourself.

How am I breathing right now while listening? Put one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly to sense your breathing.

Am I fully present? Or am I secretly multi-tasking?

How is my posture? When I sit, are my feet on the floor, supporting me?: Take your hands and put them under your sit bones. Then, rock back and forth, sensing your sit bones (pelvis) moving under your hands while your spine rounds and arches. Let your head move with your spine.

Am I tired but trying to stay focused after a long work day? Is the speaker on my device good enough that I don’t have to strain to hear? Am I straining my eyes and neck while looking at the screen? Would I honestly rather lie down than sit in front of a screen?

Exercise 3: Blood Circulation

By using vibrations/bone conduction, skeletal support, and humming you can increase your blood circulation. As a result, you will regulate muscle tone and balance.

Begin in a seated position, then follow the video instructions: https://youtu.be/pom9_Xduk7E
Member Spotlight

My tinnitus journey started out about 14 months ago when I noticed a glass breaking sound in my left ear. At first I thought it was external but soon came to the realization that I had tinnitus. In my case the sound was worsened with sound exposure. Then I developed a shimmering after echo in my left ear and a rumbling sound in my right ear. I started wearing ear plugs all the time, because limiting sound exposure seemed to reduce the severity of the tinnitus. I believe that was a mistake, and I subsequently developed hyperacusis and a constant very high pitched sound in the middle of my head. This all developed within about 2 months. I had considered sound therapy but external sound made the tinnitus worse, and there was also a persistent after effect from sound exposure, so I did not want to go that route.

I saw my primary care physician and an Ear, Nose, Throat specialist, but they did not have much to offer me in treatment options. By this time, I was in a constant state of hypervigilance, wasn’t sleeping, and I had multiple panic attacks every day. I started taking a low dose of nortriptyline (10mg) that helped with the sleep but the real breakthrough came from EMDR therapy. After the very first session, I had a relatively pleasant evening for the first time in 3 months. I took out the ear plugs and within a couple of weeks the hyperacusis had improved considerably and it continued to improve until it is almost normal today. I continued the EMDR and went to an otoneurologist. In his opinion, my tinnitus was not related to hearing function. He prescribed physical therapy on my neck which seemed to help a tiny bit. I had also tried fasting, which helped during the fast, and GABA which eliminated the tinnitus completely but it only lasted a couple of hours.

I stopped the nortriptyline and have spent the last year or so working heavily on neck stretches and Tai Chi, and over time, my symptoms gradually continued to improve. There were two exercises that yielded significant improvements in particular: chin retractions with side rotation and mid/lower trapezius activation exercises to inhibit upper trapezius activation. Between the neck stretches, upper trapezius relaxation, Tai Chi and EMDR, I am close to being tinnitus free. At the moment I hear nothing at all, and only occasionally do I hear anything, and then it is very mild.

In my case, I believe the tinnitus was mostly somatic, that is caused by muscle tension in my neck and shoulder. I don’t think that is the case with every case of tinnitus but is worth exploring as there is little downside. If nothing else the reduction in physical stress can help with the emotional stress, which is the worst part of this condition. I spent a great deal of time being miserable and hopeless over the last several months, far-and-away the worst months of my life, but I kept experimenting with various techniques to try to get better. When something worked, even a tiny bit, and kept that, and over time, in fits and starts, gradually improved. What worked for me, might not work for you, but I encourage everyone to find out what helps, even a little bit, and keep building on that.

A website that I found particularly useful in creating a helpful and productive mindset during this journey was: https://juliancowanhill.co.uk/

Even though many of the techniques described there did not work for me, the overall strategy of working with the tinnitus, and also the stories of others having the same kinds of experiences and getting better over time was immensely helpful.
Communication Strategies

By: Sydney Hancock
Adapted from Foundations of Aural Rehabilitation: Children, Adults, and Their Family Members, Fifth Edition by Nancy Tye-Murray

Communication Tips

Communication is a valuable part of building and maintaining relationships with the people around us. When communication is impaired, whether by hearing loss, tinnitus, or a difficult listening environment, it can increase fatigue and frustration in both parties. Facilitative strategies are ways of making communication easier for you and those around you by making small but impactful changes to your behavior.

Facilitative Strategies

Influencing the Talker

When making changes to enhance ease of communication, start with the source: the speaker. These tips may help make their words easier to understand. Keep these in mind whether you are the one talking or listening!

- Ask the speaker to remove objects or food from mouth when speaking so their words are as clear as possible.
- Don’t be afraid to ask someone to slow down or repeat their message.
- In group situations, ask others to raise a hand (or other signal) before speaking so you know where to focus your attention.

Influencing the Environment

These are strategies you can utilize in any situation, and are especially helpful if you are not comfortable directly asking your speaking partner to change their behavior.

- Avoid communicating in excessive background noise, like when the sink is running.
- Avoid shouting between rooms; instead, wait until you are in the same room as your speaking partner.
- Ensure good lighting so the face and mouth of the speaker is visible.
- Sit facing your communication partner, or in a circular formation when in a group,
- When going out to a restaurant, try to avoid sitting near the kitchen or the host stand -- it may be noisier there!

Influencing the Listener

Communication breakdowns happen when there is a mismatch between what the speaker says and what the listener hears or understands. These strategies can help minimize these breakdowns before they happen, and repair them when they do.

- Ask specific clarification questions. Instead of "What?", try: "You want what for dinner?"
- If you know the topic of an upcoming discussion (at work, for example), familiarize yourself with possible vocabulary you may encounter so it is easier to recognize.
- When possible, look to the speaker’s face and mouth for visual clues of what they are saying.

Check Out Our Clinic!

EVALUATION

- Case History
- Pure Tone Assessment
- Ultra High Frequency Testing
- Loudness Discomfort Level (LDLs) Assessment
- Tinnitus Pitch/Loudness Matching
- Otoacoustic Emissions

COUNSELING

- Tinnitus education
- Management options
- Individualized recommendations/plan

FOLLOW-UP

- Monitor progress
- Testing as needed
- Individualized recommendations