

Zoom-pooped: virtual hearing loss exhaustion

Gael Hannan, October, 2020

January 14 Chapter Meeting

Thurs. Jan. 14 at 6:30 PM on ZOOM

Happy New Year! (Or maybe only a *better* new year?) Get together with your fellow chapter members in 2021!

- * We'll discuss resolutions – What do you see the new year holding for you? Masks? Vaccinations? Hugs? Face-to-face conversations? Or just more of the same? (Say it ain't so!)
- * Share how you celebrated (or endured) the holidays.
- * Katie will show how to get captions for telemedicine meetings and videos on Chrome.
- * Miryam will share with us a website called *Get Set Up* with free classes for seniors.
- * Maxine is on the hunt for some auditory brain-training games.

Register to attend and get the link to join the Zoom meeting at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcpd0-grzMsG9Vh4UcjWIFMAtujcc47zpxe>

Learn new tech skills! Join one of Miryam's upcoming classes on Zoom:

- January 19 —Facebook
- February 2 —Beginning iPhone
- February 16—Gmail clean up

If any of these pique your interest, email Miryam at mzzmimm@gmail.com and she'll send you a link.

After a virtual meeting or two, do you ever feel like the above picture?

When the pandemic sent us into isolation, whether forced or voluntary, we were rewarded with the beyond-amazing capabilities of modern technology.

Through Zoom and Google Meets and other platforms, we were able to connect virtually in online meetings with family, friends and business associates. Soon we were zooming for other activities: choir practice, attending church services, playing games with our family in other parts of the country, and even medical and audiology appointments! The use of such platforms rose dramatically; in April 2020, Zoom enabled 300 million calls a day!

My friend Roxana Rotundo is a Miami business-woman and hearing advocacy colleague. Roxana has bilateral cochlear implants and when using Zoom or Google Meet—which is all the time—she is able to stream the sound from her computer directly into her devices. The result is a warm and intimate connection that makes her feel close to the people in the virtual meeting.

But too much of a good thing comes at a price.

“I’m exhausted!” she says. “It’s one Zoom meeting after another, all day long, and it is a total energy-drain. But the other problem is that I spend so much time on virtual meetings, when it comes to communicating with ‘live’ people, especially if there are two or more, I can’t follow the conversation as well. I’m so used to the

New movie about hearing loss: *Sound of Metal*

Katie Wright, January 2021

If you have Amazon Prime, you can watch a new movie about a heavy-metal drummer who begins to lose his hearing: *Sound of Metal*. It was released to theaters on November 20, 2020, and began streaming on Prime Video on December 4, 2020. The film has received critical acclaim, with praise for the actors' performances, as well as for the sound design and has already received several awards.

It is not without controversy, however, especially for us who live in the hard of hearing—not Deaf—world. It emphasizes the Deaf Community even though the main character still has residual hearing.

From a review on NPR by Glen Weldon, "Nicolas Becker's sound design effortlessly and un-showily takes us in and out of Ruben's head throughout the film to experience the world

as he does; we're right there with him as his initial confusion and panic give way to anger and frustration as he attempts to navigate a hearing world that refuses to make even the simplest of allowances to him."

I haven't watched it yet but it's on my list.

Shari Eberts, who has a hearing loss blog and is on the HCAA Board of Directors, has written a review of her own from the perspective of our hearing loss community. In part, she says: "The movie does an excellent job portraying what it is like to hear poorly. The sound track alternates between silence, muffled speech and regular sound, based on how well the main character, Ruben, is hearing in each scene. Normal sound is only used if Ruben has captions, for example, so that he would be understanding/hearing speech well."

I've included it in this issue of the newsletter.

Enjoy the movie – or not – at least it will give you something to think about.

***Sound of Metal* movie ignores the typical hearing loss**

Shari Eberts, December 15, 2020

Whenever a mainstream movie or television show features hearing loss—I get excited. I hope it will raise awareness about the challenges of hearing loss without inducing pity. That it will break down stigmas and generate empathy. I search each moment for a slice of my own life that might help my family and friends get a better understanding of my daily experience living with hearing loss. I am usually disappointed and *Sound of Metal*, now available to watch on Amazon Prime, was no different.

While the rendering of how hearing loss actually sounds was excellent, the movie's portrayal of audiologists missed the mark. As did its primary message: The only way to cope with hearing loss is to learn sign language and join the Deaf community. Given all the technological advances we have today, nothing could be farther from the truth.



Sound profile captures the hearing loss experience...

The movie does an excellent job portraying what it is like to hear poorly. The sound track alternates between silence, muffled speech and regular sound, based on how well the main character, Ruben, is hearing in each scene. Normal sound is only used if Ruben has captions, for example, so that he would be understanding/hearing speech well.

The movie captured the fuzzy, blurry, mumbly sound that I often experience. I know that someone is talking—I hear a sound—but I

(continued on page 3)

Movie ignores typical hearing loss

(continued from page 2)

cannot understand its meaning. “This is what it sounds like without my hearing aids,” I said to my hearing husband who was watching the program with me. “And sometimes, even with my hearing aids,” I continued. He seemed surprised.

A great moment of the film is when Ruben walks into a large cocktail party with his new cochlear implants (CIs) and is visibly overwhelmed with the cacophony of overlapping conversations. The experience is similar for me with my hearing aids, which amplify all sounds, not just the speech ones I want to hear. This time, my husband was horrified. “That must be exhausting,” he said. Yup. Hearing loss is exhausting.

...but the story line does not

In the interest of drama, *Sound of Metal* jumps right to the culturally Deaf experience which includes exclusive use of sign language for communication. Much of the time, mainstream media makes this leap, perhaps because it is easier to portray visually on screen. The beauty and elegance of sign language beats mini-mics and speech-to-text apps every time.

But for the vast majority of people with hearing issues—the Deaf experience is not representative. Most of us have some residual hearing (as Ruben did) which we augment with hearing aids. Shockingly, hearing aids were not even mentioned as a possibility by the first audiologist Ruben visits. Perhaps his hearing loss was too severe, but this dangerous omission could mislead the general public—some of whom may be experiencing hearing problems. Viewers could be deterred from seeking information and treatment believing there is none available.

In reality, most people with hearing loss can live successfully in the hearing world by wearing hearing aids and using technology and other communication strategies to stay engaged. Life is not perfect or easy, but we are able to stay connected to our friends and family, as well as the broader hearing world. Our stories are worth telling too.

Frightening misinformation about treatment options

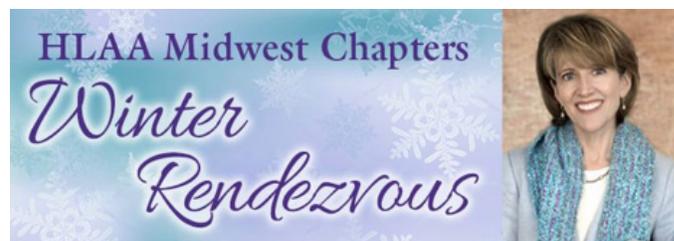
Even scarier was the lack of proper information about sudden hearing loss, a serious condition that requires immediate medical attention. If treated quickly with steroids, sometimes, partial hearing can be restored. Ruben’s audiologist ignores this potential solution, once again misleading the general public through omission.

The portrayal of cochlear implants is also deceptive, as the movie seems to go out of its way to find fault with them. Friends of mine with CIs adore them, but an adjustment period is needed and can be a challenge. Why wasn’t this explained to Ruben? Why was no rehabilitation assistance provided? Both are standard operating procedures in the industry.

Also misleading is that while CIs are expensive, in most cases, the cost is covered by insurance. Ruben did not have insurance, but the spurious omission could deter eligible people from learning more, scared off by the cost.

Sound of Metal does a good job displaying the anguish of hearing loss and accurately reflects the sound profile many of us experience. But its misinformation and its lack of a multi-dimensional portrayal of the hearing loss experience left me cold.

<https://livingwithhearingloss.com/2020/12/15/sound-of-metal-movie-ignores-the-typical-hearing-loss-experience/>



Saturday, January 9 at 11 a.m. Pacific Time

Join us for an engaging winter afternoon break with National HLAA Executive Director **Barbara Kelley**, who will share her visions for 2021 and update us on upcoming HLAA initiatives!

To register [click here](#)

Questions? Email us at webinars@hearingloss.org.

Zoom exhaustion

(continued from page 1)

sound coming directly through my sound processors, so I hold my MiniMic like a reporter's mike towards their mouths, one at a time, to understand what they are saying."

'Hearing people' are discovering what people with hearing loss already know: the intense focus required to understand people for significant periods of time consumes a great deal of energy. For people who depend on visual cues to understand speech, the meeting's visual quality and sound aren't always at the quality we need. We then have to work harder to get information from lipreading, facial expressions, tone and pitch of the voice, and body language.

Multi-person meetings are especially challenging, because the faces became thumbnails, unless you're in 'speaker view' which shows a closeup of the person speaking. Frequently, participants are not sufficiently lit in their home environments, or they are over-lit (which I admit hides wrinkles by de-emphasizing contrast lines and shadows). During live, in-person conversations, we have much better access to a person's facial expressions, lip movements, hand gestures and body movements – powerful cues that combine to help us understand.

Captioning of some sort is crucial for full communication access in virtual meetings. While Google Meets now offers captioning through automated speech recognition (ASR), Zoom the company has yet to respond to requests for free captions for people with hearing loss using the free version. There is currently a [petition](#) to make Zoom provide captions; [click here](#) if you would like to support the advocacy to make this happen.

There are other issues stemming from extensive computer use. People are reporting dryer eyes which can be uncomfortable and interfere with our vision. Many people are experiencing tinnitus, in meeting aftershocks. The constant sound, which is often loud, can exacerbate the tinnitus of those who already suffer from it. Especially me—I have reactive tinnitus that flares, often in conjunction with hyperacusis

that makes all sounds louder, when exposed to noise. Like Roxana, I use Bluetooth streaming to my hearing aid and cochlear implant which I love because it minimizes the tinnitus during the call, although I may have a tinnitus hangover afterward. But if I don't stream, the computer-generated sound is not accepted well by my cochlear implant and becomes noise.

There is enough stress in our lives thanks to the pandemic and politics. We don't need more from the virtual access that has been a lifesaver for millions of people around the world. So, how do we carry out our virtual life so that we don't become "zoom-poopd"?

- Take as many zoom-breaks as you can, preferably getting some exercise.
- Limit the number of daily virtual meetings to allow enough break time.
- Keep the Zoom meeting as short as possible to achieve meeting goals. (I find 1.5 hours is my maximum time before I lose ability to focus.)
- Stream to hearing devices or use headsets that deliver sound crisply.
- Keep volume down at a level that you don't need to strain to hear.
- Do eye exercises and use eye drops to keep your eyes lubricated.
- Use captioning if provided, or a speech-to-text app such as Otter to provide visual information.
- Avoid multi-tasking, such as working on other documents, or answering email during your zoom call. Staying 'present' and in the moment will reduce the mental effort required when switching around on your computer
- Let other people know what you need: plain background for better visual contrast, sufficient lighting, clear speech and fewer background distractions. (For me, this means no bookcases because I'm always straining to see what they're reading.)

Good luck. Stay calm, stay safe and stay connected.

https://hearinghealthmatters.org/betterhearingconsumer/2020/zoom-poopd-virtual-hearing-loss-exhaustion/?utm_source=BenchmarkEmail&utm_campaign=HHTM_Weekly_Copy_213&utm_medium=email

Zoom lags on free captions

Katie Wright, January 2021

For the last 10 months, many of us have been dependent on video-conferencing to stay in touch with others, but it's been difficult without captioning. After a tremendous response to a Change.org petition started by HLAA's Shari Eberts, both Microsoft and Google agreed to make captions available to everyone for free.

Disappointingly, Zoom offers free captions only with paid accounts. I've heard rumors that a person with hearing loss can request, via email, to have captions on their free account. So far I've been unable to verify this.

I love using Zoom, which has many advantages over Google Meet. I am hoping they get their act together and give those of us with free accounts access to captioning. When I learn something, you all will be the first to know.

HLAA Virtual Meeting: Employment Strategies for People with Hearing Loss

Saturday, Jan. 9 at 1 pm Pacific Time

Presented by HLAA District of Columbia Chapter

Finding and keeping a job with hearing loss can be challenging, and for many, those challenges have been magnified during the pandemic. Ken Cluskey and Lisa Yuan will share experiences and strategies they have developed over 30 years in both the public and private sectors on finding and landing a job, and being successful at work. They will offer tips and resources related to challenges that people with hearing loss may face as they navigate their careers.

Young adults with hearing loss are encouraged to attend: Zina Jawadi, a member of the HLAA Board of Directors, will talk about the HLAA Young Adult Hears Committee and their initiatives that they hope to address for young adults with hearing loss.

Lisa Yuan and Ken Cluskey both began losing their hearing as young adults. They each wear one cochlear implant and one hearing aid.

To register [click here](#)

Questions? Email us at webinars@hearingloss.org.

Get the Informer by US Mail - \$10/year

Make check out to Long Beach/Lakewood HLAA and mail to HLAA Long Beach/Lakewood, 5200 Clark Ave, P.O. Box 41, Lakewood CA 90714

HLAA, Long Beach/Lakewood Chapter

Officers

President Gail Morrison

Vice-President Ram Kakkar

Treasurer Craig Bowlby

Recording Secretary Miryam Fernandez

Corresponding Secretary Van VonBurg

Committees

Hearing Assistive Technology Katie Wright

Lip Reading Linda DeGuire

Looping Ram Kakkar

Membership Ellen Mathis

Programs/Publicity Gail Morrison

Refreshments Adela Praderas

Ways and Means *Please volunteer!*

Professional Advisor

Dr. David DeKriek, Au.D.

Newsletter

Editor Katie Wright

Layout Ilga Dravnieks

For more information about our chapter:

hlaa-lb-lakewood.org

email: info@hlaa-lb-lakewood.org

Katie Wright (323) 205-6794

katie.hearingloss@gmail.com

HLAA Hearing Loss Association of America

Join HLAA to receive *Hearing Loss Magazine* and to become part of the one organization that represents the interests of 48 million people with hearing loss in the U.S.

Send \$45 for individual or \$55 for family membership to:
Hearing Loss Association of America
7910 Woodman Avenue, Suite 1200
Bethesda, MD 20814

Or join online: <https://www.hearingloss.org/make-an-impact/become-a-memberrenew/>

For more information:

(301) 657-2248 or email inquiry@hearingloss.org.

Membership brochures are available at chapter meetings.

CTAP California Telephone Access Program

For information, repair or exchange:

English Voice 1-800-806-1191

Spanish Voice 1-800-949-5650

www.californiaphones.org/about-us

DISCLAIMER: We believe the information contained in this publication has been compiled from reliable sources. However none of the contributors, sponsors, or anyone else connected with the Informer in any way whatsoever can be responsible for the appearance of any inaccurate or libelous information or for your use of the information contained in or linked from these pages. If you need specific advice, for example, for your particular hearing concerns, please seek a professional who is licensed or knowledgeable in that area. We further do not recommend or endorse any product or professional but supply such information as a public service.



First Class

Address Service Requested

Long Beach/Lakewood HLAA
5200 Clark Ave, P. O. Box 41
Lakewood CA 90714

**Hearing Loss Association
of America**

HLAA opens the world of communication
to people with hearing loss
through information, education,
support and advocacy.

Join HLAA now at

<https://www.hearingloss.org/make-an-impact/become-a-memberrenew/>
to receive *Hearing Life Magazine* and
become part of a nationwide nonprofit
organization representing the interests of
48 million people living with hearing loss
in the United States.