Canadian Audiologist

The Official Publication of the Canadian Academy of Audiology

A HoH's Credo

Published May 14th, 2015

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When I was young and went to church more regularly than I do now, I thought the Credo was a nice poem that we recited to express what we were supposed to believe as Canadian Presbyterians. This Credo was especially helpful when, if you weren't sure of what you believed, or forgot a detail or two, you could look it up at the back of the hymn book.

In my last two years of high school I studied Latin, which helped to cement my love of language, as well as raise my grade average because I did very well at it. Even now, that short course of Latin study helps me recognize Latin roots of many common English words. For example, "pulchritude," a synonym for loveliness that I'm sure all of us use every day, comes from the Latin adjective *pulcher (pronounced puhl-ker)* which means beautiful. (Don't say you never learn anything in *this column*!)

I also learned that *credo* is an actual Latin word that means "I believe," although today it's used to describe 'a statement of the beliefs or aims that guide someone's actions'.

Here is my *Credo* as a person with hearing loss.

I BELIEVE THAT:

Having hearing loss is just one aspect of who I am. It does not define me as a person or confine me to a group.

Living with hearing loss, while challenging, is not the greatest challenge I will face as a human being.

My most important goal is not to *hear* better, but to *communicate* better. I must learn to listen with all of my gifts – my ears, my eyes, my heart and my mind.

By accepting my hearing loss, I am breaking down personal barriers.

By advocating for others with hearing loss, I am helping to break down public and societal barriers.

By being honest about my hearing loss and articulating my communication needs, I become a better communicator.

I need professional help from a hearing health care provider who makes me feel comfortable and who works hard to find solutions that meet my needs.

By connecting with others who have hearing loss, I am stepping into a circle of invisible and unbreakable supports.

The person whose insults and impatience have the most power to hurt me, is *me*. I am just one in a world of many. We all have burdens that may not be understood but should be respected.

It's not always easy to see the humor in awkward hearing moments – but it helps.

Hearing is precious, and I will protect what I have from noise damage.

Hearing loss affects us all – me, my family and my friends. I recognize that my hearing loss presents challenges for them, and I must honour and celebrate their efforts to make our communication successful.

So this is my Credo, a work in progress that expands on my guiding principles of communication: to be honest about my hearing loss, to be knowledgeable about it, and to be able to communicate my needs.

But, truthfully? I admit that my Credo doesn't *always* guide my actions in a particular moment. Just as I can't say that I don't occasionally *covet*, get cranky, think unkind thoughts, or any of the other attributes of a being a good person, I also sometimes forget to take the high road when communication goes bad. But in acknowledging what I believe to be true, the dark moments of hearing loss pass quickly and I live in hope that the next time will be easier.

(This column is adapted with permission from Gael's column for HearingHealthMatters.org.)