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What Your Clients Hate to Hear!

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Living with hearing loss is like drinking from a bottomless bowl of emotional soup. It's a constant loop of mis-hears, repeats, and corrections, keeping our emotions in play.

And we don't do one emotion at a time! Hearing loss is more complicated than that; emotions stay close to the surface, ready to erupt.

Let's say I'm at a small gathering of friends; communication-wise, it's not going smoothly for me.

I'm not just frustrated because I can't understand.

I'm *frustrated* because they keep covering their mouths while talking all at once and,

I'm *angry* because I had to remind them five times already and,

I'm *sad* because no one seems to care enough to remember from one second to the next and,

I'm *lonely* because everyone else is having fun and,

I'm *grieving* because it never used to be this way but,

I'm also *hopeful* that if I stop the conversation and explain, one more time, they'll finally get it, and then I'll be *grateful* and *happy* when the conversation becomes easier for me. For a little while. Maybe.

At the HLAA National Convention in June, I performed a series of monologues that put a raw, human face on the emotions of hearing loss

One of my pieces spoke to the words your clients hate to hear: *never mind or it was nothing or forget about it.* They crush us. When someone blows off our request to repeat something, they may do so because they feel the comment is not important enough for another go. But the resounding message *we* receive is that *we are not important enough* to waste their time in repeating it.

So, what do we do? Sometimes we let it go or deal with it graciously as a teachable moment. But our inner reaction is often more turbulent, and I gave voice to it.

I *yelled* it.

Now, yelling is not a good way to handle conflict. It's not polite. It's disruptive. It creates more tension. But theatre allows us to amplify emotions and situations. I could make the message bigger,

louder, angrier – very close to our real rage your clients often feel.

There's one thing that makes me clench – my fists, my jaw, my brain! And today, I'm not letting it go. This isn't a teachable moment. Because sometimes, it just boils up and over and I'm letting it rip!



So – DON'T! Don't say 'never mind' or 'don't worry about it'.

Don't you dare push me aside! Don't you dare dismiss me!

You don't get to do that. You can't use those words TO ME!

I get that maybe you think what you said wasn't important, or meaningful. Maybe it was so trivial that to keep going with it would be a waste of everybody's time.

*But **you** don't have the right make that unilateral decision, to cut me off, to end it – LIKE THAT!*

We are talking, together! We're engaging and I'm giving you my energy – I see you! I hear you! I read you! We keep talking until we both agree that this conversation is done, finished.

*You **know** this, so don't make 'never mind' the hill that our conversation dies on.*

BECAUSE I MIND!

And now, please repeat whatever it was you said, although truly? I no longer care, so just get me a glass of wine. Thank you.

In real life, I might use a *slight* raising of the outer voice, even as my inner voice is shouting *Don't You 'Never Mind' Me!* And this is how your clients feel, too.