Canadian Audiologist

The Official Publication of the Canadian Academy of Audiology

When a HoH Meets A Pro

Published November 23rd, 2016

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*In the hearing loss world that I live in, there are **HoH**s and there are **Pros**:*

HoH: The person with hearing loss who needs help to communicate better.

Pro: The hearing health specialist who has been trained to provide that help.

...OK, now that we've got that out of the way...

If you're a HoH, you have most likely—*hopefully*—met a Pro by now. You made an appointment, walked through that door and sat down to discuss your hearing with this Pro. (Just asking, did you check out the certificates on the wall? You want to see something *official* hanging there, with more substance than proof-of-participation in an online hearing aid course.)



At every meeting with your Pro, there should be a two-way conversation, an exchange of information. The Pro will ask you questions about your lifestyle and your hearing loss has affected it. They'll ask you—although not in these exact words—how you're coping. She or he should explain the Big Picture of hearing loss—the things you need to know about your hearing that will help you move forward. At appropriate times, you'll discuss different communication strategies, including assistive technology.



The key word is *discuss*. At no point should you be *told* what to do, *when* to do it, or that *this-hearing-aid-here* is THE best and ONLY option for you.

It doesn't matter if you're new to hearing loss, or if you've been using hearing aids for years—you have choices and input into decisions involving your aural rehabilitation, a fancy term for learning how to communicate and live better with hearing loss. If your Pro is bossy, a know-it-all or an uber-salesperson, get yourself a new Pro.

Most Pros are not like that; they welcome our input, because they are trained practitioners who *care*. However, some *are* a little behind on the learning curve of how to involve you in a two-way discussion, and you must learn to express your needs, to ask questions.

And it's not always easy being in *their* shoes, either. Pity the poor Pro who must decipher the client's answers to important questions.

Pro: *Mr. Jones, it's nice to meet you. Tell me why you're here and how I can help you.*
HoH: *Well, my hearing's not as good as it used to be.*
Pro: *Can you be more specific?*
HoH: *OK sure. My hearing's WORSE than it used to be.*

A polished Pro will eventually draw more information out of Mr. Jones, and a set of hearing tests will help fill in the blanks. It gets tougher when Mr. Jones tries on a hearing aid for the first time; the Pro must fine-tune it with the help of the computer—and more information from Mr. Jones.

Pro: *So, how does my voice sound to you?*
HoH: *Not good.*
Pro: *Mr. Jones, can you give me a bit more to go on?*
HoH: *OK, just quit yelling and let me think. It's loud, with sort of a high, hollow-y sound... no, hang on... tinny is more like it. Yep, a high, tinny-hollows sound... no wait, I've got it! You sound like a really loud Daisy Duck who's gone off her meds.*

Pro: *OK, I can work with that. Anything else?*
HoH: *Yes. I don't like it.*
Pro: *Well, it takes time to get used to the new sounds. Your brain has to adjust.*
HoH: *My brain is already a little overloaded. I can't remember what I had for breakfast.*
Pro: *Trust me, Mr. Jones. We'll take it bit by bit, step by step. Before you know it, in a few short weeks, you'll hardly know it's in your ear.*

When the HoH and Pro meet for the first time, it could-should be the start of a beautiful, trusting, effective client-professional friendship, which is what both parties need to meet their mutual goals:

The person with hearing loss wants to hear better.

The hearing care professional wants job satisfaction, happy clients, and a thriving business.

As HoHs, we need to understand that Pros cannot perform miracles unless the people they're trying to help actively participate in the process. (And I believe that modern technology, which can coax *hearing* out of uncooperative cochleas and eardrums, is nothing short of a *miracle*!)

Pros need to understand the same thing. Give us the information we need, in a timely manner, help us express our feelings and needs, discuss affordable and appropriate technology, and work *with* us to develop a plan for better hearing and communication.

When *that* kind of Pro and *that* kind of HoH meet, magic can happen.