Empathetic Support: Like a Bridge Over Troubled Water

“Like a bridge over troubled water...I will ease your mind.” This is one of the classic lines from a popular song written by Simon and Garfunkel, Bridge Over Troubled Water, in 1970. The song was intentionally written to offer support and empathy towards others, not sympathy. According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, M.D., empathy means being aware of, or being sensitive to the feelings, thoughts and experience of another. On the other hand, sympathy is largely used to convey commiseration, pity or feelings of sorrow for someone who is experiencing misfortune (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, M.D.). Based on those two different definitions, having empathy – or the ability to understand what a person is going through – is much better than pitying the person, or having sympathy.

And this type of empathetic support can also be applied to how the deaf, late-deafened and hard-of-hearing person should be treated in all areas of their life.

As a nurse, like anyone else, I find myself getting sick or in need of medical help. I usually do not address the fact that I am a nurse (because I want to be treated like everyone else) and want to see how medical staff will help me through difficult situations of health care.
The views and opinions expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or official policies of ALDA, Inc.

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Ugly Emotions

How I learned to confront and accept feelings such as rage, envy, and hate surrounding my hearing loss.

Some time ago, I was texting with a friend who also has bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. When I said I am thankful in many ways for the changes that have occurred from having this condition, she was outraged that I would say such a thing. This prompted her to rant the 1,001 ways in which her hearing loss is essentially ruining her life.

Though my friend is 20 years my senior, we share similar emotions in dealing with our late-deafened and hard-of-hearing experiences, and I imagine my gratitude for having a hearing loss caused her confusion and outrage. As we hashed through our feelings, the discussion included authentic, raw emotion as well as sharing dispassionate experiences in order to persuade the other. In the end, we came to an “agree to disagree” conclusion, marking a crossroads in our friendship, while both being thankful for the honest sharing.

I realized that “ugly” emotions (rage, envy, hate) about being deaf/hard-of-hearing have not been given the time, space, or energy to address them. These feelings are sometimes buried in the false belief that they are unacceptable, unlike emotions like helplessness, frustration, and sadness, which readily find support.

After years of unsuccessfully trying to bury “ugly” emotions, I found three techniques that help when they arise:

1. Share immediately. For a long time I told no one except my family about my hearing challenges. It felt too vulnerable. Nowadays, sharing this detail immediately has a positive effect on my experiences at restaurants, retail stores, and even medical visits beyond hearing health professionals. Now I know to release the emotions quickly in order to avoid an emotional explosion later.

2. Disperse energy. Similarly, when emotions of any kind surface, defuse them—early. In the past, I would practically run from humiliating situations when hearing incorrectly. Now, I can easily own up to the error and explain my hearing loss. While the embarrassment is still present, it releases my ugly emotions and allows the moment to pass without festering.

3. Forgive with compassion. I continue to struggle with reactions to my hearing loss. Eleven years after my diagnosis, I still feel sullen when I communicate with people I’ve known before my hearing loss. I find they speak louder and unconsciously use body
language to essentially ignore me, especially during group conversations. I know this is ignorance or discomfort on their part, but it still hurts. I have learned to react with compassion in order to ease these emotionally ugly moments.

I tell myself that I will own all the emotions associated with my hearing loss and extend greater compassion and empathy—for all of us—when ugly emotions appear.

*This article first appeared in the Spring 2018 Hearing Health Foundation newsletter and is being reprinted with exclusive permission from the author to ALDA. This specific article was selected to align with the theme of this ALDA News; empathy. May it be used as an example to demonstrate the necessary empathy we must show first to ourselves in order to enable empathy to be extended to others.*

**President’s News**  
*By Sharaine Rawlinson Roberts*  

Dear ALDA Friends,

As I write this, June has passed and July is sure to fly by in a blink of an eye. My husband and I spent four days in northwestern Colorado in mid-May photographing the wild horses of Sand Wash Basin. This was the fourth time in five years that we’ve done this. Time spent doing things we enjoy is good for the soul. What are you doing for yourselves that you enjoy?

Speaking of things that are good for the soul, meeting with members of an ALDA chapter or ALDA group can be incredibly good for you. No doubt many of you have attended an ALDAcon (ALDA convention) and have gained firsthand experience of being amongst a crowd of individuals with similar challenges, frustrations, joys and successes. People leave ALDAcons and write on ALDA’s Facebook page or send an email saying the experience was life changing. Being a part of a local chapter or group can help you offer support to one another and keep the warm feelings going throughout the years. Members who are a part of an ALDA chapter or ALDA group form friendships, many of which become lifelong. How many of you wish there was a local ALDA chapter or group for you to join?

If there’s not one in your area, why not form one? Region IV Representative to the ALDA Board of Directors, Roy Miller, has been hard at work updating the ALDA website with a separate tab: (“Chapter/Group Info”). In this section you will find information on the requirements of chapters and groups. Information includes requirements of the ALDA chapters and ALDA groups, a current list of ALDA chapters and ALDA groups, and the ALDA Chapter Bylaws that every chapter must adopt. Additionally, you can find the “Start-Up Kit” that includes six “ALDA Notes” that provide an abundance of information that may be of use to a person or persons wanting to start an ALDA chapter or group.

If you want to start an ALDA chapter, you’ll need four paid-up members of ALDA, Inc. to sign the petition requesting chapter approval. Of those four members, one must be
willing to serve as President of the requested ALDA chapter, another as Vice President, another as Secretary and another as Treasurer. The Petition to form an ALDA chapter is easy to fill out and can be done entirely online or by printing, completing the form and mailing it to ALDA via the United States Postal Service.

The ALDA Board of Directors recently made changes to the requirements to form an ALDA group. Only three people who are paid-up members of ALDA, Inc. are needed to petition for a group charter; one person needs to be willing to serve as a group leader. Groups need never meet face-to-face – they can transact all their business online. This could be of particular benefit to people living in rural areas. As with chapters, the petition to form an ALDA group is easy to fill out and can be done entirely online or by printing, completing the form and mailing it to ALDA via the United States Postal Service.

Finally, a "meeting," both for chapters and groups, can be almost anything anywhere, such as dinner at a restaurant, going to a movie, 4th of July picnic, trip to local museum, backyard BBQ, etc. Don’t feel you have to hold a “business” meeting every time you meet. Have fun! Feed your souls!

The last thing I want to mention is that ALDA, Inc. wants to get on the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) list. In order to do this, ALDA must have an organizational presence in 15 or more states in order to qualify for the CFC. For those who are unfamiliar with the CFC, this is the charitable giving program for federal employees. Your efforts to form an ALDA chapter or ALDA group in your area can greatly help us in our effort to join the CFC in order to create a revenue stream for the ALDAcon Scholarship Fund.

As I close this column, I want to share a couple of pictures from Sand Wash Basin. Remember, feed your soul.

Young foals with their band

Spirit Dancer and her stallion, Picasso
I also do not tell the medical staff right away that I am a late-deafened person because I want to see if they will take the time to guide me through procedures. It is only after listening to a few frustrating pieces of conversation that I do disclose the fact that I am a late-deafened person. Reams of information are then given to me along with their sincere sympathy. I will nod and say thank-you. But in reality, it is not the sympathy that I want. I do not need to be pitied! I need to be understood.

As a late-deafened nurse, I will search for good, understanding people to take care of me. One such person is a very kind and knowledgeable woman who works in the CT scan department in a small hospital just outside of Boston. When I first became deaf, I told her how I lost my hearing and that I really did not trust the medical field anymore. She smiled and listened. She then went out of the room and brought back a blanket and a pillow. She told me that she would get a flashlight that would tell me when to breathe and not to breathe. She understood me! She did not pity me!

I went through the scan just fine. I did not have to have it repeated because I breathed at the right time. Through understanding and empathy, her actions not only helped to reduce costs in the hospital, but also enabled me to develop a certain trust of hospital personnel. Over the years, we have developed a certain trusting relationship and I can ask when she is working, if I need another CT scan.

On one such occasion, I needed to have a CT scan of my arm. In my haste, I did not find out when she was working. I just wanted to get this procedure over with. A day later after the CT scan schedule was made, I got a call from her and she asked me if I wanted her to help me through the CT scan. This was not a breach of HIPPA. I was delighted that she called me and changed the appointment. And when I arrived for my appointment, in the CT scan room was the blanket and pillow, all set for me. Empathy in action!

It does not take much to understand another person. It does take time and heart. I would rather have someone be empathetic towards me than to sympathize with me being a late-deafened person. Finding those people in and outside of our lives who will provide us with empathetic support is important and necessary. There are so many times in our lives when we just need to be understood, heard and cared for. We should be treated with respect and kindness, not pity.

Simon and Garfunkel had it correct in 1970, “Like a bridge over troubled water... I will ease your mind.” Being understood through empathetic support will guide us through difficult times. Above all, it will also ease your mind.

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References:
Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, M.D. Empathy vs. Sympathy
ALDAcon 2018 Program News

The ALDAcon 2018 Program Committee is excited to share news about plenary session speakers and workshops to be seen at ALDAcon 2018.

The opening keynote presenters will be Richard Pimentel. Richard is an internationally-renowned consultant, speaker, and professional trainer. He has the well-earned reputation for being one of North America's premier speakers concerning disability and employment issues. He lost most of his hearing in an explosion during his service in the army during the Vietnam War. In 2007, Richard's life story was portrayed in Warner Brothers' full-length motion picture, *Music Within*.

Friday night will feature Gael Hannan performing "I'm Hearing as Hard as I Can" at the I. King Jordan Award Banquet. Gael is a renowned writer, humorist and public speaker on hearing loss issues. "I'm Hearing as Hard as I Can" is a stand-up performance about living with hearing loss. According to one person who saw it, (Gael’s performance) is "sometimes hilarious, sometimes moving, always brilliant."

Ms. Hannan will also be signing copies of her book, *The Way I Hear It*, on Thursday, October 11, at the Exhibitors’ Reception. This reception will feature refreshments and offer attendees time to visit all the exhibit tables to learn about products and services available.

A complete schedule of meals and events can be found at: ALDACON.

Scheduled workshops to be offered include:

- *True Working Dogs: What You Should Know* - Cynthia Moynihan and Hearing Dog Hero LaRue
- *Talk to My Face, Not My Feet - Tips on Improving Communication Skills When Seeking Medical Care* - Anne Killilea
- *Advocacy for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People* - Roy Miller
- *Mindfulness as a Tool (When I Became Deaf)* - Gaelen McCormick
- *Ten Things You Should Know About Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants* - Ron Leavitt, Nikki Clark, David S. Viers
Saturday afternoon, we will have two extended 3-hours workshops. These two workshops are:

**Solving Small Setting Communication Challenges** - Connie Robinson

This training contains essential information for both persons with hearing loss and their hearing loved ones. It focuses on small setting situations that one would encounter in the car, in the home, or during one-on-one conversations. Communication barriers are discussed, components of conversation are defined, and both technological and no-tech solutions are explored to help you get the most out of each conversation and listening situation.

**Artmaking for Everybody** - Antonia Lindsey

ALDA is a place of many ways to communicate, where we are no longer alone with hearing loss. Art can hold feelings & thoughts beyond words. Saturday afternoon's workshop offers art materials for reflection on the changes we make as late-deafened people. You are invited to set aside expectations of the outcome & simply renew yourself through play with color, form & materials - to experience creativity for its own sake, for relaxation & resilience. What to bring: a magazine or two on your favorite topic, a special memento (card or note or letter from a loved one or friend) and your curiosity!

In addition to workshops, there will be four meals provided and the traditional karaoke party on Saturday night. The ALDA Board and the ALDAcon planning committee look forward to seeing everyone in Portland for ALDAcon 2018!!
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ALDA’s Advocacy Corner

By John Waldo, Esq.

ALDA members Tina Childress and Mary Stodden, in collaboration with the Greater St. Louis chapter of Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), filed a lawsuit against Fabulous Fox Theatre (St. Louis, Missouri) for not complying with the American Disabilities Act (ADA). Several considerations were addressed within the lawsuit. One of the considerations was in regard to the obligations that a live theater must provide to deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons. As a result, a federal judge ordered Fox Fabulous Theatre to provide captioning for every performance of every stage production, when a request is made in advance. As reported in past columns, the lawsuit became necessary when Fabulous Fox Theatre declined to provide captioning after Childress sent a series of emails to them requesting captioning for a Broadway musical scheduled a year in advance. I then sent a letter to the theater pointing out that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires accommodations such as captioning. When Fabulous Fox Theatre ignored my letter, we filed a lawsuit.

After some early face-to-face negotiations, Fox began offering a single captioned performance of each production provided that a request was made two weeks in advance, and it hired a local court reporting service to prepare the captions and transmit them to tablet-type individual viewing devices. The ADA requires businesses to provide "effective communication" through auxiliary aids and services like captioning, but privately-owned businesses like Fox are entitled under ADA to elect the type of accommodation to offer. So, while we suggested that Fox hire experienced theater captioners to provide open captioning, in which the captions are displayed on a portable LED reader-board placed in front of one side of the stage, we acknowledged that the theater had the option of selecting a different method. We also agreed that because a live operator is required for each performance, an advance request would be appropriate.

In light of those conditions, we saw no reason why Fox could not offer captioning for any performance for which a request was made, rather than for only a single, pre-selected performance. We pointed out that the ADA requires businesses like Fox to offer people with disabilities benefits equal to those offered to others and argued that limiting people with hearing loss to a single accessible performance provided far fewer opportunities to see a performance than are available to patrons without hearing challenges.

The court agreed with us and directed Fox to: offer captioning whenever requested, provide notice of the availability of captions, and provide us with an equal opportunity to
purchase single-event or multi-event tickets through means other than a telephone query. (Here’s a link to the opinion: Legal Decision).

We were also concerned about the method used to display the captions. Fox offered individual viewing tablets that had to be put on the patron’s lap, requiring the user to look down at the captions then back at the stage, or to hold the tablet at or near eye level, which is uncomfortable for the duration of a performance. We asked initially for some kind of clamp or stand that could support the tablets and allow for hands-free viewing, but the St. Louis fire inspector vetoed this, citing such devices could impede an emergency evacuation.

Fox then said it would provide a floor stand to support the viewing devices from the wheelchair seats and would allow us to purchase tickets for those seats. While we thought that was potentially workable, our concern was that federal regulations dealing with accessible seating, including the number of spaces that must be provided, specifically define “accessible seats” as wheelchair seats. The judge, however, interpreted another part of the regulations to indicate that people with other disability-related needs could also use those seats. She therefore ordered Fox to provide the support stands for people who buy tickets for wheelchair seats, and to provide hand-held viewing devices for other seats.

The solution that one can buy wheelchair seats is theoretically troublesome in that it does create competition between people with different needs for a limited resource, albeit this isn’t likely to be a problem very often. Through research, we learned that Broadway theatres are making efforts to develop fire marshal-approved, hands-free viewing devices. The National Theatre in London sends captions to wearable glasses, much like the Sony glasses that the Regal Movie Theaters use. While a definitive solution has not yet surfaced, we are optimistic that one surface soon.

Federal regulations governing accessible seating does provide some distinct advantages to things like pricing and the ability to purchase tickets. Those regulations apply by their own terms only to wheelchair seats, but in declaring that we may also be entitled to buy those seats, the judge likely helped us quite a bit.

While this was the first live-theater case to result in an actual court decision and order, this is by no means the first live theater to offer captions – dozens of them currently do so. Most theaters offer open captions using the LED reader boards and do so for only a couple of pre-selected performances. This case may suggest that those theaters might also have to offer additional performances on request, but as we noted in our arguments, offering open captions requires blocking out seats such that the captions and the stage can be viewed in something approaching a straight line of sight, and such seats might not be available on notice as short as a couple of weeks. Maybe a more interesting extension of this case is that while we limited our argument to scripted presentations, there is no reason why the same logic cannot apply to other types of shows, like concerts or comedy performances.
Another encouraging aspect of this decision is that the judge implicitly recognized our interest in participating in a social event. We pointed out that the plaintiffs often wanted to attend the theater with their friends and family, but that limiting access to a single performance made it difficult and often impossible to plan group outings. The judge agreed that we are entitled under ADA to enjoy performances on our schedule, not the theater’s schedule.

The decision was handed down on April 18, and the court gave Fox 30 days to comply. It appears that Fox has done so. While Fox may still appeal, our sense is that the only issue Fox really wants to leave open is to argue about my fees. So, Fox should become fully accessible for the 2018-19 season and thereafter.

This case never should have been necessary – every other live theater I’ve ever dealt with have understood their obligations to provide captions, sometimes after a certain amount of grumbling, as have dozens of other theaters approached by other advocates. The case resulted in a very positive outcome; another indication that advocacy by ALDA and similar organizations can produce effective results.

**MOVIE THEATER CAPTIONING UPDATE**

*By John Waldo, Esq.*

For years, many of us with hearing loss thought it would be wonderful if we could go to any movie theater and enjoy the show, knowing that captioning would be provided. Thanks in large part to the advocacy efforts of ALDA, federal law now requires captioning. Now it’s time for action, by every one of us in our own communities, to turn the promise of that law into reality.

Effective June 2, new federal regulations issued pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require all indoor theaters showing digital movies to do the following:

- Offer closed captioning, visible on individual viewing devices, for every showing of every movie distributed with captions, OR
- Offer open captioning, visible to everyone in the theater, either for every showing or whenever requested prior to the start of the movie, AND
- Provide notice on their websites, at the box office and in any other advertising that captioning is available and for which movies, AND
- Maintain the equipment, AND
- Have at least one staff person available at all times who can operate the equipment and provide instructions to users.
The ADA requires “places of public accommodation” such as movie theaters, to furnish “auxiliary aids and services” – i.e. captioning – to enable people with hearing loss to read the dialogue and fully understand and enjoy movies. The captions are prepared by the studios, then furnished at no charge to the theaters, which are responsible for providing whatever equipment might be needed to view captions.

For a variety of reasons, many theaters were slow to comply, so advocates looked to the courts for relief. The initial results were mixed – some courts said no captioning was required, while others said some limited captioning was necessary. The watershed year was 2010, when a federal court of appeals and a Washington State court both ruled that movie theaters must offer closed captions, seen on individual viewing devices, unless the theater could prove they could not afford to do so. ALDA followed up with a lawsuit in California against Cinemark and a demand to AMC, two of the dominant national theater chains.

At the same time, technology changes were making it both easier and cheaper for the theaters to do their part. Traditional 35mm film was becoming obsolete, and movies began to be distributed digitally online or in readily portable data packages. It was then a simple matter for the theaters to activate the captions, so long as the theaters had obtained and installed the necessary viewing equipment.

Federal regulators such as the Department of Justice (DOJ) were involved as early as 2008. The DOJ is empowered to make rules to implement the ADA and expressed concern about what it called the “disconnect” between the rapidly increasing availability of movies with studio-provided captions and the slow deployment of caption-viewing equipment by the nation’s theaters.

As digital projection became standard and in light of their losses in court, the three dominant theater chains – Regal, AMC and Cinemark – agreed to make captioning available at all of their theaters. Regal provides glasses that display the captions on the inside of the lens. AMC and Cinemark provide screens attached to a flexible gooseneck that fits into the cup holders. Both types of viewing units show closed captions, visible only to patrons who request the devices, and do not alter the moviegoing experience for other patrons.

A number of smaller theaters, though, continued to hold out whether through ignorance or in the hopes that they wouldn’t get sued. Therefore in 2014, DOJ proposed a uniform national rule in order to bring the results achieved in litigation – specifically referencing the ALDA California cases – to everywhere in the country. DOJ adopted the national regulations now part of the legally binding Code of Federal Regulations, which can be found at 28 CFR § 36.303(g).
However, these regulations, while wonderful, are not self-enforcing. All of us need to step up to ensure that every movie theater, in each of our communities, is accessible to those who need captioning.

Here’s what I ask all of you to do. In many respects, the most important part of the new regulation is the requirement for public notice about captioning in all advertising, including the websites. We can understand why this is vital. We’ve learned through experience that not every place is accessible to us. Our default assumption is that hearing access won’t be provided unless we’re told otherwise. If we aren’t informed that captioning will be provided, we can assume there will be no captions, and we don’t need to go to the theater and buy a ticket only to find out we can’t enjoy the movies.

Please, look at the website of every theater that you might want to attend. If those websites don’t clearly state that captioning will be available, then it’s time to take action and ask for assurance.

I’ve drafted a sample letter you can send to those theaters. It can be found at the end of this article.

Please note that this letter does not threaten a lawsuit. Our first attempt is to simply notify the theatre in an amicable way that there is a violation of federal regulations. It’s worth letting them know that you are copying a lawyer who is experienced in handling these types of cases.

Our goal is to keep track of the responses. If the theaters respond positively and indicate they will provide captions and/or notice, we’ll say “thanks, and we’re looking forward to being patrons.” If we receive no response – or a “no” response – I’ll write them a letter emphasizing their legal obligations. Similarly, if they tell us that for whatever reason they don’t need to provide captions, then we’ll explain why they’re wrong. And if none of that works, then we’ll decide where to go next – either a complaint to the Department of Justice or off to court ourselves.

ALDA has become a formidable force in advocacy because even though we ask nicely, and encourage cooperation, we are not willing to take “no” for an answer. It is this approach that resulted in the national regulations. We must continue to go the last mile in our communities to make sure this regulation is actually put into effect. If we do our part to enforce these regulations, each one of us can be positive agents of change in our own lives.

If you have any questions or comments, please get in touch with me at johnfwaldo@hotmail.com.
Dear Theater Manager,

A new federal regulation requires your theater to become more accessible to people with significant hearing loss. Your theater does not appear to be fully compliant. On my own behalf and as a member of the Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA), a non-profit organization comprised of deafened people like me, we are asking you to correct that situation immediately.

We cannot fully enjoy your movies because we can’t understand the movie dialogue. That can be remedied through captioning. The movie studios furnish captions for virtually all movies at no cost to the theater. You must provide the means to display those captions, either as open captions visible to everyone or as closed captions visible only to patrons who obtain and use individual viewing devices that you provide.

The regulation requires you to offer closed captioning for every studio-captioned movie or open captioning when requested before he show starts. (The regulation is available at https://www.ada.gov/regs2016/movie_captioning_rule_page.html) Just as essential, the regulation requires theaters to provide notice in all of its advertising that captioning is available, and for which movies. Your website does not indicate that any captioning is provided. The notice requirement is critical, because the lack of assurance that captioning is available deters our members from attending.

The two-year phase-in period for compliance ended on June 2, 2018. If you are providing captioning as required, please make sure that you also provide notice. If you are not yet able to provide closed captioning, you may wish, at least temporarily, to offer open captions whenever requested. Doing that requires no additional equipment and no out-of-pocket expense and is vastly preferred by deaf and hard of hearing movie-goers.

Please let us know at your earliest convenience, but no later than [enter date for deadline], what your plans are with respect to captioning. You can reach me at (phone and/or email). Meanwhile, we will continue to watch your website for the notice telling us that we can now enjoy your movies and hope to see you soon in the theater.

Very truly yours:

[enter your name]

On behalf of [enter group you are part of]

cc (by email attachment):
John F. Waldo
Advocacy Committee Chair and Counsel
Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA)

Advocacy Director and Counsel
Washington State Communication Access Project (Wash-CAP)

Counsel
Oregon Communication Access Project (OR-CAP)
Happy Summer!

This issue’s spotlight is on Lisa Peten, the new editor of ALDA News. Lisa was born in New Jersey, and grew up between New Jersey and Pennsylvania. I met her at an ALDA Chicago social on Chicago’s Riverwalk, and she was the warm and friendly epitome of grace and elegance. She has since relocated to southern California, and now calls San Diego home. Though she misses Chicago, Lisa prefers life on the beach – and who wouldn’t?

Lisa became deafened when she was about 30. It started more as tinnitus and progressed to hearing loss over time. She’s divorced, with multiple talents to earn her living. She’s a writer, a blogger, a health coach and a business owner. She’s smart, articulate and well read. Enjoy reading her interview and discover why Lisa is “one of us.”

KK: What books do you recommend others read?

**LP:** The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho; You Are the Placebo: Making Your Mind Matter by Dr. Joe Dispenza; anything by Dr. Wayne Dyer; Heal Your Body by Louise Hay, or A Return to Love by Marianne Williamson

KK: You simply cannot live without…..

**LP:** Love, books, sun, beach, olives.

KK: Your little known talent is:

**LP:** Cooking delicious plant-based meals.

KK: Hardest thing you’ve done is:

**LP:** Run a marathon; 40-day water fast.

KK: Your funniest hearing loss moment is:

**LP:** …stay tuned.

KK: When and how did you learn about ALDA?

**LP:** Internet search on hearing health support groups.
KK: Do you belong to an ALDA chapter or group?

LP: Not now. During my first ALDA membership I belonged to ALDA-Chicago.

KK: Have you ever attended an ALDAcon? (If so, which ALDAcon was your first conference?)

LP: No.

KK: In what ways has ALDA enhanced your life?

LP: ALDA enhances my life through its warmth. I belong to other groups for hearing loss, but ALDA has this special-ness that adds a comfort to the realness of hearing loss and its accompanying highs and lows.

KK: Who or what inspires you the most?

LP: My mother.

KK: People would be surprised to learn that you......

LP: Skipped 6th grade, attended boarding school at age 12.

KK: Your biggest pet peeve is:

LP: Discrimination.

KK: Your favorite childhood memory is:

LP: Summers spent in North Carolina with my beloved great Aunt.

KK: Your favorite saying is:

LP: "What’s for me, I shall not miss."

KK: The bottom line is:

LP: Life is short, take advantage of the joys and find joy in those not so joyful moments.
8 Tips For Better Communication With Hearing Loss

By Sheri Eberts

Available at: 8 Tips For Better Communication With Hearing Loss. Reprinted with permission from the author.

Hearing loss can make conversations more challenging. Often we must rely on our conversation partners to practice communication best practices like facing us when they speak and providing context before changing topics. But communication is a two-way street. There are also many things we can do to enhance our ability to have successful and productive interactions with others. By following some simple rules of thumb, we can put ourselves in a better position to hear and communicate as best as is possible.

1. Inform Others About Your Hearing Loss

Don’t be shy about disclosing your hearing loss. People cannot help you if they do not know you are struggling. I make a habit of announcing my hearing loss at the start of any group meetings or retreats. It is easy to do as part of the introductions. This way I get the information out and avoid any awkwardness later when I ask someone to repeat themselves or grab a seat in the front row so I can hear the speaker better.

2. Be Specific About Your Needs

Let others know what they can do to help you hear your best. The more specific you are in your instructions — I need you to sit on my left side or please face me when you speak to me — the more likely you are to get good results. Be prepared to remind people what they can do to help. Since hearing loss is not visible, people sometimes quickly forget that you have trouble hearing.

3. Put Others At Ease

If you appear comfortable with your hearing loss, others will be as well. Let people know that they can ask you about it. I often joke with people saying, “If you say something to me and I don’t answer, or if I look at you like you have two heads, please don’t think I am rude, it is probably because I didn’t hear you.” Humor often makes people more forgiving of a social faux pas or two, and more willing to try again to engage you in conversation.

4. Stay Informed

Since context is so important in following conversations, try to stay abreast of current news and social happenings. It is easier to understand a new name (of a country or a celebrity) if you have seen it written about recently. This can be especially important if you are traveling to a different country where the names of historical figures and landmarks are less familiar to you.
5. Maintain Good Energy

Hearing takes extraordinary concentration for those with hearing loss so it is important to approach communication situations as well rested and alert as possible. **Eat healthy food, exercise regularly, and be sure to get enough sleep.** Also, don’t be afraid to take breaks from communication if your energy is lagging.

6. Interrupt for Clarification In Moderation

If you miss a word or two of a story, listen a little bit longer before jumping in with “What?” You may be able to piece together what was said after another sentence or two. This does not apply at the doctor, or in another situation where full knowledge is imperative, but in social situations, not following every detail is probably ok some of the time. Also, when asking for clarification, say what you think you heard to minimize what the speaker needs to repeat.

7. Use Non-Verbal Clues To Guide Your Communication Partner

Cupping your hand behind your ear is a good way to ask the speaker to raise his voice without interrupting the flow of the conversation. Leaning closer to somebody can also indicate that you are having trouble hearing them.

8. Go With The Flow

Manage your expectations. In certain situations, hearing every word is just not possible, but try to be grateful for what you can hear. Keep your sense of humor ready for the inevitable mis-hearings. Some of them can be quite funny if you let them.

Shari Eberts is a hearing health advocate, writer, and avid Bikram yogi. She blogs at: Living With Hearing Loss and serves on the Board of Trustees of Hearing Loss Association of America. Shari has an adult-onset genetic hearing loss and hopes that by sharing her story she will help others to live more peacefully with their own hearing issues.

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**PUBLISHING ALDA NEWS**

**ALDA wants to publish YOU!**

The theme for the next issue will cover **Online Resources.**

Tell us your experiences related to the online tools you use to help support your hearing, including any social media sites.

Please share with your fellow ALDAns!

Don’t delay, the deadline for the fall issue is August 20th.
I want to thank you for re-electing me as Treasurer. I appreciate your support and I am very happy to be on the Board.

At the end of Fiscal Year 2017, which ended on Dec 31st, we had $93,614 in the bank accounts.

The Balance Sheet for the ALDA Bank accounts (and the end of Fiscal year 2017):

- ALDA Operation Expenses: $50,784
- ALDAcon 2017 Account: $4,745
- ALDAcon 2018 Account: $2,530
- Scholarship Funds: $35,555

The $4,745 in the ALDAcon 2017 Account represents the profit for the ‘Con and was rolled into the Operating Account at the start of 2018.

The $2,530 in the ALDAcon 2018 account is the early payments under the special holiday rate plan.

The Bank accounts as of May 31, 2017: Total cash in the ALDA Bank accounts is $107,201.

The Balance Sheet for the ALDA Bank accounts:

- ALDA Operation Expenses: $53,071
- ALDAcon 2018 Account: $18,427
- Scholarship Funds: $35,703

All Federal and State (IL) forms that were required for 2017 and 2018, to date, have been filed.

All outstanding bills have been paid. We are on budget.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE**

I am looking for volunteers for the Finance Committee in order to evaluate the feasibility of various fundraising campaigns.

And, as a reminder, ALDA, Inc. is a non-profit corporation; donations may be tax deductible. Also, some employers do have matching donations plans. If you have any questions regarding donations, please contact me via mattf812@comcast.net.

ALDAcon 2018 in Portland, OR is fast approaching. I look forward to seeing you at the ‘Con.
**What is ALDA?** ALDA is the Association of Late-Deafened Adults and was established for people who are hard of hearing or deaf, or who have lost some or all of their hearing usually after acquiring the ability to use speech. Late-deafened people may have lost their hearing, suddenly or gradually, as a result of inherited causes, accident, illness, medications, surgery, noise, or unknown causes. ALDA also welcomes family, friends and professionals who support late-deafened adults.

**Join us** in Portland, Oregon, as ALDA hosts its 30th annual international convention (better known as **ALDAcon**) on October 10-14, 2018 at the Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel. It’s an experience you won’t forget and will want to attend annually!

The theme of the convention is “**ALDA: Bridging the Gap,**” referencing the many bridges in Portland and the “gap” between hearing and deafness.

**ALDAcon** offers world renowned speakers, workshops, karaoke and, most importantly, barrier-free interaction with peers. All workshops, luncheons, and banquet are fully communicatively accessible via CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation – a form of captioning) and sign language interpretation, as well as assistive listening systems and pen & paper. These services allow everyone to understand what is going on and to participate fully.

**ALDA Member Registration:**
- Regular (7/1/18 to 10/1/18) $310

**Non-Member Registration:**
- Regular (7/1/18 to 10/1/18) $340

**Military Veteran Registration:**
- 11/1/17 to 10/1/18 $260

For more information visit: [ALDAcon 2018](#) For hotel reservations call the Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel at 503-281-2500 or 800-325-3535. Ask for the ALDAcon 2018 group block and mention the group code: AJ06AD.
**Chapter Happenings**  
*By Ann Smith, Curator*

**Kim Mettache** reports that the **ALDA Northwest Indiana** group attended another fabulous captioned play, “Steel Magnolias” on March 9. We were lucky to have Kathy Cortopassi provide CART for our enhanced enjoyment.

**ALDA-Peach** officers for 2018 are:  
**Marge Tamas**, President;  
**Jim Stansell**, Vice-President;  
**Sara Hartman**, Secretary;  
**Steve Tamas**, Treasurer; and  
**Ann Smith**, Member-at-Large.