



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association British Columbia Chapter



THE HEARING HUSBAND'S TOP COMMUNICATION TIPS

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I have hearing loss. My husband does not.

A more exact description of my hearing ability is that I am deaf without my devices. With my hearing aid and cochlear implant sound processor, I hear reasonably well, but often struggle to locate the sound or even what it is. The Hearing Husband can hear an animal rustling in the bushes a hundred yards away and can identify almost any sound – AND where it's coming from. (What a show-off!)

Through more than 35 years of being together, the Hearing Husband, whose legal name is Doug, has learned a thing or two about living well with a partner with profound hearing loss.

Here are some of his tips:

Never assume that the person with hearing loss (PWHL) has heard and understood you, especially when there is some distance between you and there's background noise.

Sometimes your beloved PWHL will break this rule herself. She might, for example, talk to you from another room. But do not yell back that she's not supposed to do that, because she will just respond with, "Pardon?" and get irritated because she's just done a no-no. Things will keep going south from there.

When you are asked to repeat yourself, which seems like almost any time you say something, do not over-enunciate your response. It's not necessary, looks ridiculous and ticks her off.

When someone, perhaps a stranger who is not aware of your PWHL's hearing loss, says something to her, you have a couple of choices. One is to say, "Honey, this nice man just said something to you." The other is to say to the nice man, "She has hearing loss and you need to get her attention and face her." Both seem like reasonable choices, but if your PWHL is like mine, the first choice might be your safest bet. Mine likes to be in charge of letting people know. If you choose the second option, your beloved will be friendly to the stranger but later, you and she will have words.

If your PWHL leaves the TV room because they're not interested in hockey/baseball/basketball, feel free to turn off the closed captioning. But when they re-enter the room, don't wait to be asked to turn the captions back on. Just do it. Fast.

It's bedtime and the lights are out. Your PWHL's hearing devices are not in her ears. Do not pick this time to tap her on the shoulder, without turning on a light, to say something. She will lift her head and snarl, "Seriously? How the heck do you think I can understand you, IN THE DARK, and without MY DEVICES?!"

If your PWHL doesn't seem to be hearing as well as she did, say, yesterday, do not under any circumstance ask, "Do you have your hearing aids in?" This is another situation that will not go well. Of course she has her devices in or she wouldn't hear you at all! Some days our beloveds simply don't hear as well; they could be tired or distracted or there is background noise that you don't even notice, but which can interfere with their speech comprehension.

Communication is everything in a relationship of any kind. Our PWHLs are hearing as hard as they can. Sometimes they need help – from you, from other people with hearing loss, and from their hearing care professional. But mostly from you. Have empathy, use clear speech, face them. Most importantly, ask your beloved how you can become the good communicator they need.

