

April 2023

Hearinglossdenver.org 720-295-8581  
© 2023 HLAA-Denver Chapter. All rights reserved.



## Beyond hearing aids:

# People and places affect communication

By Paula DeJohn

“Communication isn’t just about hearing,” the Denver Chapter’s resident audiologist told members at the March meeting. Dusty Jessen, AuD, has been audiology consultant to the chapter for several years, and on March 18 was elected to the board of directors. She discussed her book, *5 Keys to Communication Success*, which identifies many factors beyond hearing loss that can sabotage communication efforts. The book is full of pithy slogans and cute illustrations, but also clear explanations of the science and sociology underpinning the advice. Some of the remarks may seem elementary and common-sensical to people with hearing loss experience: “It is much easier to communicate in a calm and quiet environment,” and, “Visual cues are essential for effective communication exchanges.”

But how often do we let ourselves be frustrated by loud restaurant music and mumbling phone callers? So the book is full of reminders of things we already know...but need to be reminded of.

The 72 pages cover many possible circumstances and how to deal with them. Dr. Jessen has organized the “5 keys” as follows: Environment, Speaker, Listener, Technology, and Practice. She stresses that these keys apply to everyone involved in communication, not just the person with hearing loss. In fact, someone with normal hearing might benefit from reviewing the fundamentals of communication as explained in the book. So, as Dr. Jessen advises, let family members, coworkers and friends read it as well. The book shows

how each key can be used in a variety of environments, meaning the places and situations we are likely to be in during daily life.

### Around the house

“At home we let down our guard, and don’t try as hard to be good communicators,” Dr. Jessen says. Communication at home works best when appliances such as TV or the dishwasher aren’t competing with people speaking. It’s best to turn them down or off. “Do you want to nurture a relationship with your TV or with your spouse?” she asks in the book.

The speaker should be in the same room as the listener, so that visual cues such as posture and facial expressions can supplement the spoken words. Listeners must learn to pay attention to the speaker, not some other distraction like a phone. And, Dr. Jessen insists, wear your hearing aids all day. Don’t treat them as accessories for going out in public: “If you leave them out at home, then put them in to go out, the noise will cause information overload to the brain.”

Finally, if you have developed bad habits like talking while the TV blares or water is running, practice new ways of communicating. Change will take time: “Experts say it takes 30 days to create a new habit.”

### In the car

First, turn off the radio if you want to converse in the car. Keep fans low or off, and windows closed. As a passenger, be sure to sit in front, where you can turn to see the driver or someone in the back seat. If you’re



hearing aids have a “speech in noise” setting, use it in the car to minimize background noise.

The book suggests riding around with a friend to practice car-based conversations. After determining what works, tell your audiologist, who may be able to adjust hearing aid programs for car use.

### **Dining out**

As Chapter members regularly discuss, noisy restaurants are a major source of frustration. Now that many restaurants have reopened post pandemic, it is a bit easier to select one that offers a comfortable setting for someone with hearing loss. Among the suggestions are:

- Look for a quiet restaurant, without loud music. (Note: That can be difficult with chain restaurants, as corporate policy often demands loud music that makes the place seem full and lively.)
- Choose locations with small rooms rather than a large hall.
- Request a booth or corner table.
- Find a spot with good lighting, to be able to see speakers’ faces.
- Visit during off-peak hours, when the restaurant is less crowded and therefore quieter.
- Of course, let your hearing companions know you have hearing loss, and may need them to speak up, face you and sometimes repeat words. Even so, if several people are dining together, don’t expect to hear everything.

“It is difficult for people with normal hearing to follow multiple conversations, so don’t expect to be able to do this with hearing loss,” Dr. Jessen says.

For the practice part, first experiment with different restaurants to find the least noisy. Then make repeated visits to locate the best table and the best seat for hearing conversation. If you are eating with the same

person, both can practice the speaker and listener skills.

### **On the phone**

The book recommends using a landline for clarity of signal. However, they seem to be a dying breed as cellphones predominate worldwide. While telecoils and Bluetooth systems have come a long way in boosting signal strength and sharpness, the 5 keys apply when on any kind of phone call.

Speakers and listeners cannot see each other, so they need to make an extra effort to speak slowly and distinctly. It is especially difficult to distinguish letters and numbers. When in doubt, repeat what you think you heard, and let the speaker verify or correct it: “This lets your speaker know exactly where the communication breakdown has occurred.”



*Happy Easter, Happy Spring*



## Public events

These could be anything from a church service to a business meeting to a play or movie. First, where you sit is important. For acoustics, up front is usually best, but it depends on the building. It helps to be familiar with the play, the agenda, or the subject of the speech. "Meetings in the workplace or the community can be very challenging for those with hearing loss," Dr. Jessen says. Side conversations and other disturbances make it hard to focus on the speaker. "Be attentive and do not multi-task," she advises. The speakers will be the performers, meeting leaders and any guest speakers. The speaker should use a microphone (too often not the case in informal meetings). Many public venues such as theaters, conference centers and, increasingly, churches, have hearing loops and other assistive devices that work with hearing aids. "Public venues are required to provide headphones for those who do not wear hearing aids, and to provide neckloops for people who do wear hearing aids," she notes. But if the room has an installed loop, hearing aid wearers need only switch to the telecoil setting, and the sound will be delivered directly to their ears. Practice is important to develop confidence in attending, even speaking, at public meetings and events. Happily, for this kind of skill, it means going out as often as you can, to be entertained, informed and inspired. *Contact Dusty Jessen at [support@columbinecares.com](mailto:support@columbinecares.com).*



### **Swinging summer**

*Paula (member), Don (husband) and Lucy (cat) ended the summer of 2022 in Bailey, near Staunton State Park.*

## **In other news...**

### **New board elected**

New board members elected March 18 are: Marilyn Weinhouse (secretary), Roger Ponds (treasurer), Paula DeJohn, and Dusty Jessen. The board is not yet complete; the president and vice president positions remain vacant.



*The Forum Theater at Koelbel Library*

### **Baseball fans**

The chapter will be a sponsor of the Platt Canyon Sertoma Club Field of Dreams Baseball Camp for hard-of-hearing youth. The camp will be on the weekend of June 24 and June 25 at All Star Park, 200 S Harlan St., Lakewood, CO 80226. *See page 4 for details.*

### **New meeting location**

The HLA Denver Chapter has a new meeting place: the Koelbel Library at 5955 S Holly St, Centennial, CO (Orchard and Holly). Most upcoming meetings are in the library's Forum Theater.

The next meeting will be Saturday, April 22, from noon to 2 p.m. The following meeting will be Saturday, May 20, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

# 25th Annual – 2023 Sertoma Field of Dreams Baseball Camp



## Baseball Camp for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**Ages: 7 - 16**

Dates: June 24th and 25th, 2023 (Sat./Sun.)

Mandatory Field Registration – 7:00 am. – 7:30 am.

**Camp Times: 8:00 am. SHARP – 3:45 pm.**

## Location: All Star Park – Keli McGregor Baseball Field

200 S. Harlan St., Lakewood, CO 80226.

Location - The baseball field is located on the North-East corner of Alameda and South Harlan Street.

Sponsored by Platte Canyon Sertoma –  
in partnership with Front Range and  
Central Colorado District Sertoma Clubs



“Connecting those who are called to  
serve– to those who can’t hear the  
call.”

## Registration Instructions

[www.sertomafieldofdreams.com](http://www.sertomafieldofdreams.com)

Baseball Camp Link – Print off the website  
registration form (please read all payment and  
mailing instructions) - complete it in its entirety.  
Mail your registration form and camp fee to  
**Field of Dreams Baseball Camp – 25875 E. 4th  
Pl., Aurora, CO 80018 - Attn: Kathy Hobbs.**  
Or complete your registration on-line – mail in  
your camp fee. All camp fees and registrations  
must be received by **June 3rd, 2023.**

For Registration Information

Kathy Hobbs - [Kmatlack2001@yahoo.com](mailto:Kmatlack2001@yahoo.com)

For Camp Information – 720-334-6527

Galen Graf – [twobsailin@msn.com](mailto:twobsailin@msn.com)

## Baseball Camp Features and Highlights

- Open enrollment for all deaf and hard-of-hearing campers ranging from beginner to advanced baseball skill levels.
- Experienced/professional coaching staff – highly personal and individualized instruction - **1:3 coach to camper ratio.**
- Experienced/professional “on-field” signers/medical staff.
- Home-Run Derby and game simulated scrimmages.
- Minimal \$10 Camp Fee – **financial needs “scholarship funding” is available on an individual basis.** Contact our registrant – Kathy Hobbs – for information and details.
- Free camp baseball cap and camp tee-shirt.
- Free luncheon (both days) for the **campers and families.**
- All non-camper minors **MUST** be supervised by parents or guardians at all times.
- **Only tennis shoes are allowed to be worn during the camp.**

## Baseball Camp Skill Sets/Instruction Philosophy

Constant emphasis and attention to the safety of the campers. Heavy emphasis on basic fundamental **and** advanced techniques with repetitive drill and skills development covering all skills applied in simulated game situations.

- Throwing/Catching Techniques
- Hitting Techniques (extensive work)
- Outfield/Infield Play (extensive work)
- Running Game Techniques
- Scrimmage/Game Segments

**Camp Director – Galen Graf** – directed this camp for 22yrs. – worked and presented at over 45 baseball camps in Colorado - 27 yrs. of high school coaching experience - 20 yrs. as the head baseball coach at Littleton High School.

**This camp is a progressive camp - all of the skills learned and developed on the first day will be needed and utilized on the second day. More advanced campers will be placed in advanced drill work situations as the camp progresses.**