The Patient Perspective: What Your Clients Need from You

Presenters: Shari Eberts, Gael Hannan

It's my pleasure to welcome our guest speakers. Today they will be presenting the patient perspective, what your clients need from you. We have with us Shari Eberts and also Gael Hannan. If you'd like to learn more about either guest speakers, you can read their bio on the course registration page. At this time, I hand the mic over to you, Gael.

Hello. I'm Gael Hannan. Hi, everybody. And I'm Sherry Eberts. And we are your hearing hacks.

We will explain what that means later on, but we are so pleased to be here with you on audiology online. You know, hearing loss does not come with a how to guide, and that makes it challenging for those people like Shari and me, those who are newly diagnosed with hearing loss, to gather the information that they need to live well with it. This session today, the patient perspective, what your clients need from you, provides a roadmap for your clients on their journeys and how you, as their hearing care provider, can better support them through all stages of that hearing loss journey, because their relationship, our relationship with you, is an integral part of the journey, which for most of us is a lifelong trip. But why do you need the patient perspective? Well, you'll gain a better understanding of their full life experiences, and that builds empathy.

It makes your practice more person centered and your treatment, you're working with them more complete. Patients are the experts in their lived experience, just as you are experts in hearing science and the delivery of hearing healthcare. And when we marry those together, everyone wins. This creates best possible outcomes for the patient and also increased satisfaction for you on a job well done. So the roadmap we're going to cover today details how your clients can live what we call skillfully with hearing loss.

And we don't use the term skillfully lightly. So we're two women with hearing loss, and we've learned the hard way that there is an easier way. We can become better at living well with hearing loss, and we can become more skilled at getting the most out of any listening situation. We can take charge. We can

be in control of our hearing loss journey, not just bystanders, but full, active participants.

Another reason we like the word skillfully is because a skill is something you can learn. It's something you can practice, and you can get better at it, and it's something that can be taught. And that's where all of you really come in. We believe a skills based approach will help any person with hearing loss, regardless of how long they've had it. And this approach is based not only on our personal experiences, but on those of thousands of other people like us.

It's rooted in our lived experiences, and it aligns with hearing science and advances in technology and the development of modern hearing care principles, such as person centered care. And Gael and I have been individually dedicated to this philosophy for many years because we know the life changing difference that it can make. So here are our disclosures and our learning outcomes, and then here is our agenda for this session. First, we're going to talk about why we need an operating manual by sharing our personal hearing loss stories. And then, most of the presentation, we'll talk about our three part framework for how to live a better life with hearing loss.

And then finally, we're going to discuss your role in making all of that happen.

So, age before beauty. So, I will start with my story. I first found out that I had hearing loss when my mommy told me. I don't know how young I was, but I was very young because it was diagnosed at age two as a congenital hearing loss. Cause unknown.

But all of the usual suspects came into play, a challenging pregnancy, difficult childbirth, and a very small birth weight. It was a very small but very cute baby. But anyway, they discovered it at two and a half when my parents realized I wasn't responding in a way that they expected. My mom was a nurse, and it was diagnosis, but at that time, we're talking the dark ages, way back in the mid 1950s, late fifties. And the conventional wisdom at the time was not to put an aid, a body aid, on a child with what

was then a mild hearing loss.

So the only hearing care that I received was to visit the doctor annually, say, yes, that hearing's a little worse this year. And no, a hearing aid won't help her. Just come back next year. And this is the way it progressed through my childhood and into the teen years. If you all think back, the teen years are challenging enough, let alone having a hearing loss that was now moderate to complicate the issue.

But I got through school. I sat at the front of the class.

My go to strategy was to read lips, and I did the best that I could. When I left home at 1920, I discovered really how hard of hearing I really was. I didn't have parents or teachers to make sure that I was paying attention, et cetera. And I thought, I really need a hearing aid. So I reached out to a new ent, and I had a hearing aid within a month.

And it was the first of many life changing moments in my hearing loss journey. Life became very loud, but I could hear better. And that's the way it continued. For two decades. I went through a succession of increasingly better hearing aids.

And until the age of 40, a couple of interesting things happened at that monumental age. I went to binaural. I went to bilateral hearing aids, which was wonderful. But I was also expecting a baby. A baby.

And for the first time, my hearing loss, or my need to hear well, took on a new urgency. I mean, I was going to have a baby. I was going to be responsible for the care of a child. And I was worried about how my hearing loss would impact that. How would I hear my child cry in the night?

I found that out quickly enough. Husband jabs you up your gap. But what if I didn't hear him burp? Would he blow up? Who tells you these things?

Because there were no hearing resources for me at that time. I didn't know anyone else who had hearing loss. So for the first time, I reached out for help and to other people with hearing loss. And I got the answers I needed. I went to a hearing loss conference.

I walked into that conference one person, and three days later, I emerged another person. I got the answers, what I needed to know about mothering and being a parent to as a person, a mom with hearing loss. But I also learned so many other things. I learned I was not alone. I learned about new technology, about new behaviors.

It was so amazing that when I went home from that conference, I looked at my husband and thought, you poor man, you can hear. I had a new identity and sense of self, and it led me into hearing loss advocacy. I had a new life as a mom and as a hearing loss advocate. And I wanted to. I dedicated my work from then on to helping people better understand the hearing loss life, what they could do to live a more successful journey.

So I became a writer. I was presenting. My background was in theater, so I used a lot of drama to help get the message across. I wrote a book called the Way I hear it in 2015. And then a couple of years later, I thought there were so many memoirs coming out about living with hearing loss, and there was no longer a resource with the strategies, the strategies that I never had and I had to learn on my own over decades.

And so I reached out to Sherry Eberts, who was an acquaintance. And that's how we spent our pandemic. Was writing a book. Yep. How I spent my pandemic.

Everyone has stories, but writing a book called hear and beyond, live skillfully with hearing loss. And it was the roadmap, the guidelines and strategies that neither of us ever had. And that's what we're

talking about today, is our philosophy that we love to share, not only in our book, but in sessions such as this. And it's what I do. It's my passion to help others find the success in the hearing loss journey that I have.

Okay, my story is a little bit different. I first noticed my hearing loss in my mid twenties, but my journey actually started well before that, watching my father struggle with his own hearing issues. He was highly stigmatized by it, and he would do almost anything to keep it a secret. He had his hair grown long down over his ears. Well after it was fashionable.

I remember family parties. He would be sort of off by himself with his back to the festivities. And as a child, I didn't really understand why he was doing that. But when I developed my own hearing loss, I finally understood he was probably having trouble hearing in that loud party environment, and he just couldn't bring himself to keep trying. And I knew just how stigmatized he was by his hearing loss.

He probably thought isolating himself might help to keep it a secret. And as we all know, that doesn't really help to keep that secret. But he didn't know that yet. But when I first discovered my own hearing issues, I hit it as well. I was following in his footsteps.

I felt embarrassed. I felt ashamed. I didn't know if it was because of something I had learned from him, or maybe it was just that societal stigma that still lingers around hearing loss. But whatever the cause, these feelings lasted for many, many years and really held me back from staying connected to the people that I cared about. But once I had children, everything changed because I saw them watching me do the same things I had watched my father do, hiding my hearing loss and laughing at jokes I hadn't heard and isolating myself at parties.

And I realized I was passing on the same stigma to another generation. And it was not something I wanted to do. I decided it had to stop. I finally had to accept my hearing loss, and so I did. At that time, I

finally started wearing my hearing aids all the time and began teaching my family and my friends how they could help me to communicate better and to hear my best.

And now I refuse to let my hearing loss isolate me. And it's not always easy, but it's definitely worth it. And like Gael, I became an advocate for people like me, people with hearing loss. I write a weekly blog@livingwithhearingloss.com, and during the pandemic, helped produce a hearing loss documentary called we hear you as well as writing hear and beyond. Live skillfully with hearing loss, with Gael, and through my advocacy, I really hope to help others live more comfortably with their own hearing issues as well.

But I hope that, as you can see from our stories, there are similarities and differences and, of course, ups and downs. Because just because you've been living with hearing loss for a long time, it doesn't mean that you're necessarily good at it. And this was true for Gael and me as well. So when we sat down to start writing our book and we began to compare notes about our journeys, we realized that over the years and through trial and error and by meeting and learning from other people with hearing loss, we had each found our way to a similar set of skills and strategies that helped us live well with it. And when we talked about this, what we realized is that when we shifted our goal from hearing better to communicating better, that made all the difference.

And we've realized things could be better if we just lived more skillfully.

But why are some people more successful than others at living with hearing loss? All people with hearing loss, to some degree, share similar challenges and share opportunities to thrive. Sherry and I didn't have resources earlier in our lives that are available. Now they are available, and yet still people struggle. They avoid getting help, and they even get in their own way through negative practices in their communication.

Why aren't they using all this fabulous information and technical resources? They don't know about them. They don't understand the benefit, how it will help their lives. They don't know how to use them. So one of the key influences on how well a person does with hearing loss is their life experiences and attributes.

And you know this in your practices, with all the different people you see daily. One issue is, of course, the degree and type of hearing loss. But that's just one reason. It's also their personality, how they deal with stress or don't deal with it, their openness to change things in their lives. It also helps how well they actually understand hearing and hearing loss, both in general and in their own case, their Families.

When I met other people with hearing loss, I found people who'd grown up whose parents did not address their hearing loss. They didn't talk about it. And so family attitudes towards hearing loss and the stigma that Sherry was talking about in her own family, family stigma, societal stigma and personal stigma. And this is a difficult thing to deal with and also access to hearing, healthcare, both financially and proximity to providers. The next major influence is the service that you provide.

On one hand, on the negative side. We've all or many of us have had the experience with the hearing care person who made us not want to go back, who we felt was not sympathetic to our fear of the sound booth or our financial situation, who seem to simply want to slap a hearing aid on it and call it a day. Then on the other side is this. You just being here today and tells me that you're in this side of the ledger? The positive side, qualified hearing care professional who was not only a good technician and who communicates well, but who endorses a full range of communication strategies that will benefit your client or patient.

And the third influence is peer resources that both Sherry and I referred to and talked about in our stories. This is transformational. This can be life changing for your clients in addition to what you are working with them and explaining to them accurate advice or life advice from another person who

understands can really boost a person on their journey, as well as information from unbiased websites and consumer groups. And again, interaction with other people with hearing loss, personal interaction, sharing stories. This reduces isolation in a huge way.

All right, so we've given you a few hints already, but what does it mean to live more skillfully with hearing loss? The first step is knowing what to expect, because if you don't know where you're going, it's pretty hard to get there. Understanding the big picture lets us see that ups and downs are part of the process. So, for example, it takes time to adjust to hearing devices. And if we know that the fact that they don't work right out of the box is not seen as a personal failure, but just as a normal part of the process.

The second step is embracing a trio of strategies to improve communication. And as you can see, only one part of that trio is technology. The other two parts are about attitude change as well as non technical communication strategies. And then the third step is putting it all together right, taking what we learn about the journey and the three legged stool of strategies and applying them to all aspects of life. Let's take a closer look at the hearing loss journey itself, starting with the big picture.

Big picture. As Sherry said, it gives your client a clearer vision of where they can go and how they can get there. It is really helpful to us to have the big picture come from you. Hearing care providers are key in setting the stage for us laying the groundwork for our success, not just for getting the most out of our hearing aid, but getting the most out of our lives. We need to see that hearing loss is, for most of us, permanent and it's only with hindsight that sherry and I realized we were even on a journey that looking back, we could see the twists and the turns and stalls, blockades and breakthrough.

And all of these would have been much easier to handle with some foreign knowledge. And who better than you to do this for us? For most of us, hearing aids and cochlear implants are not a standalone cure. Most of us still need to use visual cues, visual information, and other methods as well. We need

help in accepting and understanding and accepting the emotions of hearing loss.

People communicate with emotions, and we need to know that these emotions are normal, and they need to be acknowledged, both individually and within our communication network, how powerful it is to realize that we are not alone in feeling sad, angry and embarrassed, that communication now takes so much work. The big picture shows that there is help and support available, and that asking for this support is not helplessness, it's strategic. Now, while all journeys are unique, we all go through similar stages.

We have spent probably thousands of hours talking with other people with hearing loss. And like Gael said, every journey is unique. But most of them pass through a series of typical, recognizable stages. And the first one is debating with yourself. And that's where you wonder if you're having trouble hearing, or maybe everyone else has just started mumbling.

And here I know I definitely struggled with denial. I was looking for anything or really anyone else to blame but my own porn hearing. And this stage can last many, many years. The next is validating, and that's really where you all come in. We go for a hearing test, and it may not be what we wanted to hear, but it's now a reality of hearing loss.

The third stage is taking charge, and that's really the most exciting part of the journey because this is where we decide that we can do something about it. For most people, this means getting hearing aids, but we soon discover that they are not a standalone solution for hearing loss. And we begin to explore other strategies as well. Well, and that's really where here and beyond can be very helpful. The fourth stage is living skillfully, and that's really the ultimate goal, right?

It's living the way we want to be living. Now, it might not be smooth sailing every day, but we're equipped to handle the hiccups. And when they do happen, we try a new strategy and we keep going.

And then there's refreshing and restarting. This is what makes hearing loss a journey, really, rather than a puzzle with a finite answer.

So something changes. Maybe you get new hearing aids or your hearing loss progresses further, or there's a pandemic. And this sets you back to an earlier part of the journey. And so it begins again. And these stages don't happen overnight.

Each of us takes the journey at our very own pace. Now, the second part of living skillfully is embracing integrated strategies, or skill sets that have a single targeted purpose, and that is to improve communication. This is our three legged stool. Now, a three legged stool never wobbles, even on uneven ground. Don't ask me how, I don't know.

It has something to do with science. But I know from experience it's a fact that our three legged stool is the solid foundation of communication that we can stand on. And these legs are mind shifts about our attitudes, technology, about technology and communication. Game changers, which we mentioned, are the non technical behaviors that we employ in communication. Now, each of these skill sets is important, but when the three of them work together, that's when the magic happens.

I have the potential to change my journey. The person with the most power in my hearing loss success is me. I think this is a very moving statement and a life changing one, because it's the moment you discover that you are in charge of your hearing loss journey. And a lot of that comes down to the attitude that you have about it. A diagnosis of hearing loss often comes with emotional burdens that paint hearing loss as embarrassing or shameful.

And some of these beliefs come from external sources, like advertisements or tv shows and other media that still use poor hearing as the brunt of the joke or to make someone look foolish or out of touch. And without realizing it, we can internalize these feelings and we look down on ourselves,

causing us to hide our hearing loss so that we don't appear weak or broken. Now, let's do an attitude selfie. This is an attitude selfie that when we are talking to consumers, to people with hearing loss, we have them do this. We want you to do it as well.

These reveal common negative attitudes that people may hold about their hearing loss, clearly unproductive and lead to negative outcomes. And just like the stages of the journey, this list was compiled from our interaction with thousands of people like us that we have met through our work. Why me?

No one understands what I'm going through. I want to hear better the way I used to. I don't like advertising my hearing loss. People will think I'm old or slow. My family, my friends, they always, always forget about my hearing loss.

Hearing aids are ugly, they're expensive, and they don't always work. Oh, I don't want to bother anyone with my hearing loss needs. Who would want to hire me or love me or be my friend? I get angry at myself and I get angry at others when we make communication mistakes. And everywhere I go, there is no access for people like me with hearing loss.

Our attitudes toward hearing loss affect our emotions and our behaviors. And this is powerful because it means that life with hearing loss can be better just by changing our attitudes. These better attitudes create better conversations because we're more willing to ask for the assistance that we need. And they can even help our technology work better because we're more open to experimentation and change. When we can reframe these unproductive, destructive thoughts and reposition them as constructive, actionable statements, we create a healthier approach to hearing loss.

Now, we're not trying to be overly simplistic here. Mind shifts are not cures for hearing loss. But when people with hearing loss actively support their hearing aids with other strategies, and including an

improved emotional attitude, they can communicate better. And this will also improve their working relationship with you. So Gael's going to give us a couple of examples.

So, the first one, the mindset, is, nobody understands what I'm going through. The shift is, many people experience the same challenges as I do. I can learn from them. I'm not alone. You remember that I mentioned this conference that I went to and how it changed me.

One of the defining moments was at the end of the final day, and it was all over. And I went with some new hearing loss friends out for a drink at a local pub. And we walked into this pub, and it was almost empty, which is great for people like us. Not as much noise, except for this one table in the corner of four people, presumably hearing people. Now, I don't know if you've ever gone drinking with people who have severe hearing loss.

Let me tell you, we are loud, very loud. And that's always something that's embarrassed me. If I'm too loud, people will say, you're too loud. And I was quite aware of the looks we were getting from this table of hearing people in the corner. And then all of a sudden, I went to myself, so what?

So what? This is what having hearing loss is like, and I'm okay with that. And I just felt this cloak of shame fall off my shoulders. It was yet another defining moment. The second one is about technology, and the mindset is, well, this resistant to hearing aids.

Hearing aids don't always work. Shifting that to technology is my friend. When I switched to bilateral hearing aids, I got the small CIc. This was in the early nineties, very cutting edge. And it was so cutting edge that there were issues with it.

Actually, they weren't supposed to work for my severe hearing loss, but they did. They were great. But they were so new. Getting a fit was an issue, and the battery cage was plastic, and it broke off. And I

remember having a hissy fit at home.

And my husband, who I referred to in my work as the hearing husband, said, gail, Gael, they are not doing this just to tick you off. You have to have more respect for technology. And I was like, okay. But then I did. I made that shift to really embracing technology.

Those are just two examples, real life examples of mind shifts. So how do your clients put mind shifts, what we call them, into practice? Not always easy, but as Sherry was saying, the results are worth it. Here are three strategies that might help your clients. The first one is to optimize rather than perfect.

The idea here is to change the goal to making it better, not expecting it to be perfect, because in reality, most of us will not hear perfectly again. We, the life was hearing losses we will make hearing boo boos. It's not always a smooth journey. And that's okay, because we can learn to forgive ourselves and others to make the best of it. The second one is practice to build confidence.

When we put attitudes into action, we do it because we're practicing, practicing. And when we see the reactions we get, I have hearing loss, will you do this for me? And they go, okay. It's not what we fear. We're not rejected.

It's a big wow. I always tease Shari, like Shari had said to me, you know, people should practice. Like, get on the bus and tell someone you have hearing loss. Now, personally, I believe Sherry is a New Yorker, probably has never been on a bus in her life all the time. But the issue is to practice.

Let people know, and it gets easier. And the third one is prioritizing self care. And for me, this is relatively new, practicing mindfulness, an attitude of gratitude and forgiveness. This has been a huge thing for me in dealing with stress. We need to manage our energy and our stress.

We need to. Our hearing health is part of our overall health, and we need to address that. And we need to find. It helps to find the humor in hearing loss, although usually you think something's funny later, not when it actually happened. But these are ways that can help people deal more effectively with their hearing loss.

All right, so let's turn now to the second leg of the stool, which is technology. And for a lot of us with hearing loss technology can be pretty intimidating. You'll remember that negative attitude that we found in the attitude selfie. Hearing aids are ugly, expensive, and don't always work. And to secure this leg of the stool, we need to reframe that attitude into like what Gael was describing in the mind shift example.

Technology is my friend. My devices let me hear sounds I had forgotten or had never heard before, and they connect me to other people and the world. So why are so many people reluctant to adopt ear technology? Some of it, I think, has to do with expectations. People don't always have the right expectations about hearing aids.

They expect them to be like glasses, and we all know that they're not. They don't return your hearing to normal. That's just not possible yet. But this is what a lot of people with hearing loss believe and expect. And I think a lot of their Families and friends do as well, which can create a lot of discomfort.

If that's not the reality, we all need to do a better job educating potential users about what hearing technology can and cannot do. They're great and they improve speech comprehension, especially in a quiet environment. But they're not enough in certain situations. So we need other things. Examples of things like branded accessories, so remote microphones, or even smartphone apps like speech to text and sound alert apps, external accommodations.

I had never heard of cart, where a person types in real time what is said, or a hearing loop before I went to my first hearing loss convention. And this is a huge missed opportunity to get your clients back out to

lectures, the movies, all of the entertainment that they enjoy, and to really reengage with life. And I would encourage everyone not to rule out over the counter. It's a great entry vehicle and maybe a good backup solution in a pitch. For us, the must haves are bluetooth and until auricast is everywhere, t coil.

So it's an exciting time to have hearing loss. And sometimes Gael and I get very excited about it. We could kind of go on and on about technology, but the reality is that we need more other strategies, the non technical type. And this is the third leg of our stool. I want to communicate better, and it takes more than technology to do this.

I must use softer skills, too.

When we communicate with people, we use a variety of interpersonal behavior. And for people with hearing loss, even small changes in communication behaviors can have a huge impact on the actual quality of our conversation. Most people. I'm just going to. I'm going to use a few examples of what our communication game changers are.

Most people are already using some of these tactics to some degree without realizing it. One of the key things is self identifying. Self identifying to someone that you have hair in loss. This is tough for some people. There is this stigma.

It goes against, perhaps a private nature of keeping something like that close to the chat. Sometimes people don't know the proper term to use. Excuse me, deaf, hard of hearing, big deaf, little deaf, hearing impaired, or what acronym? Hoh, which stands for hard of hearing. And so if someone tells you their whole, you know what they mean in this situation.

But guess what? We no longer care. I no longer care what term a person uses to describe themselves. Far more important than a label is the decision to be honest and open about our hearing loss and the

difficulties that we may be experiencing in this moment, in this conversation and how to address them. A favorite mind shift for us is being open about my hearing loss will help me communicate better.

Trying to hide my hearing loss leads to misunderstandings. Another behavior or tactic is speech reading, called speech reading. Obviously, because I don't just read a person's lips, I take in all sorts of cues. It's a natural process. And the pandemic and the mask wearing made a huge chunk of the population realize how much they depended on seeing someone's face.

To understand speech reading is not a perfect science, but it can be learned. It is a skill. And I really encourage you to encourage your clients, especially someone who might need more help, to take a speech reading course that helps broaden their understanding and their skill. Self advocacy is one of the key things when we advocate for ourselves by asking for the music to be turned down or whatever the situation, we are simply asking for what we need. People aren't mind readers.

They can't tell looking at us what we need. We need to tell them what we need and what we don't need. Because if we don't, what happens? We bluff. We pretend we understand when we don't have a clue.

Bluffing is the evil twin of self advocacy. Learning not to bluff is a positive communication behavior. But I will admit, it is almost impossible to stop doing it completely because we bluff for many reasons. When conversations get away from us, we don't have the assertiveness or the communication skills to make things right. We want to hide our hearing loss.

And then there's the ever present listening fatigue, the effort that goes into trying to follow communication. Best practices must become the standard for both sides, and both sides being me with hearing loss, you, the hearing person in our Families, they need to understand you know, face each other, you know, light up, noise down. All of these things are best practices. And we have another favorite tool that Shari is going to tell you about. Okay.

And we really love this one. Here is our mental checklist tool that can be used to improve any listening situation. It's quick, it's effective, and it helps you determine what needs to change and how to make it happen. So the first step is hearing check. Can I understand what my communication partner is saying?

And if the answer is yes, that's great, you're done. But if not, you move on to evaluate. And here's where you figure out, what do I need to do to improve the situation. Now, some of these things could be environmental fixes, like we need more light or maybe just a different seat. But there also could be communication partner issues, like, we need to ask someone to speak a little bit louder or slower.

And it's a great time also to look at tech tools to see if an app or an accessory might help. And then comes the hardest part, articulating. But obviously, we cannot skip this part. We need to ask for what we need from others. And it's important to remember that articulating our needs creates a situation where our partners benefit as well.

It improves communication for both sides. Then there's revise and remind. This is refresh and restart in the hearing loss journey. Sometimes adjustments need to be made. Maybe a musician arrives and the noise picks up, or our communication partners slip back into old habits.

It's hard to change the way that you talk. So it's just all you do is reapply the steps, even if it's just to remind people of what was already suggested. And this is not just for the person with hearing loss. Families and friends can use it as well. So I remember when my son was young, and we would go out to eat at a restaurant, and we'd walk in, and the first thing he would do is say, okay, mom, this is where you're going to sit, because you'll have a wall behind you and the light won't be in your face.

And every time he did that, I felt so incredibly supported. So it's a tool that we can all use, right? People with hearing loss and also others in our life. It's simple, it's effective, and with practice, it really becomes

second nature. So the final feature of skillful living is applying that three legged stool to all aspects of the hearing loss life.

Everything that is affected by hearing loss can be improved communication wise. So we mentioned hearing hacks at the beginning hearing hacks are specific tricks and tips for each individual situation. In the book, we devote an entire section to hearing hacks. And there's a hearing hack for almost everything. For leisure activities, work situations, family events, dining out, exercise.

And even as hearing loss advocates or as a person with hearing loss, we could also be a hearing act. And we talk about this. One of the most important areas of our lives is relationships. Communication is the glue that connects us to each other, and hearing loss saved the biggest fist for our relationships. You know, with any relationship, new relationship, there's a filtering process, and there's one that is unique to people with hearing loss.

So we go, nice person, check. Fun to be around, check. Intelligent, check. Good looking? Check.

But for us, there's also an extra question. Can I understand this person? If there isn't a check, we're in trouble. But maybe with some things we've been talking about, some honesty, we might be able to communicate well, if nothing, nice to know you. But with existing relationships, we don't get to choose.

Our family, our colleagues, we have trouble understanding them, and they get frustrated with us. But there are ways to make it work with our famous mind shifts and technology and behaviors. For example, Sherry and her family have held some highly charged, but ultimately very rewarding, focused family discussion to set ground rules on activities such as on hikes and in restaurants. As Sherry just mentioned, with her son in my house, technology has saved my marriage. Tv streamer.

We can now listen to tv at our own levels and other things such, oh, I thought of a way that my husband and I could communicate, let's say in the middle of the night, needed to say something to me, but he refused to wear glow in the dark lipstick. I thought it was a good idea. And a big hearing hack is to make partners and support network within our family, within our group of friends, with our colleagues, and with you.

Okay, so let's turn to the final part of our talk, your role in the successful client journey. And we are really looking to you to be our partners and our guides as we take on the challenges of hearing loss. And for Gael and I, we're both longtime proponents of person centered care. We believe the best hearing care professionals are communication specialists who create personalized solutions, including both technology and non technical strategies. So, like I said, we're really looking for a partnership, and that includes more than just the hearing aids.

Both the professional and the client have roles and responsibilities in meeting this. And for the clinician, they are the guide. You are the guide. Painting that big picture that we've been talking about and setting appropriate expectations. Creating personalized solutions is so critical and as you know, you must take the time to understand the client's lifestyle and their communication needs, respecting their knowledge and emotions.

People with hearing loss are the experts in their lived experience, just like you are the experts in hearing science. Bringing those together is really the sweet spot. Using all types of technology and reaching beyond the technology like we've been talking about to include all types of communication. Game changers one thing that people sometimes don't think about is making their office hearing loss friendly. So offer telehealth so family can participate or have a tablet with auto captions available to help at the check in counter and maybe even consider text or email correspondence to make appointments or to reconfirm appointments.

It's great when you share information resources like books and magazines in your waiting area and maybe pamphlets from a local HLAA chapter or if there's a lip reading course in your area. And of course provide all important information in writing and referring to peer resources. I think we've mentioned that many times because for both of us, peer support was really life changing. It helped me build confidence, it helped me learn a lot of the tips and the tricks that I use today to live well. And most importantly, it helped me to feel less alone in my struggles.

Now, a lot of times we get asked, when is the best time to share all this information with clients? Because it's hard to fit it all into every appointment and it's also hard for clients to absorb all of it, especially at that first fitting appointment. So our advice is to space the information out over time. You can share a little bit at each appointment, maybe some in your newsletter or by recommending books or online resources that you like, and you might feel like you're repeating yourself, but that's okay. The repetition is going to help us to really absorb the information.

All of these things that you do will show respect for your client and reinforce your position as a caring partner. But we have responsibilities too. If you practice client centered care, you include your client and perhaps the family in the decision making process. But regardless of where your patient is on their journey, receiving this information from you or anyone else really is a new experience for them. Collaborative decision making in the health setting, that's something new for people.

We're used to being told what to do without much discussion, and we don't always follow up as directed to help you to help us. Our job is to share our hearing loss journey, share our communication struggles. We need to be honest about the situations in our lives that are most difficult communication wise. We need to ask questions. We need to feel comfortable in asking questions, and we need to respect your expertise as well as our own.

And we need a to be open to new strategies. But, and here it's back to you. You need to help us carry out our role. You need to make us feel valued and comfortable in doing this.

So thank you so much for your attention through this presentation. And we just wanted to end with this one last thought. Living skillfully with hearing loss is an ongoing process. And so for each of us, the journey continues and we invite this, invite all of you to take this journey with us.

So again, thank you very much for your time today. For more information on the client journey, please reach out to Shari and me with any questions or comments you have. We love to hear from you. We've listed our websites and email addresses on this slide and we also invite you to take a more detailed look at our book here and beyond live skill hearing loss. In it, we have shared everything we know about living the best hearing life possible.

We hope you will find it useful, but we guarantee that your clients will thank you. Thank you so much Jerry and Gael and providing all the resources there. That QR code will also link to their site where you can find all the resources that Shari and Gael discussed today. We do have a comment here in the queue, please. At this time, if you have any questions for Shari or for Gael, type them in the chat box and we'll get them in the queue for them.

So Jeanette mentioned that she's been in our industry as a provider for 35 years now. And she just mentioned that this is so necessary for all of us to hear and that no matter how long we've been in the profession in this industry and that she just wanted to say thank you both so much for your passion and to helping people navigate hearing loss with a positive journey. She said, well done to you both. Well, thank you. That means a lot.

We appreciate that. We're actually surprised. We have been surprised at hearing from your colleagues in different presentations how seldom the client or the patient perspective is offered in training and

educational sessions. So thank you for letting us know you appreciate it and we hope to continue to reach more of your colleagues.

And Denise just added to that comment, just adding that it was an excellent presentation. So thank you, Denise, for your nice comment.

Let's see, we have a question here from Christine. Christine mentioned this is great info. How can we get a copy of the here tool to use in our office. Oh, that's a great question. Well, it's obviously in the book, and I do believe we have a graphic of it on the website so we can share that link with everyone after the session.

Thank you, Shari. And just another kind comment from Margaret. Thank you. This is so important. I love this topic, and it's often overlooked too often.

Thank you, Margaret, for your comment.

Well, we'll leave the classroom open here just for another moment or so to see if there's any other questions. Jeanette also mentioned that this was a great course. Thank you, Jeanette.

And we have an attendee here. They just wanted to verify on question, on the exam. Question five. The question is, what do people with hearing loss value most in their hearing care professional? Is it low priced hearing aids?

A low tech, a technician who can explain how hearing aids work, an efficient practitioner who offers a quick in and out experience, or a communication specialist who understands the full range of assistive technology? The answer to that is D. The communication specialist who understands the full range of technology.

Let's see. Oh, lastly, Kim, just wanted to ask if either of you are in our industry dispensing at all. We are not. We aren't. This is what, that's your skill, technology.

You may have sensed science is not my key strong point. So I am a receiver of hearing care, hearing aid care, not a dispenser. And same for me. We have one last question here to close out the classroom. Laurie asked Gael, what was the conference that you went to that was life changing?

Thanks for asking, Laurie. That was, I'm canadian. That was the canadian hard of hearing association. But here in the US, we may have some Canadians on this call as well. But at the Canadian hard of Hearing association conference, which are no longer held live, but HLA, hearing loss association of America, I'm also very involved in that.

And they have annual conferences and which I, Sherry and I can always recognize the people who are there for the first time because they're the ones that are walking around with tears in their eyes because going through a life changing moment. So hearing loss association of America national conferences as well as regional conferences, and they also host webinars. So local chapters moved a lot of their meetings online during the pandemic. And so most of them are open for anyone from any area to join. So it's great for your clients.

If the New York area is having a meeting with a guest speaker, but they live in Arizona, it doesn't matter. They can join in at any time. So HLA has a lot of great opportunities to bring people together, to have those life changing moments that Gael and I have had from peer support. There's something about a live event. You know, they are expensive to hold, expensive to attend, but to be able to be live, like, after four years of living on Zoom, we are what I call Zoom pooped.

And sometimes, sometimes we're doing now is great. We're able to reach more people, but there's just something so magical about being able to connect with people in real time and sit down and talk and share and laugh. So there's. And you know what? This is something you can do in your own practices.

If you'll let me say, to hold. Maybe once a year, you hold a one day event or a morning event inviting your clients to come together and have guest speakers. I know two good ones that I can recommend or someone local and have them interact with each other. You'll see dynamics that are quite mind blowing. Oh, someone just bought our book.

Thank you, Erin. Thank you. Wonderful. We're going to go ahead and close the classroom. I just want to thank Jerry and Gael again for sharing this wonderful resource and their knowledge and expertise over the years.

For clinicians to, you know, better understand those living with hearing loss, please reach out to either of them. They've provided their contact information there, as well as a link to their website so you can learn more about this resource. Thank you so much, everyone. We hope you enjoy this presentation. Thank you.