

HEARING DIFFERENTLY

Episode 2: “Lip Reading”

Opening sounds: “Abracadabra”- Silent Partner (loud at first and then fades out)

Background music: “Deliberate Thought” – Kevin MacLeod

Hi everyone, I’m your host Karina Cotran and welcome to this week’s episode of “Hearing Differently”. For those new to this podcast, welcome! This podcast is about informing others about how the deaf and hard of hearing live in a world of predominantly hearing people. We will be covering a variety of topics from misconceptions people have about the deaf/hard of hearing to the limitations that we experience.

In today’s episode, I will be talking about lip reading.

SEGWAY: “Columns of Water” – Alexandre Navarro

Topic 1

Most people rely on their ears to hear because they are your best assets when you want to hear something or someone. For those who are deaf/hard of hearing, our ears would be considered our weakest asset. So the question is...how do we hear? We hear through our eyes. What this means is that we lip-read. You lip read by looking at a person’s lips and decipher, from the way their lips are moving, what they are saying! The skill of lip reading can sometimes be referred to as a “third ear”; you are essentially training your eyes to help you hear. People with mild to moderate hearing loss, would be able to hear noises without a hearing aid and can rely on lip reading to help figure out anything they might have missed.

However, those with severe to profound hearing loss like myself usually have to rely on lip reading almost constantly, because even with the aid of a hearing aid or cochlear implant, we are liable to miss out on a lot.

Funnily enough, lip reading is the reason why it took my parents some time to figure out I actually had a problem with my hearing. I was born three months early, and because of that; have missing nerves on my Cochlea in the inner ear. However, I was born with hearing...but not full hearing, only partial. Luckily for me, that partial hearing allowed me to hear voices for a little while, which is why I was able to learn how to speak and have good language acquisition.

Anyways, so as I grew older, my hearing steadily worsened and to make up for it, I learned how to lip read. And this was funny because, I tricked my parents for a long time since as long as I was facing them, I would be able to talk to them. Then one day...the jig was up. According to my parents, I was upstairs in my room reading (typical) and they were down in the kitchen calling my name over and over and over. So they climbed

upstairs and reading on the floor, my back is to them. They called my name and I still didn't hear them. I only found out they were in the room when they tapped me on the shoulder. I was whisked to the hospital and voila...they found out I was deaf. Mom cried...sorry Mom. So lip reading turned me into a little trickster when I was young...but no regrets, it helps me a lot in certain situations

SEGWAY: "Columns of Water" – Alexandre Navarro

Topic 2

I depend on my ability to lip read more than anything. This is useful, especially in loud atmospheres such as bars, clubs, malls, or any place that has a lot of noise really. I will not be able to hear much even with my Cochlear so that's usually when I depend on my lip reading, and sometimes...it can make for some hilarious moments.

Lip reading is great, but it's not always foolproof.... a lot of letters usually take the same lip shape, for example, consonants such as f and v. Make the shapes of those letters with your lips. What do you notice? Your lips more or less make the same shape. Because of this, like I said earlier, lip reading is not always foolproof...it resulted in some funny scenarios. For example, my friends will say something and I would end up registering it *completely* wrong. Like one time, my friend asked me if I had any small shades and that she'll make me pack. When she asked me that, I stared at her completely mystified, and repeated it back to her in confusion. She laughed really hard and then in a louder voice asked me if I had any *small change* and that *she'll pay me back*. To this day, I have no idea how I bungled that up haha.

But I'll have to say, regardless of these few spare mishaps, lip reading helps me be more confident in social situations because I can talk to other people without as many mishaps. Like when I was invited to a pool party back in high school, I was initially very shy about it at first because, I can't swim or go near water with my Cochlear on. I would have to take it off and hear absolutely nothing, but I was able to talk to my friends with no problem because I was able to lip read. At that point, I've gotten good enough at it that several people who didn't know that I was deaf and talked to me during the pool party had no idea that I couldn't hear a single thing they were saying. They were pretty impressed upon finding out. I'll admit, I was pretty impressed with myself too.

Now, not everyone can lip read. For example, my brother who is also deaf in one ear, and needs a hearing aid in the other (he can hear better than me without his aids) can't lip read at all. The ability to lip read depends on when the person lost their hearing. Even those who do have hearing can train themselves to lip read with classes! I was able to lip read from a young age because as my hearing got worse, I opted my ears for my eyes! I trained myself but it helped that I heard a little bit before I lost my hearing completely. It allowed me to match the sound of the letter to the shape. However if you lost your hearing at an older age, you will have to train yourself to lip read with classes and practice, and even then, because it was not an ingrained habit from your younger years,

you will have more difficulty in mastering the skill. While lip reading can have its limitations, it certainly does have its advantages as well.

SEGWAY: “Columns of Water” – Alexandre Navarro

Topic 3

I’m not going to lie...while I do sometimes wish that I could have regular hearing when lip reading fails to help...I have to admit, it certainly does have its advantages. For example, say *you* want to be nosy...and you decide to eavesdrop. What do you do? You angle your ear towards the source you want to eavesdrop on and you listen.

Now, say *I* want to eavesdrop. Angling my ear would be useless, but if I angle my *eyes* to the source, then now we’re talking! Like I said...in this type of situation, I hear with my eyes. And sometimes...eavesdropping with your eyes can be better because if the person I want to eavesdrop is out of hearing range... then it’s not a problem for me! Provided I can still see them of course.

I was in a coffee shop on my school campus and I was just chilling there, doing my homework, or maybe gazing absently around the coffee shop because I didn’t feel like doing my homework...and my eyes land on something interesting. Three tables down is a couple (or at least I assumed they were a couple) and they were in a really heated whispering argument. So I subtly...at least I hope it was subtle, angle my laptop towards the couple and peer over the screen at them. I sound like such a creep right now...anyways, so I’m watching them and this girl is screaming...whispering loudly? Well either way, I can’t hear her so I’m lip reading.

FYI: mannerisms also help with lip reading; it can help determine the tone of the speaker. Now, let me narrate this little lovers tiff for you:

The girl leans forward and says: “you need to stop leaving your socks around the apartment, I’m not your mom, pick them because they smell!” She wrinkles her nose here.

And the guy leans forward, and you can tell he’s trying not to laugh and he says something like, “c’mon, it’s not that bad, I don’t leave my socks around all the time!”

And then the girl leans forward and says, “babe...I found one of your socks in the sink...that’s disgusting.”

At that point, I let out a giggle and a girl at the table beside me gives me a weird look...yeah okay, I guess a girl sitting by herself staring seemingly into space giggling can be a little weird...but whatever...I’m honing my spy skills. So I turn my eyes back to the couple and they’re kissing.

Well, okay then...I guess they resolved the boyfriend’s sock problem...

Another eavesdropping moment I had was in the school cafeteria. This turned out to be a little mortifying, but I'll tell you it anyways because I believe in self sacrifice for the good of the people...the people being you. All right now I'm starting sound a bit like Dumbledore...moving on.

So I was studying...as is the university life...and I got bored...again. There was a group of boys in front of me and they were jostling and joking around. So I - uhhh, tuned in my eyes, so to speak.

There were two boys facing me and then another two with their backs towards me. One of them had blonde hair, so let's call him 'Blondie' and the other one had his hair gelled, and so let's call him 'Slick'.

Blondie said something along the lines of, "I don't get why she was booted off", and Slick said, "yeah man, honestly she was hot...stupid man should have gave her the rose".

So I'm sitting there with a puzzled look on my face...thinking, "are they talking about what I think they're talking about?"

And just to confirm it, 'Slick' opens his mouth again and says, "it's okay though, he still has that hot girl in the red dress, she's staying till the end for sure, my money's on her," and then the two guys with their backs to me were talking, so I didn't catch what they said.

And I'm sitting there thinking, "Why are these guys watching The Bachelor..."

And then 'Blondie' goes, "you know what the blonde chick reminds me of?"

He leans forward, "she's like a hot Big Bird...you know from Sesame Street".

Okay, so here's the embarrassing moment, I couldn't contain myself, I actually just busted laughing so hard and I couldn't. Stop.

So I'm sitting there looking a bit deranged laughing by myself with my psychology textbook open to a picture of the brain. Completely normal.

So I finally calm down, and I look up. 'Blondie' and 'Slick' are staring right at me with the most dumbfounded looks on their faces. Needless to say, I packed up my book and hid in the library.

So...lip reading can actually be a lot of fun, and it can also helps me in social situations by allowing me to communicate with my peers better. It is safe to say that if I didn't know how to lip-read; I would not be as socially outgoing as I am now. So, if you ever feel like you want to be a skilled espionage like me, here are two pieces of advice.

1. Take some classes and practice whenever you can.
2. Because eavesdropping by ear is subtler than blatantly staring at a person, I advise you to bring sunglasses...with dark shades. No seriously, you can get away with a lot if you wear them. Unless you're inside, then you just look stupid.

Well that's it for today! I hope you learned a little bit about lip reading and give it a try with your friends! If you have any questions, concerns or even any experiences with lip reading, please comment below! I'd love to hear from you! Talk to you all next week!
Bye for now!

ENDING JINGLE: "Abracadabra" – Silent Partner