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## Autumn Edition - 2019

Grafton - Glen Innes - Inverell

[www.accenthearing.com.au](http://www.accenthearing.com.au)

Welcome to the Autumn 2019 edition of Accent Hearing's Newsletter *The Listener*. We explore helpful hearing tips on all hearing matters.

### Don't Wait Too Long!

Has the family been mentioning your hearing issues lately? Has the TV volume increased, or having trouble hearing in group conversation or on the telephone? Do you feel yourself you have hearing loss? Do not give it the 'wait and see approach' and wait until 10-15 years later, as your family and friends will struggle also in daily communication with yourself for this length of time.



If you do wait a length of time, it will be much harder to acclimatize to hearing devices, as your brain has been hearing sounds at lower volume levels for many years, not to mention the possibly of poorer finger dexterity issues with device management.

We see many clients at Accent Hearing and the ones who do very well with hearing devices are the ones coming in early with hearing loss! If you leave it till you are in your late 70's or early 80's, your brain will take much longer to adapt to amplified sound through the process of plasticity in the brain. Brain Plasticity does not decrease with age, however filtering out irrelevant details is the problem like background noise. Older adults possess the ability to learn, but they do not filter out irrelevant information as well as their younger peers in the rewiring of neurons in the brain.

Hearing devices are improving every year and are now quite discrete. They are 'free' if you are an Australian Government Pensioner, however conditions apply. If fitted correctly, the free devices can do wonders with family involvement for anyone with a hearing loss that qualifies.

Why not 'unlock all those tired old myths' about hearing aids from your grandparents and friends who have left it too late and come and hear for yourself? It's up to you to enjoy your senior years as best as you can, not to mention making your loved ones happy also.

### It's Time To Take 'Loud' Off The Menu

Luxury didn't always mean loud, and there are lessons to be learned from the glamorous restaurants of the past, including *actual* mid-century-modern eateries. From the 1940s through the early 1990s, fine-dining establishments expressed luxury through generous seating, plush interiors, and ornate decor. But more important, acoustic treatments themselves were a big part of that luxury. Restaurants today are so loud because architects don't design them to be quiet. Much of this shift in design boils down to changing conceptions of what makes a space seem upscale or luxurious, as well as evolving trends in food service.

From the mid-1970's highly rated restaurants began to integrate lowbrow influences such as country-farmhouse decor, along with the atmosphere and casual serving styles of cafés and brasseries. Another feature of today's restaurants that greatly increases the loudness inside are open kitchens, where the making of the food is on full display, something we saw in a lowly diner. Today, high-end surfaces connote luxury, with use of slate, tile or wood.

According to *Architectural Digest*, mid-century modern and minimalism are both here to stay, in that it means sparse, modern decor; high, exposed ceilings; and almost no soft goods, such as curtains, carpet or upholstery. These design features are a feast for the eyes, but a nightmare for the ears. No soft goods and tall ceilings mean nothing is absorbing sound energy, and a room full of hard surfaces serves as a big sonic mirror, reflecting sound around the room.



The result is a loud space that renders speech unintelligible. Now that it's so commonplace, the din of a loud restaurant is unavoidable. That's bad for your health and worse for the staff who work there. But it also degrades the thing that eating out is meant to culture: a shared social experience that rejuvenates, rather than harms, its participants.

There is hope, however with new solutions including acoustic tiles and furniture in which quiet doesn't need to mean ugly anymore. That means choosing "good" design over the comfort and well-being of patrons is no longer a suitable excuse for restaurateurs.

## Testimonial Corner....

An appointment with Greg has been the best choice my husband Ross has made in regard to his hearing. The result far exceeds any previous choice of which there has been several in the past 10 years. We have no hesitation in recommending a visit to Accent Hearing for industrial deafness and being fitted with rechargeable hearing aids, they are excellent.

Denice Campbell, Maclean NSW

## It's all about the service...



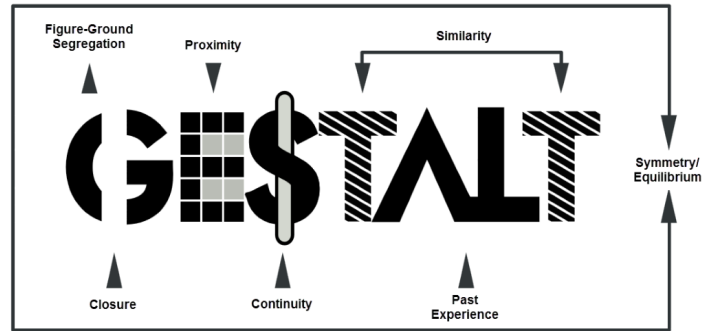
One of the main reasons companies stay in business is because of the service they give to others. The hearing industry is no exception. As indicated by the retail price of hearing aids, this was only one factor considered by users, but not the most important factor in their decision to purchase. In the American Magazine *Consumer Reports*, they found among conclusions was the advice to potential hearing aid buyers that "the most consequential decision is finding the proper professional from whom to buy them from because it's likely to be a long-term relationship".

Other research from MarkeTrak (a tracking survey of the hearing-impaired population and hearing aid market, usually conducted every 3-4 years to 80,000 households utilizing the National Family Opinion Panel) has found that reducing hearing aid cost did not influence device acquisition and that the top factors are largely dominated by product and fitting-related issues, such as reliability, feedback and comfort; all issues unlikely to be addressed by an online distributor or someone not trained in the field

Professional Audiology Organisation Guidelines recommend an evidence-based step-by-step process specifically developed for the fitting of hearing aids. This includes a Needs Assessment, a Hearing Aid Selection, Verification, Orientation & Counselling, Post-Fitting Care and Outcome Validation.

Furthermore, overall hearing aid satisfaction has increased from 74% in 2008 to its current level of 83% in 2017 with an average age of 63.3 years for first time adult users as referenced in MarkeTrak.

The drivers of hearing aid satisfaction centre on sound quality, value, and the effectiveness of using enhanced features.



Gestalt psychologists proposed a number of rules governing the manner in which the brain forms mental patterns from elements of its sensory input. Although these principles were generally described first in relation to vision, they are equally applicable to audition (hearing).

For example, the Gestalt principle of 'closure' refers to a tendency to complete (close) perceptual forms. We should expect the same principle to apply in audition, since sounds are regularly masked by other sounds. Indeed, it has been shown that listeners are able to perceptually restore parts of a quieter sound that have been masked by a louder sound, a process known as auditory induction. Another potent Gestalt principle is 'proximity', which states that elements changing in the same way at the same time probably belong together. There is good evidence that the auditory system exploits proximity by grouping acoustic components that exhibit changes in amplitude at the same time.

Similarly, grouping by 'harmonicity' can be phrased in terms of the Gestalt principle of proximity. When a person speaks, the vibrations of their vocal chords generates energy at the fundamental frequency of vibration and also at integer multiples (harmonics) of this frequency. Hence, the components of a single voice can be grouped by identifying acoustic components that have a common spacing in frequency (i.e. harmonics of the same fundamental).

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- **INVERELL** | Skybridge Financial Building, 129-135 Otho Street, Inverell NSW.

**Accent Hearing is independent & is locally owned. Our clinician Greg Butcher is an Accredited University trained Audiologist; a full CCP Member of Audiology Australia and Independent Audiologists Australia; and a qualified Government & Medicare Hearing Services Provider.**