

Hearing Relationships

By Linda Bilodeau

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Like many, I struggle over telling others about my hearing loss. It is personal health information, and I don't want to be judged or looked at differently. Yet, it is often to our advantage to admit our hearing loss. Sometimes, the people we deal with will go out of their way to make our hearing lives easier. I've had many such experiences.

About 5 years ago, the church I attend was remodeled. As part of that project, a hearing loop was installed in two sections of the church. I applauded that change. I always arrive fifteen minutes early to obtain a seat in the section where the loop is activated and to make sure that I am seated as close as possible to the altar and pulpit. Once the service begins, usually with a hymn, I switch my aids into the loop mode and enjoy the sermons, prayers, and hymns.

Several months ago, I attended a service only to find the loop wasn't working. The next day, I found the name of the administrative assistant to my parish and emailed Ann about what had happened. I explained that I rely on the loop to hear the music, the Bible readings, and the sermons. Within hours, I received her reply, assuring me she would look into the problem. A day later, she wrote back saying the loop was fixed.

Unfortunately, that was not the case. At the following week's service, I found that the loop was down. The following Monday, I emailed Ann, and she answered, saying someone else would look over the church's equipment. She offered to meet me at the church to help investigate the problem.

I had not expected her to take these extra steps. A few days later, we discovered that there was indeed an equipment problem in the church, one that could be easily repaired. I couldn't thank her enough for all her extra effort.

A few weeks ago, after the passage of a bad storm that had caused power outages, Ann emailed me and said the loop was down and that a needed part

would not arrive for two weeks. Once again, I was astounded that she remembered me and had taken the time to contact me. Once the part was installed, she followed up to make sure I had access to the loop.

And so it goes. When we tell people of our hearing loss, when we ask for help, there are those who will step up and make sure we have all that we need to hear. Many of my friends who know I have hearing loss help me, too. I'm always very grateful to them.

Think about how wonderful our spouses, partners, and friends are to us, how they stand by us and help us hear. I don't know what I would do without my husband. Not only is he my ears, he goes out of his way to make sure that I have an enjoyable life. Those of us who take the risk of telling others about our hearing loss often experience assistance and extra efforts from friends and family. On Valentine's Day, take a moment to acknowledge those special people who make our meanderings through the hearing world just a bit easier.