

Have you Heard “A Listening Project”

Episode #7

Hosts: Audra and Betsy

Guest Host: Jamie

Audra (0:03) Hello and welcome to “Have You Heard: A Listening Project.” On this podcast we share tips, stories and practical advice to help people with hearing loss stay connected. Today we have a really fun episode planned and I’m super excited to record it. We’re going to cover all things holiday and we actually have a very special guest joining us today. So please don’t forget to stay till the end of the episode where we’re going to give you guys 5 great tips for managing holiday stress. On today’s episode I have Betsy joining me. Betsy welcome (Betsy....Hello) and before we get started Betsy and I would love to introduce you guys to our very special guest host. He’s one of the managers here at OEI and he’s a bit of a “jack of all trades” and in his very limited spare time he’s also a standup comedian so please help me welcome Jamie Machotka. Jamie, welcome and tell us all a little bit about yourself.

Jamie (0:55) Well, hi everyone! I’m a Capricorn. I like long walks on the beach and I have a son that is about to turn 2 and I know you are all jealous because you don’t get to quarantine with a 2 year old.

Audra (1:12) I’m kind of jealous Jamie but not really because mine is 4 and also a terrorist so there’s that (Jamie...so you get it) I do.

Jamie (1:22) Ha Ha Ha! Well anyway. I work alongside Audra and Betsy at OEI advocating for people with hearing loss and I’ve been doing this 11 years now. I love helping people and I also have an affinity for older folks and I think it’s because I spend a lot of time with my grandparents when I was growing up. I’ve been able to stay in the career for so long because it is so rewarding. Every single day I get to experience how we helped someone, made a difference in their lives literally. Every single day even on the rare bad days.

Audra (1:55) We are so thrilled to have you here Jamie and we’re so thankful at OEI to have you because you’re such a wonderful manager and we enjoy working with you so I’m glad you’re here. Let’s talk about the 2020 holiday season. I feel like 2020 is just a hot mess in general but the holidays are up on us and it’s no secret that this year it might look a little different for a lot of people and as someone who is unashamedly change resistant it might be a little hard for some of us to find the groove this year so what do you guys think as far as that.

Betsy (2:32) Well, I'll go first. I'm a total Christmas person so this year I have to come to terms with some major changes which I don't like either in our traditional approach to the holiday. So not only are we adjusting to COVID that's still lurking and the need to physical distance but also this is the first year that our son, his wife and our grand-babies no long live near us. Yeah, they moved from southern California to Sweden recently for a job and this is not the optimum time travel, you think?

Jamie (3:12) I have a similar issue this year. I also live far away from extended family. We're in driving distance of my wife's family in Philadelphia but I don't even know if we will see them for the holidays and we're certainly not going to see my family that's in Chicago this this holiday season.

Betsy (3:33) Oh, I get that feeling Jamie, I'm sorry. Well, anyway, we will accept this reality as we must but we'll make it better by FaceTiming with our kids on Christmas day and Zooming would be great if we can pull it off but that is a challenging thought for a technically challenged brains in this family, ha ha, ha.

Audra (3:53) Aww, I can totally relate with that. Most of family does live close but my sister and 2 of my brothers live in Arizona so I'm kind of used to not seeing them so I don't think COVID holiday it's going to be too much different then what we've been doing so far but I know a lot of people are going to be relaying on technology more than ever this year.

Betsy (4:12) Oh for sure. Well this pandemic sure does affect all of us in so many ways. We are fortunate to have our daughter with us so we will still decorate the house and play our favorite Christmas music, make the traditional cookies just for the 3 of us. And of course watch "It's a Wonderful Life" and "White Christmas" duh. And we will do the best we can to keep the holiday spirit alive in our home.

Audra (4:41) That sound really lovely. In our house "Sweeney Todd" counts as a holiday movie so that's just because we are a weird family. So, what are you guys what are some of your favorite holiday memories?

Betsy (4:54) Alright, for me, I'll go again, signing Christmas songs with my family and friends while hosting our annual Christmas party and we're not doing it this year but it's what we've always done so it's a really big adjustment to not do that anymore. But also tasting my home made apple pie, always relived when the crust survives, it's not a pretty pie but it sure tastes great. And gifts you know

figuring out gifts and wrapping them special and decorating the tree with these wonderful ornaments my brother sends us each year. Every year we get 4 new ornaments for our tree, it's the most gorgeous tree around.

Jamie (5:32) For me, the weekend after Thanksgiving we usually go to Vermont to bake with our best friends. They have this secret family recipe that's been handed down thru many generations and it's for something called "Linzer Tortes." I think they pronounce it "Linzer Tortas" and we take part in baking and they make hundreds of them and so our reward for helping it's that we get to keep a few and (Audra...nice) yeah, they're delicious, I've never had anything like them, so we love to partake for the fun of it but if I'm being honest someone with a sweet tooth I also love the food reward, yeah. And my other favorite is celebrating Hanukah with my family. We cook potato pancakes and other traditional Hanukah foods. We stay up late at night and we play with a dreidels and these chocolate coins that maybe you guys have heard of they are called gelt and we also, I love our traditions for Christmas day too. We normally go see a movie and have Chinese food, which is known as you know in quotes "typically Jewish Christmas" (Audra, Betsy, Jamie....ha ha ha) well because both those things are we can always count on them to be open for Christmas day so works for my family. And then, usually we do that earlier in the day and then at the I would say mid to end of the day we usually end it by going to my best friend's home for the rest of the day..(Betsy....cool).

Audra (7:02) That's really awesome. I think I'm gonna go to Jamie's house for Christmas cause clearly he's got the lockdown on all the hot holiday treats so I'm just going to show up Jamie with a zip lock bag for treats. But for me I think the best part of the holidays is always it's just my family. I'm the second oldest of 6 so I have a like a huge, you know lots of brothers and sisters, and then several of my siblings are married and I'm blessed with all of these awesome sisters-in-law and my mother-in-law is wonderful and so whenever all of us just get to be in the same house in the same house it's always loud and fun but very very awesome. So we what we usually try to do for Christmas and it's usually the women, the boys kind of opt out is we watch all of the "Lord of the Rings" extended version or it doesn't count and then we also watch all of "The Hobbits" also extended or it doesn't count. So I'm gonna enjoy when Virgil is old enough to care, cause now he does not care about Tolkien, one day he will because he will have no choice. So when it comes to maybe presents, let's talk about that. What's the best gift you've ever gotten and what's the best gift you've ever give, Betsy.

Betsy (8:13) Okay pick me pick me! One of my best gifts that I gave was an airline ticket to my brother to meet me in New York City to see a Broadway musical that we both loved. And that was really special. And as for the best gifts I received, are my babies! My children and my grandbabies it definitely what I am the most, you know one of my best gifts ever, our puppy bear, and many moons ago my parents gave me a Sony reel to reel tape recorder, do you remember that? Or maybe you're too young I'm not sure. But when I since I was twenty years old so but so I could record my singing so that's why they got the Sony reel to reel so I record my singing in front of my parents and I still have it.

Jamie (9:02) Betsy, which musical was it that you went to go see with your brother?

Betsy (9:06) Kiss Me Kate

Jamie (9:08) Aha. Okay.

Audra (9:10) Ah. Sweet. So now that we're talking about musicals and singing and since we know that you had a recorder, uh do you still sing? And if so, can you please share one of your favorite holiday songs with us? (Jamie....Yes Betsy sing sing sing!)

Betsy (9:22) Yes! Okay yes I sing all the time. Um so I'd be glad to do that and feel very touched to be asked to do so. Um I chose this familiar Christmas carol and altered the lyrics to communicate the wonder of our CapTel Captioned phone. For so many with hearing loss. The love is the same. Do you hear what I hear? Finally I can hear my daughter speak. Do you see what I see? Every word my son says I can read. This CapTel phone has given me new life. I am no longer scared of the phone. I can hear and read on my own.

Audra (10:17) Betsy that was lovely I've never heard you sing before I loved it! (Jamie...I'm clapping) Jamie, are you going to sing? Are you going to follow that up with some hotness of your own? (Jamie...Mary had a...no I'm good) Ha ha, that was great, that was wonderful (Jamie....thank you, thank you) (Betsy....let me get my recorder out) (Jamie....yeah actually that would be handy if I could borrow that, that would be great) let's make that happen. So Jamie, what about you? About your best gift ever given and best gift ever received?

Jamie (10:53) I think the best gift I have ever given is the way that I proposed to my wife. Her favorite TV show of all time is "The Amazing Race" so for those of you who don't know is this adventure reality show where there's teams of 2 people each. They compete against each other doing crazy challenges and activities and they have to find different clues that takes them around the world.

And so for my engagement to my wife, I had her traveling around our local area in Washington DC at the time and she had to go finding different clues, solve riddles and participate in physical challenges and then her final challenge was she had to find her way to the train station and she had to get on a train to Philadelphia and find her way to the spot I had picked to propose (Betsy...oh cool)

Audra (11:43) Oh my Gosh, that's amazing (Betsy....that's so cool you did that)

Jamie (11:47) I'll never do it again (Audra and Betsy...ha ha ha) one and done that's it, this if for life - really it just took so much planning that, it was fun, but it took so much planning that, I can't imagine how the plan the TV show quite honestly. I'm glad she said yes, we're married so that worked and the best I received were tickets to see Hamilton in London, yeah. This happen only because, Jordan, my wife surprised me. We were going to London for the holidays one year and she somehow discovered that in London they don't allow you to buy tickets and marked them up. So scalpers can't sell them you can't buy them or give them to somebody else. If you buy it, you buy it at face value and you have to show your ID to get into the theater (Audra....wow) (Betsy....cool) she got the last 2 tickets available for the show that was the day after Christmas so we didn't get to seat together so the seats were totally you know in different areas but it didn't matter to me the fact that we got to see Hamilton, I'll never forget it and it was very fun and interesting to see it as an American while in London (Audra...that's so cool) (Betsy...yeah I'm jealous)

Audra (13:12) And really sweet. So my gifts are nowhere near that level of elaborate, I feel like Jamie you should have went last with all your super awesome fancy stuff but that's okay let me tell you about my gifts. I think the best gift I've ever given was when I got my husband tickets to "Welcome to Rockville" which it's obviously like a 3 day long rock festival. My husband's favorite band is "Tool" has been his favorite band since high school. He had tickets to go one time and then something happen and he couldn't make it. And then the last time they were here he had tickets but it was, I wanted to get tickets, but it was right around on our son's due date so obviously he couldn't go because he didn't want to miss the birth. So I got him the tickets and we got to see "Tool" live and that was like the most excited I think I've ever seen him be about anything, it was like 20 years in the making for him to finally see this band. So that was I think the best gift I've ever given (Betsy...that's sweet) so, yeah it was, I was happy to do it, plus "Incubus" was there and they're my favorite band so it was kind of a 2 for 1 and it was very awesome. And as far as the best present I've ever received,

I've gotten lots of really great stuff. My family is very big on thoughtful like I saw you need this gift but the thing that my mom gave me last year, that was probably my favorite thing was a Light Bright. And I don't know if you guys remember from the 80's but the Light Bright was the toy (Jamie...do I remember? Yeah, yeah) thank you so you remember "Lite Brite..." that was like my jam and I found a Lite Brite in the closet and I've must have been I don't know 6 or 7 and I'm like oh snap it's about to go down I'm getting a Lite Brite. Christmas day comes Lite Brite, it's not there. It turns out my parents bought it for some under privileged kids and they donated it (Jamie...what's wrong with them!) and I had no idea, I know (Jamie...what's wrong with them!) (Betsy...that's terrible!) they didn't know that I wanted it. So a couple of years later, mind you, I'm 38 years old okay, I'm not young 38 and I mentioned it to my mom and she was like I had no idea. So last year for Christmas it was the last gift and I opened it up and I'm like "ohh it's a Lite Brite" and I start signing the theme song and I'm all about this toy and my dad keeps going but what does it do? I'm like dad you plug the pegs in and you turn the light on, he's like, I get that but what does it do? My dad could not comprehend why at almost 40 I was so excited about this Lite Brite but I've used it many times. Virgil and I play with it so that was my favorite. (Jamie: Um I think that I need) It was my Lite Brite (Betsy: I think you need to sing it). You do. Lite Brite Lite Brite (there you go, see!) That's all I remember (Jamie: ... magical colored lights or something like that) See there you go! Jamie it's a duet, that's awesome. So we've covered gifts, what about traditions? So what, maybe traditions you guys have or traditions you'd like to start for the holidays? Any thoughts around that?

Betsy (15:56) Okay well I've already established I'm jealous of Jaime for Hamilton and Audra some things are worth waiting for. I mean you got you Light Bright (both laugh) and all is well with the world you know that's good (Jaime: boohoo). So for me let's see now my new tradition that I would like to do is it would be caroling. Christmas caroling in hospitals. I've done this before years ago but I haven't done it in a long time. Or retirement homes where people are feeling alone and need that Christmas spirit. Um actually for now during COVID possibly but what I thought might be really cool is to sing outside their windows and they'd be allowed to open the windows accordingly (Aww) so that old days of Christmas caroling that we also used to do growing up. We would just go from house to house with all of our neighbors and sing Christmas carols just like you'd seen in the movies hahaha.

Audra (16:47) that's really sweet (Betsy: yeah thanks). What about you Jaime?

Jaime (16:52) I think people probably, well no I do, I have a new appreciation now that we're dealing with COVID times for people who do put in some effort for costumes and dressing up so I think a really fun thing I'd like to start doing is to have a funny or wacky ? With my family and then actually make or get appropriate costumes and then be the family that sends out the holiday card that everybody you know gets a chuckle from. I'd love to be able to start doing that (Betsy: do it. Do it Jaime that's a great idea) (Audra: I love how all in you are Jaime for things. You just go all out I think that's awesome). You know I think I think it wasn't always that way I think my wife has brought it out of me (Audra: aw). If we had done this podcast 12 years ago it would have been what the best gift you ever got is? A hamster. What's the best gift you ever gave? A concert ticket. You know like to like the local choir at the high school" My wife is who brings out the fun in me (Aw that's really awesome). Yeah and they I think in terms of another tradition I do think it's important to give back I feel like that's what I even do for work which is remarkable. I'd like to teach my son to give back though and I'd want to start it early. So I think I have to find the right place that would allow children to volunteer, but I'd like that to be something that we do as a family each year and ideally you know helping families and specifically children that are in need. That's something I'd like to do each year with them.

Audra (18:31) Yeah I think he'd love that. I think all kids naturally kind of want to help so I think it's really cool as parents when we can provide those opportunities for them (Betsy: yeah). For me um one tradition that I think we are going to start this year and I think it might be from Sweden but it's the tradition of giving each other one wrapped book on Christmas Eve to open and then you spend the evening just reading books and eating chocolate which is kind of how I spend every evening. (Jaime: laughs). But with this, this is really cool because it's like as a family we can do it. So I'm looking forward to like sending books to like my sister and law and my sister and that all of us can be like having our own little book club on Christmas Eve. So we'll probably do that and then the other tradition I really want to do like holiday day with our son cause we don't really do Santa in our family but I want him to have the joy of going out and finding that perfect present for papa or for grandma, buying it, and having him have to keep it a secret for you know a week or two. And then have the joy of him like being excited to let them open it because he knows what it is and he got it for them and I really want him to focus on giving for Christmas and not getting. So I think he's still a little too young because he cannot keep any surprises, he's four. But I'm hoping next year that this can be a tradition for us. For us to do.

Jaime (19:48) Um I'd like a review on all my answers and I just would like to change them to Audra's. She likes to give back to people. The focus is on

spending time and quality time with people (Betsy: You said that!) I did but her's is much more yours is much more ?

Audra (20:08) You guys are funny. I know I'm awesome. Thank you for feeding my ego. Now I feel better. So now that we've covered gifts and we've covered all that fun stuff here is one of the most important questions: tree up before Thanksgiving or after Thanksgiving. And I'll go first on this one. So for me it is the day after Thanksgiving, that's it. And I don't like to disrespect Thanksgiving by putting my tree up too soon because then your mac and cheese comes out dry. It's like a scientific fact. Don't disrespect Thanksgiving. Wait till the day after for the tree. What about you, Betsy?

Betsy (20:41) Wow I didn't know that, I'm gonna have to write that down. Well um yeah for me it's after unless our kids come home from Sweden, yes Sweden, for Thanksgiving and then it would be before (Audra: cool)

Jaime (20:57) Alright well then how about the great Thanksgiving debate: canned or uncanned cranberry sauce? I say canned all the way forever all the time.

Betsy (21:10) Canned! Our son insists on it.

Audra (21:12) I'm gonna be the outlier and say that canned cranberry sauce is blasphemy and I will not have it in my home. It is fresh all the way. Fresh all the way. (Betsy: I'm impressed!) So speaking of that, what are you guys' holiday foods?

Jaime (21:29): I mean my real answer is all of them but my two favorites are stuffing and mashed potatoes.

Betsy (21:36): Yeah that's pretty great I have to agree. But I put down sweet potato casserole with marshmallows and Waldorf salad.

Audra (21:47) Mine is pecan pie for sure. Like I make it with bourbon and the best part is is you get to drink the extra bourbon so it's like a two for one. And it comes out like it just adds this extra layer of flavor that makes the pie like you can't stop eating it. Which is why I only make it for Thanksgiving and sometimes Christmas because I will eat the entire pie (Betsy: mmm that sounds good). One and done. Well this has been so much fun thanks for sharing you guys for all of your traditions and your gifts and your stories but we do not want to leave all of our listeners hanging cause we promised to give you guys some tips. So without further ado, here are your five fabulous tips for managing holiday stress. The first one and it can be a little a bit difficult when you've little ones at home or grandkids at home but it's this: making time for yourself. Whether that's baking,

or taking some time to go for a walk, or listen to your favorite holiday music, make sure to make time for yourself

Jaime (22:43): That's a great tip actually because in my house I'm the one that loves to bake and now that we have a two year old I'm famous now for being the guy that bakes before dawn, before everyone's up. And it works for me because that is the only uninterrupted time I get but I can get what I want done. But what I've also heard that I want to try is that people are baking together on zoom so you can't be together in person but people are I guess they get together on zoom, they pick a recipe, they're all gonna bake the same recipe and then apparently it's really fun that after you're done baking you can literally show everybody how yours came out and how it tastes and you can compare it (Audra: wow) So I want to try that (Betsy: but they can't taste it. But nobody else can taste it but you). No that's true but you know I think we all have times where you bake something it doesn't taste quite the way you want (Audra: oh) (Betsy: yeah oh so oh okay) so people can see you taste your creation for the first time and your face will probably tell it all.

Audra (23:43) Yeah. Well that's really sweet. Alright so tip number one make time for yourself. Tip number two: practice healthy sleep habits. So you guys definitely want to be mindful about how much alcohol maybe you consumed late in the evening or caffeine. Making sure you're trying to get a little bit of exercise in during the day because our sleep is very sensitive and it can get thrown off by minuscule things. So try your best to practice healthy sleep habits

Jaime (24:10) Yes and your sleep can also get thrown off by minuscule beings if you give them sugar late in the day then they never go to sleep which means you never go to sleep. (Audra which is why I'm tired today). I hear you. And then also for people that are sensitive to caffeine, I am. I cannot have any caffeine after 12pm or I don't sleep (Betsy: Me too)

Audra (24:36) Fair enough, that's a tip guys - no caffeine after 12. So tip number 3: use aromatherapy. Different fragrances and different smells can really make a difference and I don't know if you guys know this but there's a lot of science that shows that fragrances and smells have a unique way of getting directly to the part of our brain that regulates emotions and memory and stress. So if you find yourself stressed out during the holidays, it's a really great time to start experimenting with either like an essential oil in a diffuser or some nicely fragranced candles. For me, anything earthy and woody just brings my stress level down so I've got lots of like sage candles leather teakwood sandalwood anything like that just helps me feel super calm and relaxed. So aromatherapy, if you're not into it, look it up it will be a game changer for stress. And number 4?

Number 4 is get outside. So that means if you're not in a frigid tundra like it was when I lived in Chicago. I live in Florida now, I can go outside whenever I want to but even if you are some place really cold even just getting in your back yard of if you're in an apartment being able to go on your back porch for a little bit just getting a little bit of nature can make a huge difference.

Betsy (25:53) Yeah, I love that idea. And we in particular we're outdoorsy people. We live in a little mountain here in California so the sound of the creek in our mountain trail is just heavenly, it's just music and the smell of the stage brush and the pine trees just always lifts our spirits. And that does remind me that I'm very grateful and I think that helps lift my spirits and keep going.

Audra (26:18) That's awesome! I love to be outdoorsy buy there's alligators and scorpions and ticks and water moccasins in Florida so I just don't go, there's that. But one thing I do try to make sure and this is our last tip is, I always make sure especially during the holidays that I'm connecting with people so whether that's old friends that I haven't talk to in forever or new friends that I just met. I feel like it's so important to take the time to send that Christmas card or if you're like me and you forget, send that Christmas email or make that Christmas call to somebody because not everybody has somebody that they can be with for the holidays. But I think it's so touching to lot of people for someone else to take the time out of their day to send a Facebook message or an email or a card or something. And especially if you can get something handwritten even if it's late I should say that. Even if you're card gets there for New Year's that's okay, it's the fact that you took the time to do that really sticks with people and it's really inspiring to them. So anytime you guys can connect with other people for the holidays, you know take the time to do that because that just might be their favorite holiday memory is the fact that you took the time to check in on them.

Jamie (27:27) Oh yeah, that's so important. For my family during Hanukkah and holidays it's going to be zoom calls and FaceTime calls you know anything that can be on some type of video seems to really make a difference. We'll play some games online and then, I've already been famous for making individual short videos of things that my son says or does but I'll be putting an extra focus on catching the hilarious and embarrassing moments of his so that people can enjoy a chuckle. And a lift during all the holidays, I think that's going to go well.

Audra (28:06) I think so too. And I like that you're going to feature your little boy because I think a lot of your family are going to want to see that so they fell like they are not missing out.

Betsy (28:13) Oh absolutely believe me.

Audra (28:15) Well this has been super fun guys a really interesting and fun episode to do and I'm so glad that we got to host this one together. And I know that for all of our listeners 2020 feels like it was written by Stephen King and produced by M. Night Shyamalan there's nothing but horror and twist all the way through. But I don't think that that means that we can't all have a wonderful holiday season even though it looks a little bit different. The most important thing to remember is why you're celebrating which ever holidays you choose to celebrate because if you can connect with the why you're celebrating the how you get to celebrate or how you get to celebrate won't matter as much. Every year for the holidays we have a chance to make new memories, start new traditions and this year, while it's a really weird year, it's still holds the same opportunities. So we're just really hoping that all of you have an amazing holiday season no matter what that looks like (Betsy....absolutely) So that is the end of our show, please join us next time where we're going to be talking about virtual learning, home schooling and the ways to keep everyone engage while staying home. In the meantime, please don't forget to subscribe to our podcast so you don't miss out and for more information hearing health resources please visit our website at oeius.org, that's oeius.org. So until next time, this is Audra, Jamie, Betsy reminding you guys to stay safe and stay connected. Bye everyone!