

Reflective practice

Learning through the client story



Abstract

In accordance with best practice guidelines, hearing therapists work *with* their clients to identify and prioritise their hearing and communication needs, and to problem-solve with them to find appropriate options that may address these needs.

Best practice includes learning from the experience, thoughtful deliberation, and an ability to think critically and creatively about intentions and actions in the therapeutic process.

An essential component of reflective hearing therapy practice is the recording of intervention outcomes, and an evaluation or retrospective analysis of the approach and actions taken by the therapist to facilitate these.

Seeking client feedback is part of this process and provides an invaluable opportunity for reflection and consequent learning that may influence future therapy practice.

This poster describes the feedback provided to a Life Unlimited hearing therapist by one of her clients on exiting the hearing therapy service. The client's in-depth and insightful feedback is an integral part of their therapy, and provides comment on the significant benefit that the client experienced through hearing therapy.

What is reflective practice?

The practitioner learns through the client story, and in telling their story the client reflects on and develops insight into their own experiences. This helps the client identify new strategies and tools they can use in the situations they find most challenging.

The process is facilitated using motivational, open questions:

What would you like to manage better?

Where do you rate yourself now? Where would you like to be?

How would you like your world to look?

How have you previously coped with adversity?

What has worked well? What has not gone well for you?

If you could change anything – what would you do differently?

Holly's story

Holly had reached crisis point. She had a full-time job but lost it due to her hearing. She hated her hearing aids and felt exhausted in social situations.

Holly was motivated to make change. She was open to sharing her story and working with hearing therapist Debbie Brown so she could achieve her goals.



Tools for reflective practice

Debbie worked with Holly over eight sessions spanning five months.

The **Rehabilitation Session Record** captured Holly's hearing challenges and allowed Holly to identify the goals she wanted to work toward.

Regular rehabilitation sessions focused on developing strategies to support Holly to reach her goals. They included effective communication strategies, adaptive strategies, hearing tactics, repair strategies to keep conversation flowing and assertiveness strategies to allow Holly to discuss her hearing needs with others. Auditory training exercises were included in each session and Holly's learning was further supported by roleplay exercises and activities to complete at home.

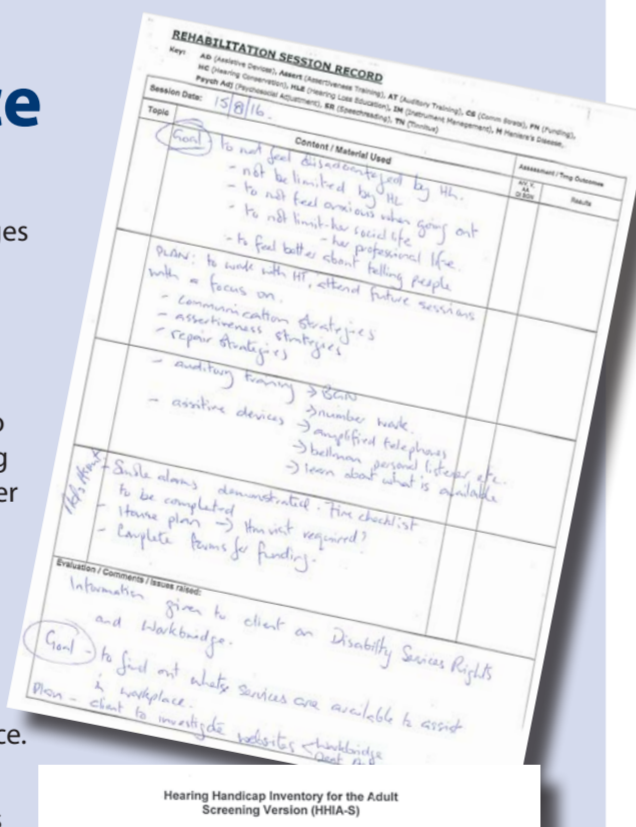
Regular rehabilitation sessions also provided an opportunity for Holly and Debbie to examine any new issues Holly might be facing and to reflect and evaluate the success of strategies Holly was putting into place.

Debbie used a number of additional tools to facilitate reflective practice.

The **Behaviour Inventory for Rehabilitation Therapy** tool allowed Holly to think about her own behaviour and assess her coping abilities in various communication environments. This tool was also important because it allowed Holly to critically evaluate her preconceptions about how other people might react to her and their willingness to support her hearing needs in a given situation.

The **Hearing Handicap Inventory for the Adult** tool helped Holly recognise how hearing loss impacted on relationships and daily life. Repeating the assessment at a later stage of therapy allowed Holly to measure improvement since rehabilitation began and reflect on the strategies responsible for changes she observed.

Being able to reflect on what worked well and not so well is something that occurs with every client. Through this reflective process we are continually practising self-learning.



Name:	Date:	Yes (Y)	Sometimes (S)	No (N)
1	Does a hearing problem cause you to feel embarrassed when you meet new people?			
2	Does a hearing problem cause you to feel frustrated when talking to members of your family?			
3	Do you have difficulty hearing or understanding co-workers, clients or customers?			
4	Do you feel handicapped by a hearing problem?			
5	Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when visiting friends, relatives or neighbours?			
6	Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty in the movies or in the theatre?			
7	Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when listening to the radio?			
8	Does a hearing problem cause you to have arguments with family members?			
9	Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when listening to the TV or radio?			
10	Do you feel that any difficulty with your hearing limits or hampers your personal or social life?			
11	Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when in a restaurant with relatives or friends?			
TOTAL:	HHIA-S	50	E=10	S=10

Name:	Date:	Yes (Y)	Sometimes (S)	No (N)
11	Does a hearing problem cause you to feel embarrassed when you meet new people?			
12	Does a hearing problem cause you to feel frustrated when talking to members of your family?			
13	Do you have difficulty hearing or understanding co-workers, clients or customers?			
14	Do you feel handicapped by a hearing problem?			
15	Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when visiting friends, relatives or neighbours?			
16	Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty in the movies or in the theatre?			
17	Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when listening to the radio?			
18	Does a hearing problem cause you to have arguments with family members?			
19	Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when listening to the TV or radio?			
20	Do you feel that any difficulty with your hearing limits or hampers your personal or social life?			
21	Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when in a restaurant with relatives or friends?			
TOTAL:	HHIA-S	44	E=10	S=10

Client self-reflection on goal achievement and positive impact on relationships

The Client Self Reflection form was given to Holly to complete at home in her own time. This was to allow her to reflect back on her journey (without the hearing therapist present) and really think about the changes that had occurred for her.

Holly had taken a severe knock to her confidence and through previous bad experiences regarding her hearing had lost sight of her own capabilities. It was really important that she was able to acknowledge just how far she had come and how capable she is. Here is Holly's reflection on her progress:

Goal 1: To not let myself be limited socially by my hearing loss

Before I started hearing therapy with Debbie, I would dread social situations because I felt like I was never fully involved in conversations. I can now confidently ask people I am talking with to speak slower or to look at me when they talk. I think that educating and raising awareness to anyone I am in a social situation with is incredibly important.

Goal 2: To not feel so anxious when going out

I hardly ever have anxiety when I go out now which is great because I am going out a lot more. I still can feel a little anxious when it's people I don't know or people who don't know me, when it's a very large group, or when there's children. But I know now how to deal with situations using strategies like determining what part of a sentence I didn't hear or pulling someone aside away from a noisy crowd.

Goal 3: To not be limited professionally by my hearing loss

There are still some limitations in my professional life. Being a photographer I usually have to deal with large groups which can be difficult. But I have learnt to be diligent and patient as every event that I photograph I am getting better at in terms of communicating and more confident. I have also no longer dwelt on bad experiences and have learnt to let go.

Goal 4: To feel more confident when telling people about my hearing loss

This is the area I feel I have improved the most in. I used to hide my hearing loss and in turn no one knew about it or how to talk to me. I am definitely more open about it with my colleagues, my friends and my family – which has resulted in better relationships.

Goal 5: To communicate better with children

I still struggle with communicating with children, but I feel less anxious of telling them how to talk to me. I have learnt to make it an interactive experience when explaining to kids about my hearing loss – e.g. using ear muffs to demonstrate how quiet everything is for me.

Evaluating changes in relationships



Self

Massive difference in terms of confidence levels. I was feeling really down and blaming my hearing loss on everything that I was limited to do. I now have embraced my hearing loss and have much more confidence to ask for what I need in regards to my hearing loss. My hearing loss is now part of me.



Partner

I am no longer relying on him to hear a conversation for me then relay it to me later - I am standing on my own two feet and asking for what I need. He has noticed a difference in terms of my confidence and overall happiness which in turn has improved our relationship.



Parents

My parents (particularly my mum) used to dominate conversations and talk on my behalf. I have now told them to step back and let me ask for what I need. My relationship has improved with my parents and I feel more comfortable talking to them about issues relating to my hearing - whereas before it was almost a taboo topic.



Friends

I feel more comfortable talking to my friends about my hearing loss. Before I used to hide it. I have stopped bluffing. I am now understanding them a lot more and enjoying their company rather than dreading it.



Workplace

I still struggle sometimes with certain customers, but I have learnt to not dwell on it. My colleagues are very understanding because I have taken the time to explain to them how my hearing loss works and how I need them to talk to me.

"I feel like I can do anything I set my mind to now and my hearing loss will not be a limitation, only a mere obstacle that I can overcome."

Debbie Brown

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Bibliography

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