

Hearing Loss & Mental Health

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Introduction

- Graduated in 2008 as a Speech and Language Pathologist
- MSc Audiology in 2015
- Audiologist at Mater Dei since October 2015
- PhD in Special Education and Rehabilitation Science July 2021
- Special Interest in Pediatric Audiology and Implantable Hearing Devices

Important information

- Mobile phones muted
- Raise hand for questions
- Share your thoughts



Defining Mental Health

A state of mental well-being that enables people to **cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute** to their community.

Defining Mental Health

An integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to **make decisions, build relationships and shape the world** we live in.

Defining Mental Health

A basic human right.

And it is crucial to personal,
community and socio-economic
development.

(WHO, 2022)

Hearing Loss

- + It is common.
- + It knows no age limits.
- + It affects the very young, the very old, and every age in between.





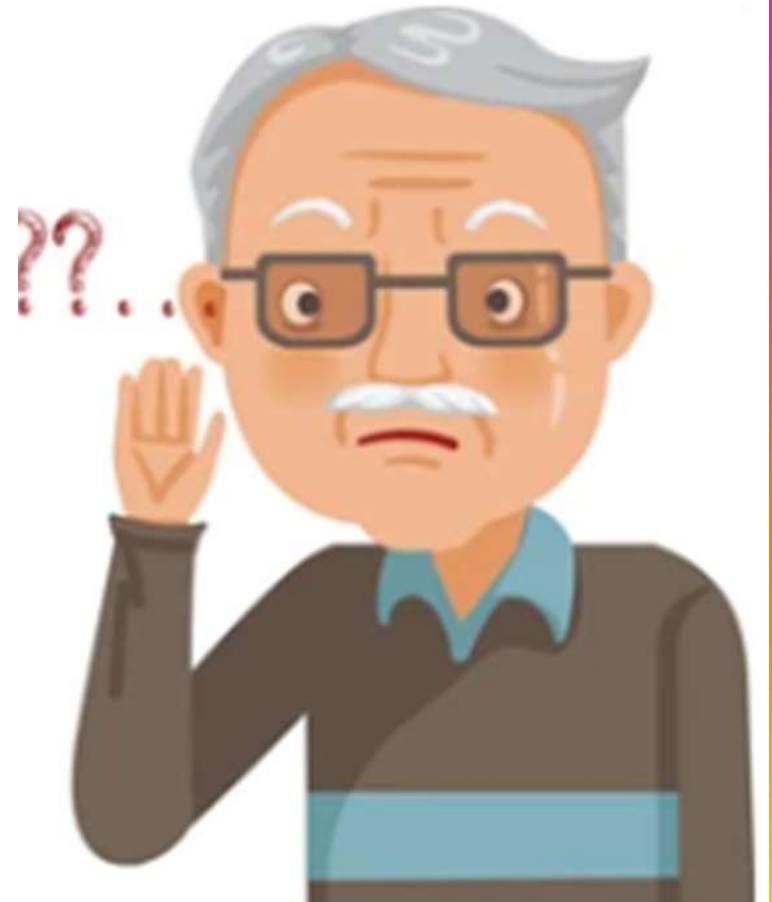
Hearing Loss

Loss of hearing is more than just difficulty hearing sounds...

“Hearing impairment is an invisible handicap, yet its effects upon one’s personal health, happiness, and personal well-being are very real.”

Chartrand, 2005

Hearing loss can come with a variety of emotional struggles...



BRAIN STORM- What emotions do people with hearing loss experience?

Log in to www.menti.com

Use passcode 5396 6919

or QR code:





PM



Join at menti.com | use code **5396 6919**

Mentimeter

What emotions do people with hearing loss experience?

bold leader
creative
focus
fast
transpiration



Menti

Emotions



Choose a slide to present

What emotions do people with hearing loss experience?

[illegible]



Frustration

- + You have to keep asking family members to repeat themselves.
- + You feel as though you're missing out on conversations.



Embarrassment

- + You may feel ashamed of the hearing loss because it is associated with a sign that they're getting older
- + Hearing loss can cause disorientation, leading the person to behave in socially unacceptable ways such as speaking out of turn
- + Some might even experience paranoia and believe that others are talking about them.



Exhaustion

- + Basic communication can feel effortful and exhausting
- + Struggling to hear every day can cause them to give up

Isolation, loneliness and depression



- + Withdrawal from social activities; skipping birthday parties, dinners, holiday gatherings, and other events where large groups of people gather in noisy settings.
- + This self-imposed reclusiveness may seem easier at first BUT over time it can make the person socially isolated, lonely, and depressed.
- + They may feel like an outlier within their own families and social groups—an observer in life rather than an active participant.

Do not discount these emotions...

- + Impaired hearing and the feelings of isolation and helplessness that often come with it can contribute to mental health problems
- + Anxiety, Depression, Dementia, Sleep problems etc



Anxiety

- + Research shows that people with hearing loss tend to experience more anxiety.
- + How quickly will my hearing loss worsen?
- + Can current treatments salvage my hearing?



Depression

- + People with hearing loss are at a higher risk of developing depression and experiencing suicidal thoughts.
- + Grieve the loss of hearing certain sounds
- + Wrestle with feelings of isolation.
- + Feeling that hearing loss also restricts your ability to be autonomous, which can affect your sense of self-worth.



Dementia and Cognitive decline

- + Untreated hearing loss can speed up cognitive decline. Loss of hearing may discourage you from being social. This isolation then speeds up cognitive decline.
- + The brain is working harder to interpret the world without sounds, which reduces its ability to perform other tasks. Parts of your brain may shrink as they receive and interpret fewer signals.



Sleeping problems

- + Impaired hearing can affect the quality of sleep.
- + Studies have found that tinnitus can be a major factor in disrupted sleep.



BRAIN STORM- What sounds do you value?

Log in to www.menti.com

Use passcode 83453725

or QR code:





Join at menti.com | use code **8345 3725**

 Mentimeter

What sounds do you value?

1 response

music



Menti

What sounds do you val...



Choose a slide to present



Grieving our hearing...



- + Losing the ability to hear represents a significant loss.
- + And like with any loss, it's often followed by a grieving period.
- + The grieving process may involve feelings like anger, resentment, sadness, and depression, followed ultimately by **a sense of acceptance**.

Who does it affect?

EVERYONE

“When someone in the family has a hearing loss, the entire family has a hearing problem”

Problems for Family Members

Remembering
what to do

Deciding what
they
understand

TV/Radio too
loud

Having to
repeat – A LOT

Being the
interpreter

Dealing with
the individual's
irritation

Lack of
communication

The individual's
dependence on
them

Isolation from
family/social
situations

Communication is a 2-way street

The listener and speaker both experience problems when communication breaks down

The listener and speaker both contribute to communication breakdowns

The listener and speaker are both part of the solution

PROTECT YOUR
MENTAL
HEALTH BY
TREATING
YOUR **HEARING**
LOSS



Visit a
healthcare
professional...

Hearing loss can be effectively treated and managed

Early action is important, since hearing loss left untreated can worsen

Contact an Audiologist/ENT

Ask someone to accompany you

Explore the options available

Regaining the ability to hear clearly can counter the anguish of hearing problems and restore your quality of life

Seek Counselling...

A therapist who has experience working with adults who have lost their hearing.

Navigating the grieving process

Develop healthy coping skills and strategies.

Find meaning in your loss, so that you can continue to find joy in your life

Surround yourself with knowledge and support...

You are not alone.

If you or a loved one is dealing with hearing issues, You are not alone

Organizations that are dedicated to advancing hearing loss education and awareness.

If you or someone you know is experiencing depression and/or suicidal thoughts, help is available.

Despite the Positive Benefits...

Only 1 in 5 use amplification



So, why won't they
use hearing devices?

□ Denial

- “My hearing isn't bad enough”
- More than half of the persons
who have severe HL
deny needing HAs

So, why won't they
use hearing devices?

□ Consumer Concerns

- Cost
- Won't help my problem
- They don't work well
- I don't trust the hearing specialists
- I've tried one before

So, why won't they
use hearing devices?

Stigma

- It would make me feel old
- Don't like the way they look
- Too embarrassed
- What will others think about me?

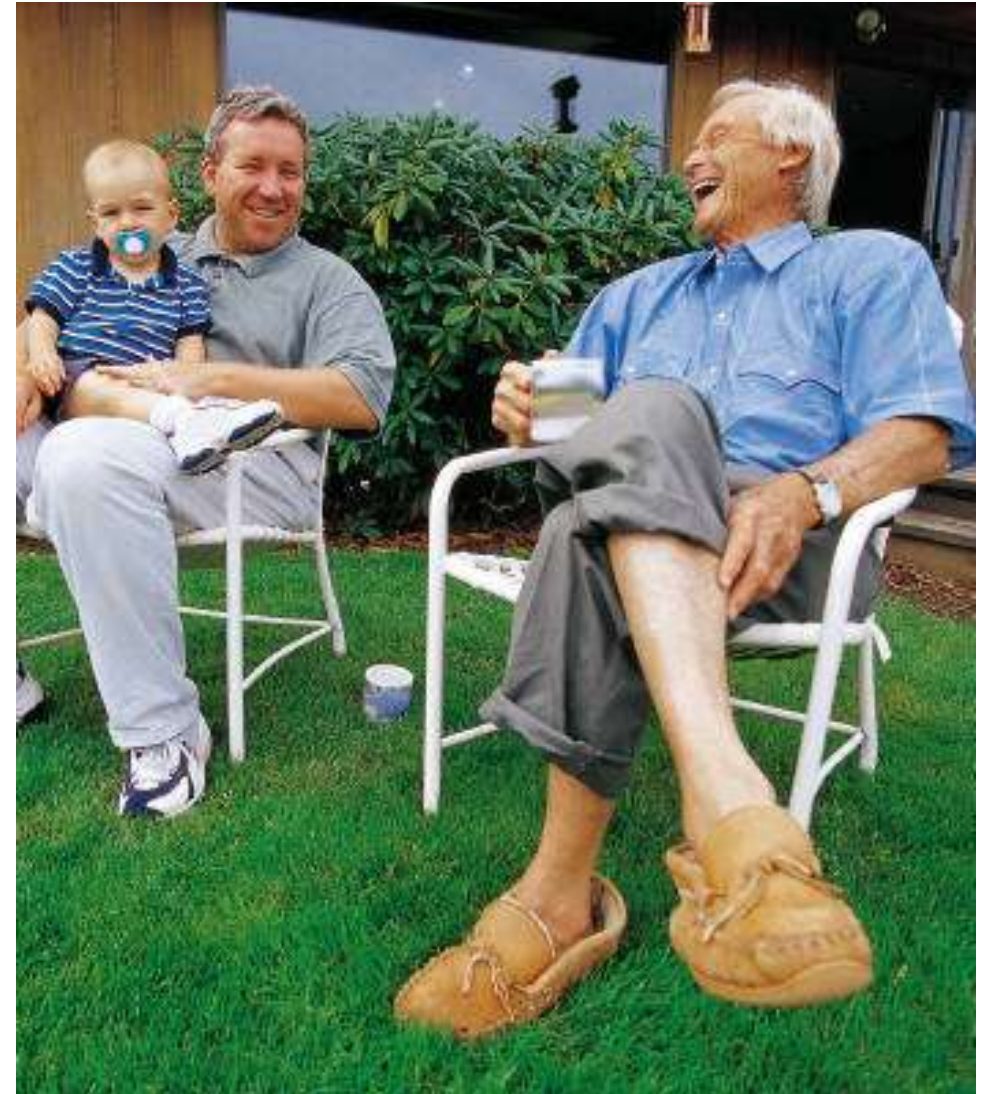


How can we help?

- +Use communication strategies
- +Use clear speech
- +Consider sources of communication difficulties
- +Be patient
- +Repeat, then rephrase
- +Provide written information

The Importance of Communication

- ☐ Independence
- ☐ Stimulating thinking
- ☐ Maintaining social networks
- ☐ Enhance well-being
- ☐ Facilitating adaptation to change
- ☐ Participation in activities of life



What is the most important activity for maintaining quality of life?

- + Spending time with family and friends (96%)
- + Religious or spiritual activities (82%)
- + Exercise and physical activity (80%)

AARP 2003



Tinnitus- the sound of silence



- + Conscious awareness of a sound sensation that is not due to an external sound source
- + The ringing, buzzing or hissing sound of silence
- + Varies from slightly annoying in some to utterly debilitating in others.
- + One ear, both ears, head



Tinnitus

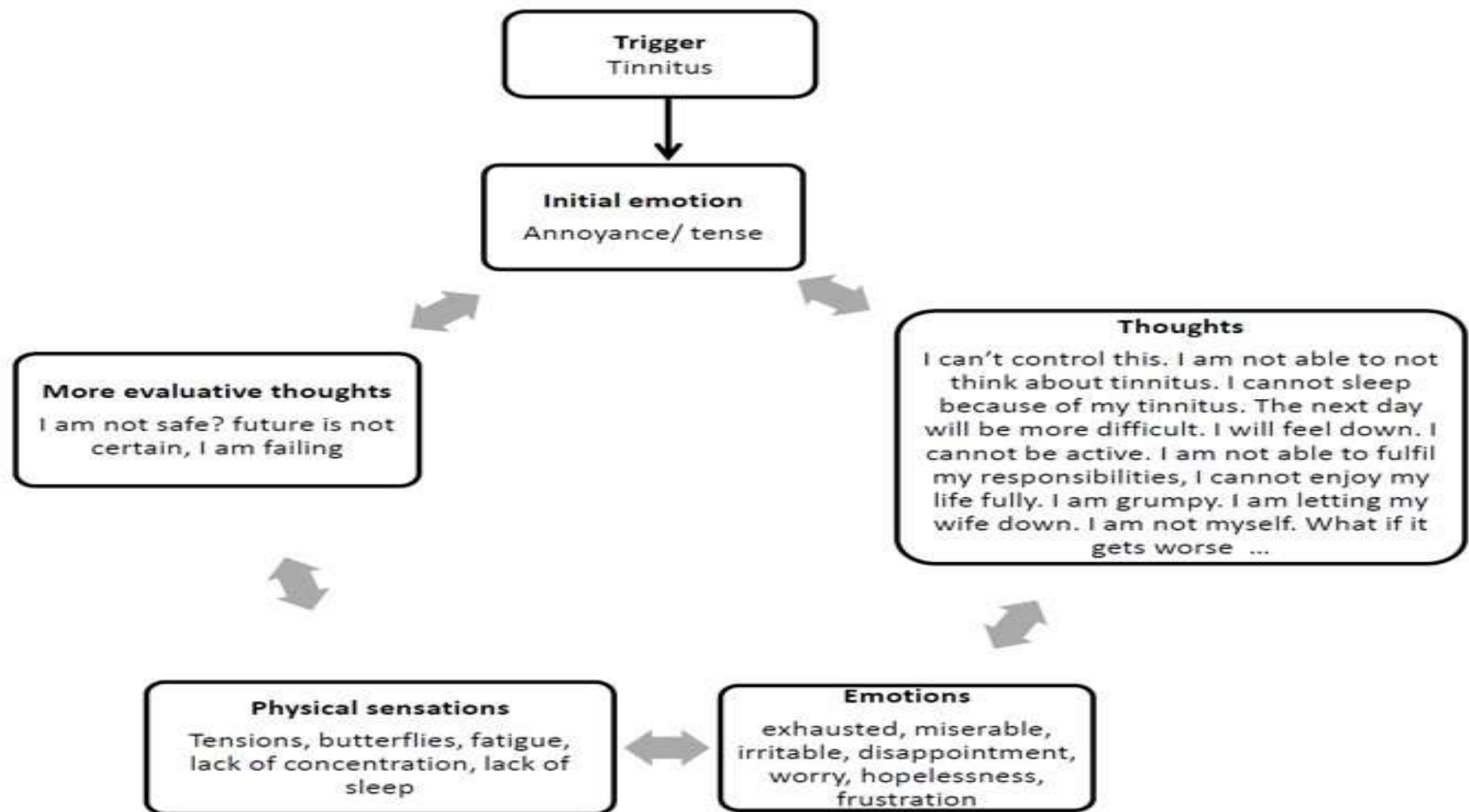
Tinnitus is often associated with hearing loss;

The more severe the hearing loss the higher the risk of developing tinnitus

Repercussions...

- Tinnitus can be a life-altering condition for patients
- Can affect them emotionally, socially and psychologically.
- Individuals may struggle with concentration and sleep becoming agitated and distressed.
- Patients report being fearful and anxious and the impact on their home, work and social situations are significant
- Impact on person's quality of life is significant





There is no cure...

But it can be
managed.



Assessment

- + Why do we need to properly assess a tinnitus patient?
 - To decide if the person needs professional psychological support
 - To exclude a pathology that could be managed by referring to the appropriate medical profession
 - To choose the right audiological course of action.

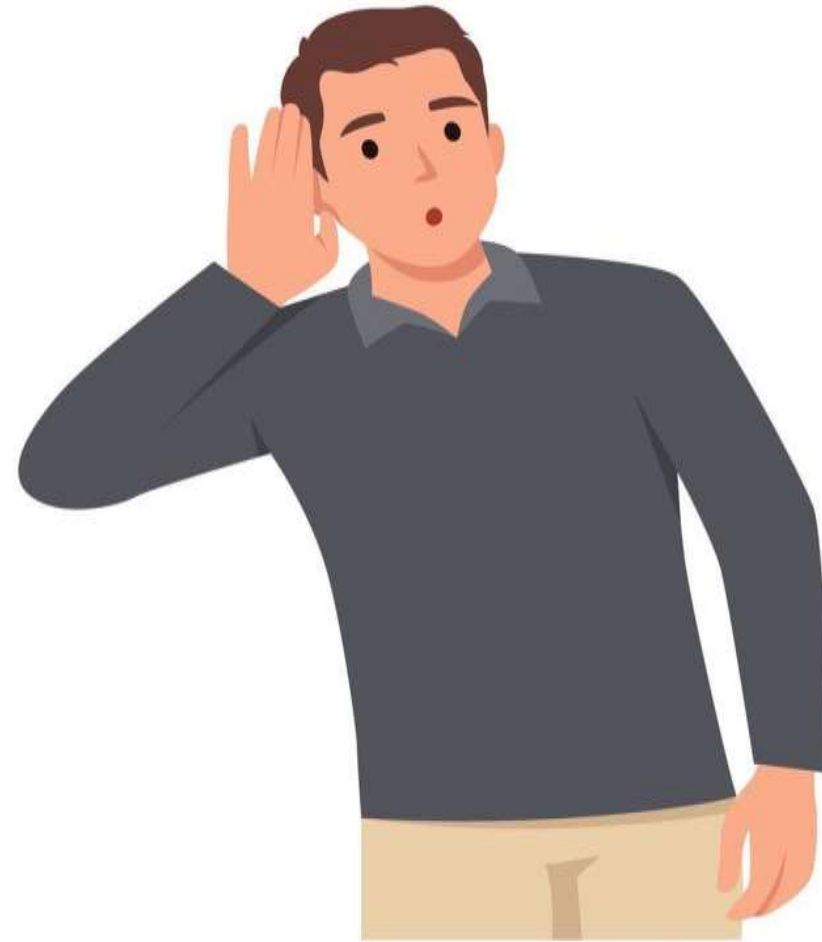
Case history



- Determine extent to which tinnitus affects everyday life and management designed to address these
- Quantify the patient's physical, emotional and social response to tinnitus
- Important to understand social context of person and appreciate life activities important to person

How can we help?

- Listen to the person
- Give Facts and latest evidence-based information.
- Rule out any misinformation that the person might have read on the internet.
- Ask about any emotional effects.
- How the person feels and any negative thoughts.



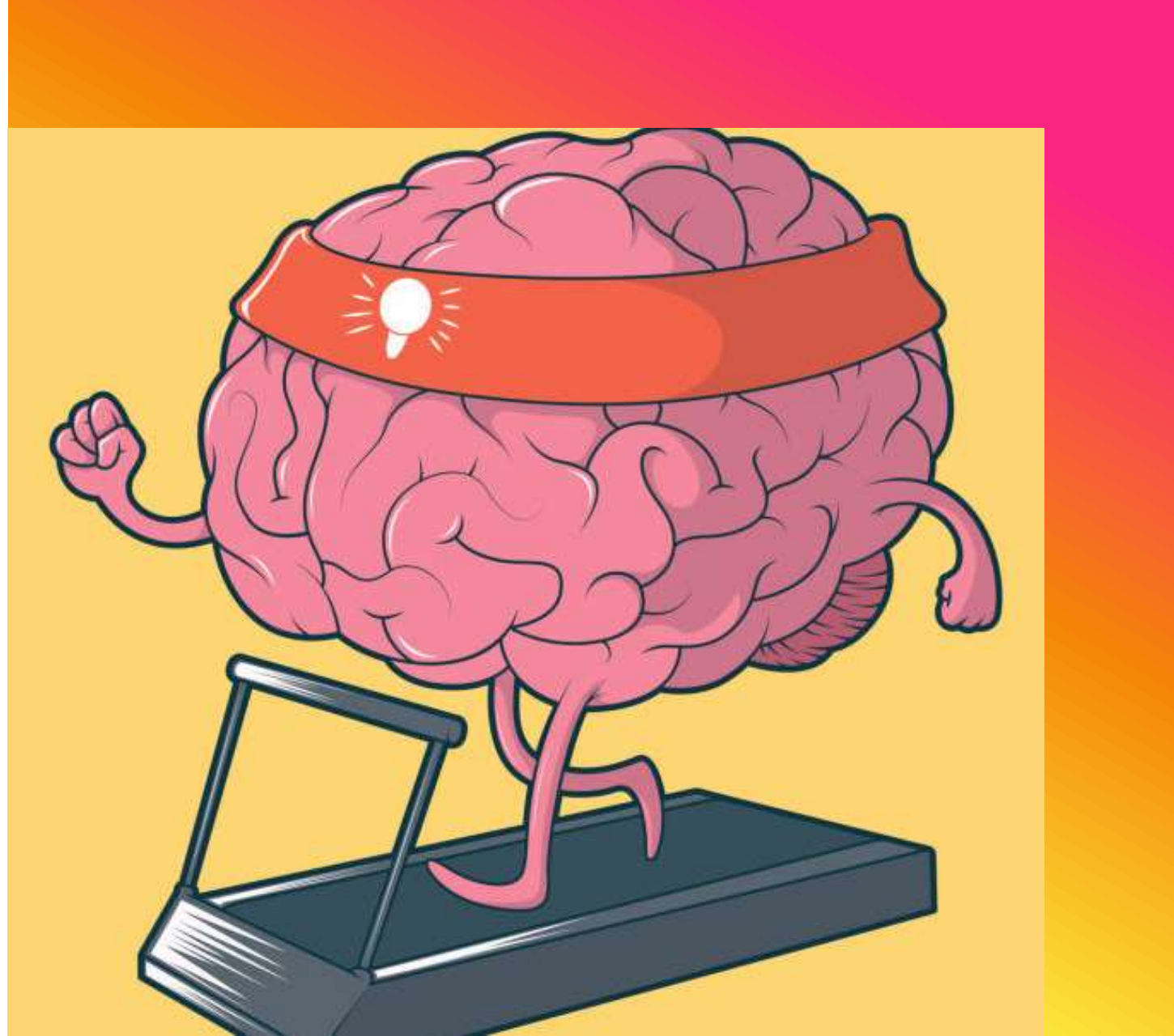
How can we help?

- Providing written information particularly for tinnitus
- Repeat, review information



How can we help?

- Exercise, increase in physical activity – getting out and about will lighten mood, hear tinnitus less (McKenna et al., 2010)
- Keeping fit has benefits for health and cognition too (Weinstein, 2012)



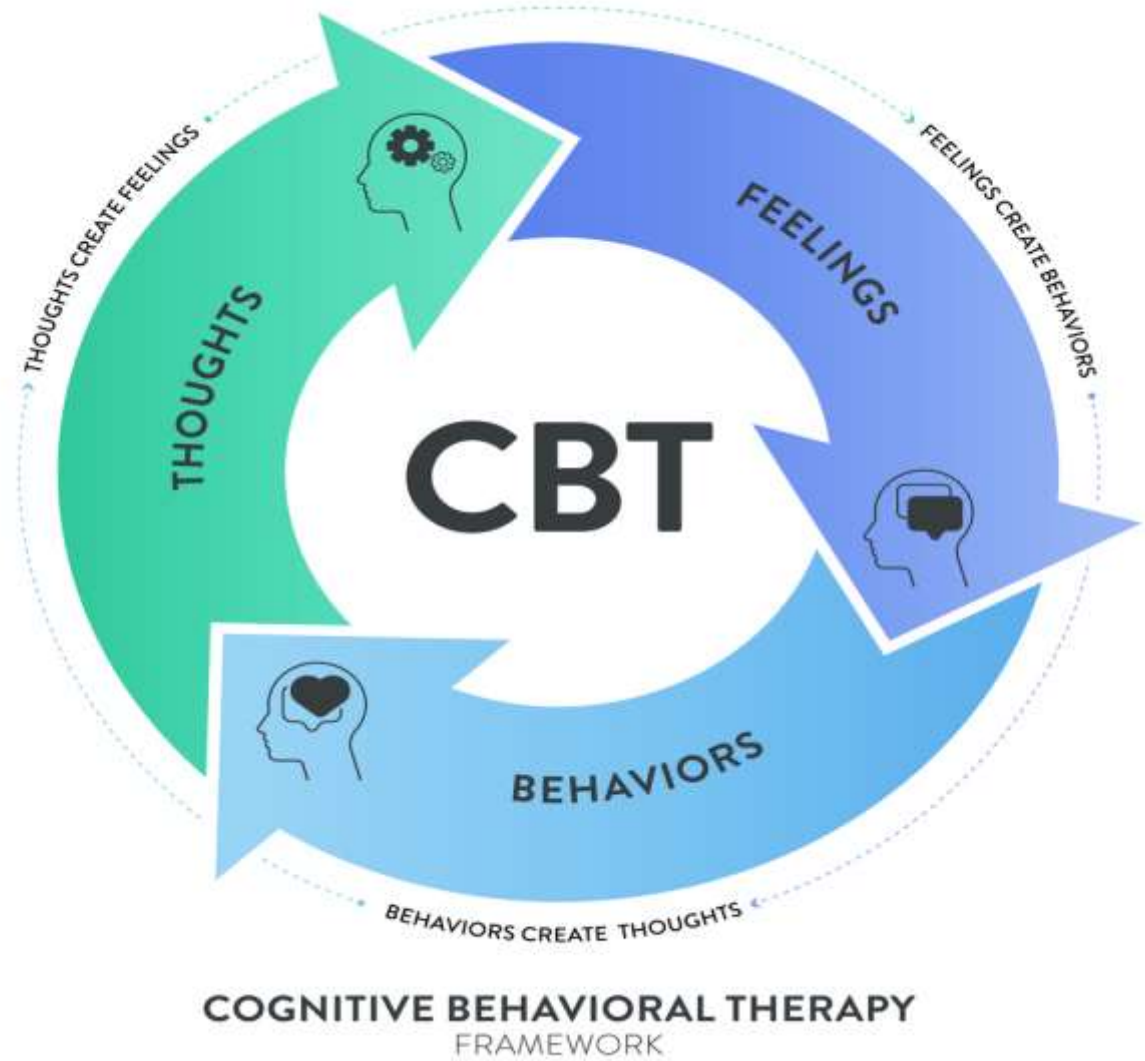
How can we help?

- Negative associations with hearing loss can lead to negative outcomes.
- Counselling and reassurance : consideration for counselling group sessions
- Motivation: powerful determinant of well-being in old age (Weinstein, 2012)



How can we help?

- Provides practical strategies to employ when the relationships among these elements goes wrong.
- Focused on problem-solving to help patients improve their overall sense of well-being.
- CBT for tinnitus is intended to help patients cope with tinnitus and is not intended as a cure or an approach to make the tinnitus quieter.



How can we help?

- Mindfulness—a training of the mind to be present in the here and now with openness, curiosity, and kindness—
- It can help reduce tinnitus symptoms and improve one's quality of life.



How can we help?

- **Progressive muscle relaxation,**
a deep breathing and muscle tensing exercise,
- Incorporates mindfulness with muscle movements to distract your mind from the ringing in your ears



Your turn to relax...



- **Sit** in a comfortable chair in a quiet place
- **Do** the exercises while listening to relaxing music. Turn the music off if it distracts you.
- **Take off** your shoes and wear loose and comfortable clothing

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Tips

Address your tinnitus
with patience and acceptance



- + **Name it to tame it.**
Acknowledging your feelings, including sadness or anger, can help calm the brain. By doing so, you won't displace your feelings and become frustrated with someone or something else.

Tips...



- + **Find reasons to be grateful in the moment.**
- + When frustrated, your focus narrows. Broaden it by taking a walk. See the beauty of the moment to refresh your spirit.
- + Reaching out to someone who is also struggling can switch the focus off yourself. Bringing someone else joy can make you feel helpful and happy.

Tips...



- + **Remember that you are not alone.**
- Millions of people across the planet share your experience of pain—it may not be from hearing loss or tinnitus but a pain of another sort.

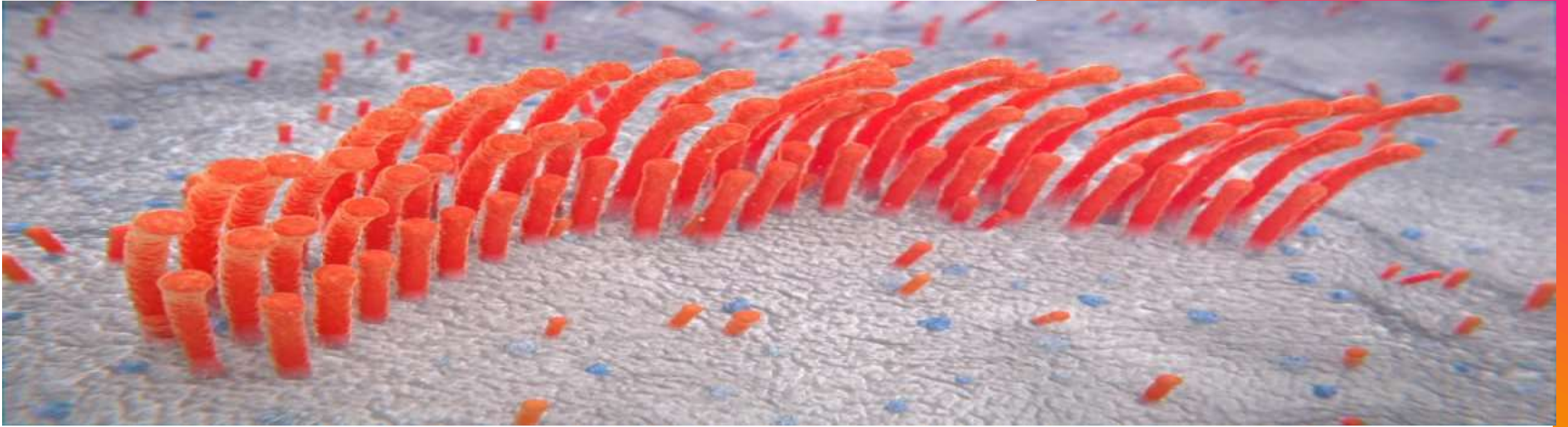
Tips...



- + **Be kind to yourself.**
- + Self-criticism in any situation is not helpful.
- + Speak to yourself as you would to a good friend, and say, for example, “Wow, this is hard. May I find ease in the day,” “May I accept myself as doing the best I can,” or “May I be gentle with myself and listen to my needs.”



Communication, love,
and connection can
make your world a
kinder, gentler
place... even with
hearing loss.



Thank you

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