

# THE MASKS OF HEARING LOSS

(BLUFFING 101)

Presented by

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(\* Master Bluffer)



# Agenda

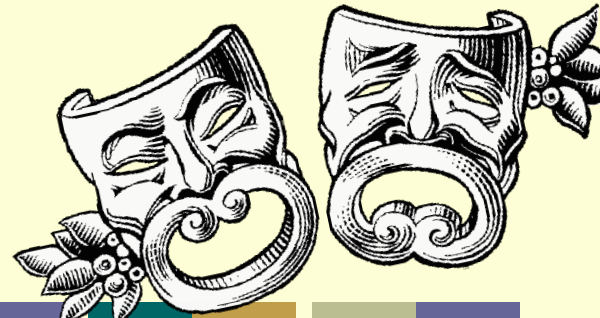
- History of Bluffing
- Good Communication
- Why Do We Bluff?
- Bluffing Lesson
- Bluff-Busters
- The Masks of Hearing Loss





# Misery Loves Company

Guess Who Else  
Had Hearing Loss?





Meet MONA LISA,  
Master Bluffer!

At last, we know why  
she's smiling!



# Hearing Loss is About Communication



# Good Communication

- From Latin “*communicare*” – to share
- Starts when participants share language and terminology
- Both parties participate, by speaking, listening, or preferably both
- Both share responsibility for mutual understanding





When we bluff, we're not  
communicating.

We're not sharing.

We're hiding behind a mask.



# Our Masks



From the Latin “mascus” – a ghost



Masks are traditional protective face coverings which hide an identity, disguise true feelings and emotions



We create a bluff mask from our own features, and project a **façade** of understanding



# Why Do We Bluff?

- Hide fact or severity of hearing loss
- Desire not to appear inadequate or slow
- Don't want to annoy or interrupt others
- It's easier, it's a habit
- Tired of asking for repetition
- Exhausted by trying to keep up
- Conscious choice to 'sit this one out'
- Lack of assertiveness, too polite
- Lack of communication skills
- Pretend that it's temporary (I'll catch up soon!)
- "It's only small talk"



# Sometimes It May Be OK!

- Temporary relief from the strain of listening in difficult situations
- Can't fight every battle – let's give ourselves a break
- Speeds up non-important conversations
- Survival Skill!



# ....But Usually It's Not!

- Dishonest and/or disrespectful
- Dangerous – miss important info, make embarrassing mistakes
- We become isolated
- Non-productive, waste of time, miss out
- People misinterpret our behavior
- It *really* annoys our families and friends.



# Bluffing Lesson!

- The Bluffing Place
- Bluffing Styles
- Calling A Bluff in Others and Ourselves



# The Bluffing Place

- Poor acoustics: background noise, outdoors, large rooms
- Family gatherings or large groups
- Speechreading impediments
- Others don't understand our needs
- No assistive listening devices



# Bluffing Styles

- Passive: following along, doing the best we can, not admitting that we're not following the conversation
- Proactive: pretending that we do understand, by consciously inserting symbols that indicate comprehension
- Tuned Right Out: totally gone off with the fairies to a place far, far away....



# Bluffing Methods

- Silent treatment
- Uh-huh, oh yes, really?....
- Copy other people
- Do all the talking
- Use physical distractions: serve food, play with dog
- “Go do the dishes”
- Ask a question, pretend to listen
- Look away and cause a distraction
- “Say, you have to hear this!”



# Bluff-Busters!

Strategies for  
Removing the Masks



# We Need to Change our Identity

From: Bluffy the  
Communication-Slayer

To: **BLUFF-BUSTER!**



# Self-Identifying

- Self-identifying – who are we, how do we communicate, what do we need?
- If we don't self-identify, how can we expect accommodation and inclusion?
- What's In a Name?



# Kicking Our Habit

- When to disclose? (ASAP)
- Be aware of our bluff patterns
- Believe that we have the right to understand and participate
- Admit our hearing loss, be assertive and express our needs
- Find the courage to say “I’m not following!”



# Kicking Our Habit (2)

- Verify and clarify
- Use assistive listening devices
- Repeat part of what we heard, or *think* we heard, to encourage repetition
- Keep up with the topic: train people to tell us when the topic changes
- Make family and friends our partners in helping us kick the habit



# Improving the “Place”

- Move to quieter spot
- One person speaks at a time
- Create a better environment – reduce noise, better lighting, fewer people
- Use assistive technology when possible



# When Our Bluff is Called

What do we do?

- Get angry
- Deny it
- Admit gracefully
- Give the reasons
- Other?



# Calling Someone Else's Bluff

## The Wrong Way:

- “What did I just say? Tell me!”
- “You’re not following this, are ya?”
- Ignoring them completely
- Pointing out their situation to others



# Calling Someone Else's Bluff

A Better Way:

- Give clues, i.e. “Speaking of \_\_\_\_\_”,  
“Does everyone follow this?”
- “Are you understanding me?”
- Ask them what would work better
- Change the communication environment



# To Be a Good Communicator

- Create best possible listening environment
  - Well lit, quiet, one person speaking at a time, etc.
- Use our hearing aids, CIs and other technology
- Practice effective self-identification



## ...cont'd

- Let others know what we need
- Express ourselves clearly for others
- Forgive ourselves when we're not perfect communicators!



# The Masks of Hearing Loss



Sometimes, people with hearing loss  
do all the talking, taking centre stage.  
This way, we don't have to try to understand anyone *else!*



Sometimes, we hide  
behind our masks,  
Pretending to follow,  
But becoming more lost  
with each word.  
Too proud to say,  
I don't understand you,  
Can we try another way?

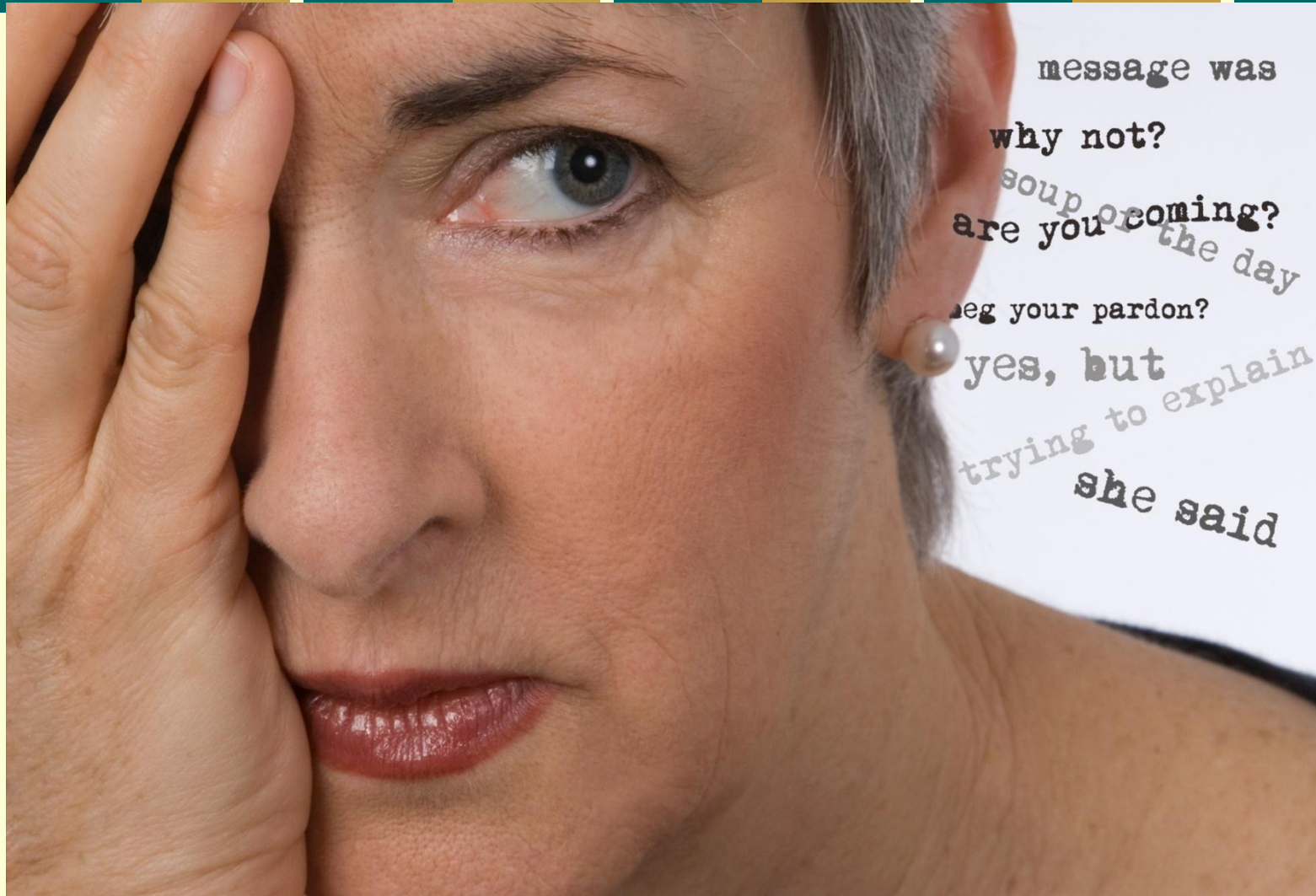




Our masks are  
different,  
Yet the same.  
We ask the people  
To play our game.

*“Please, pretend you  
don’t know that I  
don’t know what  
we’re talking about!”*





message was

why not?

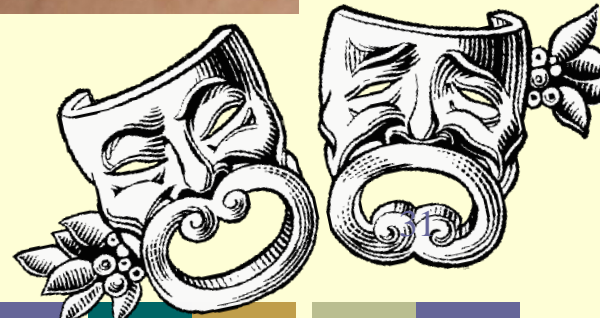
soup or the day  
are you coming?

beg your pardon?

yes, but

trying to explain

she said



Hmm, that's interesting.

Let me think about that.

*(But oh! don't ask me  
any questions!)*



My goodness, that's *very*  
interesting.

Thought provoking, too.

*(Actually, I have no idea  
what we're discussing!)*



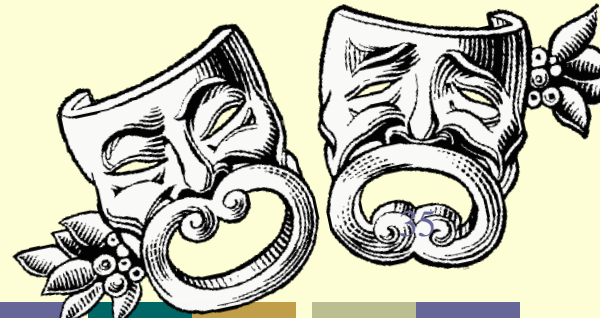
Do I look like I'm  
*intelligently* following  
your *fabulous* dissertation  
on ....well...  
*whatever* subject  
you said that you study?





Everyone else has this  
look on their face, so  
I'm wearing it, too.

(But, I don't feel my  
most *attractive!*)

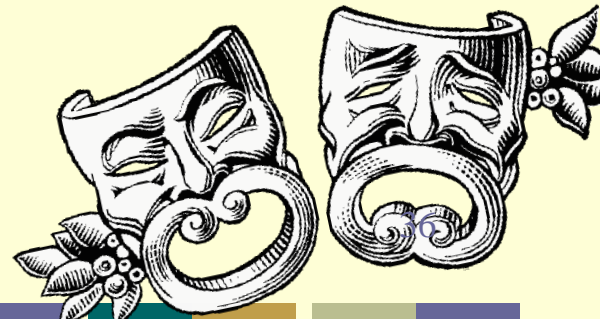




I'm with you all the way. You're saying good things.

*(Says my little smile of enjoyment.*

*Uh oh! Everyone's laughing, I better laugh too!)*



Ha! Ha! Ha!

Oh yes, I love these family  
gatherings.

All these nice little  
children...with their high  
sweet little voices,

Saying.....

....saying.....





Actually I have  
NO IDEA  
what they're  
saying!

They *mumble!*

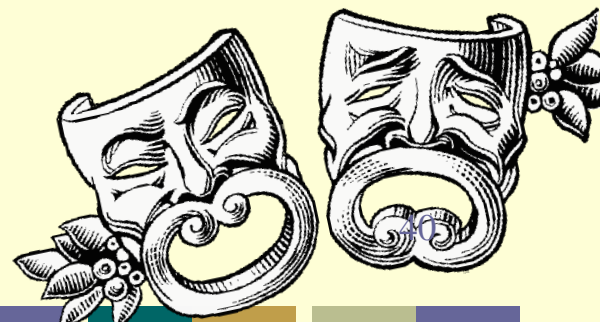


Really?  
He/she said what?  
Unbelievable!  
Amazing!

*(Help! HELP!  
I am totally lost!)*

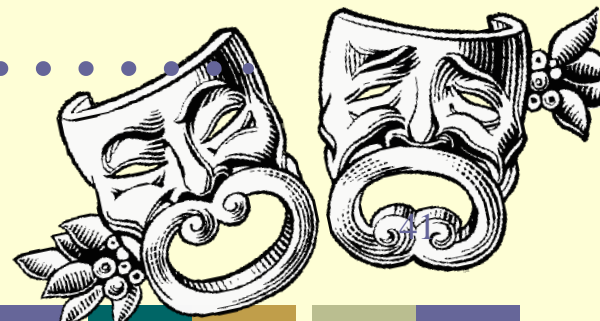


I CANNOT TAKE THIS ANYMORE!





Let's drop these masks.....





**And say.....**

*Would you mind speaking up?*

*I have hearing loss.*

*Thank you so much.*

*Now, let's have a great chat!*

**Let's Reclaim Our Lives.  
Ban the Bluff!**



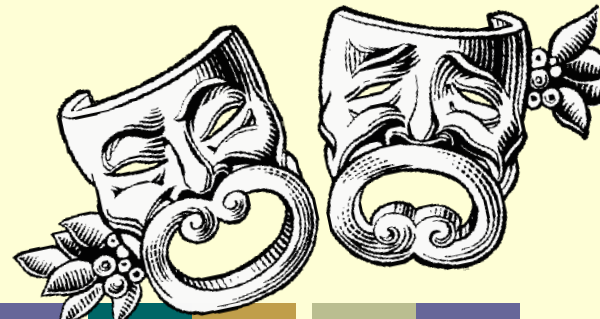
# No-Bluff Pledge

In my life, I will not bluff!  
I will not pretend to understand  
When I do *not*!  
Instead I will do, all that it takes  
To engage,  
interact,  
and communicate.





**Download slides at  
[www.ihinfo.org/convention](http://www.ihinfo.org/convention)**



# The Masks of Hearing Loss

