

Lanie Kay: Welcome to One Interview One World. This is Lanie Kay and this is a show about interviewing people from all walks of life. Because everyone has a story to share and we can all learn from each other. I hope you enjoy listening.

Lanie Kay: Today, I'm with Rama and Jeanne and they both live a life where they have hearing impairment. One of them, Rama, has recently, this year, got a cochlear implant. So, we are going to learn about their lives, and I am going to ask some questions, but as we go along, they are going to share about themselves. Thank you, ladies, for being here. I really appreciate it.

Jeanne: Just so you know, we both have severe hearing loss, but our comfort level with that is at different ends of the spectrum. She would probably have a 180 take on stuff that I...

Lanie Kay: Your perspectives.

Jeanne: Yeah

Lanie Kay: Your perspectives are different.

Jeanne: So as far as hearing loss and dealing with the world at large, we are on the same page. Because that is universal. She opted to get a cochlear implant and it is very new for her. She just got it this year. She is still making adjustments to learn how to understand speech through it. I don't know how much you know about cochlear implants.

Lanie Kay: I don't.

Jeanne: Okay. When you wear a hearing aid, it amplifies sounds, all sounds. When you have a cochlear implant, that is not what it does. It bypasses, and they insert wires into your brain and so when you get a cochlear implant, you have to learn to hear all over again. Your brain has to be retrained and there is an extensive rehab time period. She is hearing a lot more environmental sounds than she has ever heard with a hearing aid, but speech is still challenging for her because she is learning to process speech through a new brain membrane. Does that make sense?

Lanie Kay: Yeah.

Jeannie: Okay.

Lanie Kay: So, it is different.

Rama: It is different.

Lanie Kay: The sound, it is not how I would hear it. It is like an electronic kind of maybe...

Jeanne: Robotic. We call it Robotic.

Rama: Actually, the funny thing is though, what I hear with the cochlear, I don't know if you know this, Jeanne, Jeanne? With the cochlear, it's actually, you don't have all that static. You don't have this...

Jeanne: Feedback.

Rama: You don't have feedback. I could lay on this. I can do everything I want with it and I don't have a problem with that. People are telling me that once you understand speech, it is much clearer than it would be with a hearing aid. I totally understand that. It's a process. It's a process of learning to hear, but also it is an emotional thing too. Because I had hearing, then I started losing hearing and then you have the hearing aid and then you have the cochlear implant and you have to relearn all these things.

Rama: A cochlear implant bypasses the damaged areas in the brain and goes directly to the auditory nerve. Words can then become clear. The brain, however, is a bit confused in the beginning. It's never heard using this kind of technology before and it has to learn how to use it. For example: If you got a knee transplant, you wouldn't be running a marathon right out of surgery. Your brain has to figure out how to use that new knee.

Rama: Thank God, thank God they have... all these websites or Facebook pages.

Lanie Kay: Like a community online.

Rama: Yes. Thank God they have those. Because sometimes I will go on and say, "You know I'm getting a little discouraged." Hundreds of people will say, "Well, you know what? This is

what happens... It will get better..." Where I will say, "When is the speech going to come?" and they will say, "Just keep working that ear." They give you support. They give you the moral support. Some of these people are doing really well.

Fortunately, I go horseback riding every year for a week. This particular year in June, there are two people, a brother and a sister, Julie Husting. Boy, if you want to interview somebody, she is the gal. She and her brother both wear two cochlear implants. Julie, you would never ever know that she had a hearing problem. She is like what I call a 'Normie'. She just is like it's a normal hearing person.

Lanie Kay: Most of her life, she couldn't hear, but now that she got it, she can...

Rama: I think she could hear. I think she could hear fairly well until maybe 10/15 years ago. Her brother, they are different stories. He has deaf speech and he doesn't do nearly as well. I think that there is a timing thing when you lose your hearing, if you are able to pick up speech well or not. I think, I am not sure. It seems like it to me, but I know that they are different.

Lanie Kay: Okay. I would love to know, I know you both said that you are not bothered by titles. So, hearing impaired is that a common terminology that it is okay to say, or deaf community is okay to say, or hearing loss? Is there any other terminology that would explain it?

Jeanne: Hearing challenged

Lanie Kay: Okay, hearing challenged.

Jeanne: I think it is more politically correct in today's arena.

Lanie Kay: Hearing challenged, Okay.

Jeanne: Yeah.

Lanie Kay: I personally have not had to deal with anybody who... well actually, a senior. Seniors who are hard of hearing, but not anybody really young or living their life that way the whole time. So, it is a learning experience. What I hope from this is that we help the world at

large to understand your perspective and to be more understanding and how to interact better. That is my goal. Did you hear that or get that? Okay.

For me, even during this interview, I have to work on speaking slower. I have to work on where they can see my lips. Just now Rama moved because, Rama, if I'm not, yeah, they have to look at me. It helps them to see what I am saying.

Jeanne: Because we read lips.

Lanie Kay: Yeah. But you both actually speak well. You speak very well. So, some people who have this challenge, they probably have a hard time even speaking, huh?

Jeanne: The thing about deafness is there is no one shoe fits all. Deafness is so variable. At the age at which you acquire it, the severity of it, so far as being able to hear the external environment. The external noises that are coming in, and if they are drowning out voices. Things come into play like, is there carpeting or is it linoleum? Sound reverberates and bounces off of walls. So, if you have draperies, it softens that reverberation. So that's why people always say, they know you are hearing impaired, but they go, "How come you heard me say that?" At other times, you don't hear them at all. It is such a variable world that each moment it might be hearing, and it might not be.

Lanie Kay: That makes sense. Is it harder for you to hear when you are out in a louder environment or there is lots of voices happening?

Rama: Oh, yeah.

Jeanne: Absolutely. But for you too.

Lanie Kay: Yes, that's true.

Jeanne: I mean, particularly challenging is a restaurant with the silverware clanging and a lot of noisy people. Especially restaurants that don't have carpeting and don't have drapes. Oh! I have got to tell you, I went into the Black Angus this week. They have completely remodeled. I love the Black Angus because I am hearing impaired. They had high material booths and they had

carpeting and it was very quiet. A hearing challenged person could go there and have a nice meal and be able to hear and have a conversation. It's like every other place now, there is no carpeting.

Rama: Are you kidding?

Jeanne: They took out all of the walls. It's center flooring with a bunch of tables all in the middle. It is noisy. It was horrible.

Rama: Tom and I went there a lot because it was enclosed.

Jeanne: Me too.

Lanie Kay: So, Rama and Jeanne, how did you realize that you couldn't hear? At what point in your life?

Rama: I come from a very severely hearing-impaired family. My mother's mother and her grandmother, they lived in a time when they didn't have hearing aids. When my mom and dad got together, my dad he could hear okay, but my mom was hearing impaired. So, when I was born, I am assuming that they knew that I had a big chance of having hearing impairment. So, they were watching me.

When I went to kindergarten, they told my mom and dad that I am hearing impaired. I don't know how old you are, but I had to have one of these big old, like a ball thing sticking in my ear with a big cord and I had to wear this harness and put this big box right here. The only thing I could hear, like if I put it underneath my clothes was my clothes. So, what I would do, because I hated it, I would only wear the plug and the wire and didn't wear anything else and didn't tell anybody. So, I couldn't hear anyway. So, I'm plugging up another ear.

Lanie Kay: Aww that's so hard. So, you were in regular school. You weren't in where there were children having hearing impairment.

Rama: No.

Lanie Kay: So, they wouldn't even pick up on that. That's tough. I mean, they picked up that you couldn't hear, but then when they gave you something, they didn't pick up that you weren't utilizing it.

Rama: Right.

Lanie Kay: What about you?

Jeanne: Mine was not hereditary like Rama's. I was 8 years old when my parents used to take my family camping up to Lee Vining by Bishop every year. I was bitten by a tick. I did not tell my parents and it had stayed embedded in me, so I got very violently sick. I got tick fever. I was so sick that they had to cancel the camping trip and take me home, which was an 8-hour drive. I had a very high fever. Any high fever in a child can lead to deafness, blindness. We got home, and I got better, but a result of the illness, the high fever, was hearing loss.

Lanie Kay: How long did you know that you had hearing loss? Was it like quickly after that?

Jeanne: Yeah, they noticed it right away.

Lanie Kay: Okay. Both ears?

Jeanne: Because my hearing loss is severely profound. For some reason, I was not fitted with hearing aids when I was a child. I did go to a special class in main stream public school. I went to a special lip-reading class. I was pulled out of my regular class and I spent an hour with this lip-reading lady. I grew up with a stigma towards the hearing loss because I was embarrassed that I was being pulled out and going into, it was called special education class and so I felt different from all the other kids.

I just didn't have a healthy self-esteem about it. So, I grew up hiding my hearing loss and doing what we call bluffing. Bluffing is when we pretend that we hear stuff and we don't really. We laugh inappropriately in conversations because we don't know what is going on. It wasn't until I was... I got my first hearing aids at 20, but I tried to hide them. I used to wear my hair long and I would never put it up and show my hearing aids. When I got to about 35, I went to my first Hearing Loss of America which was at that time Self-help for Hard of Hearing. I met a lot of

other people that had hearing loss and found out that there were strategies to deal with it. That there were documented instructions on how to cope. That there were hearing dogs and all this technology that was available to me. There were FM systems. There were loops. There were... What's the other one? Anyways...

Lanie Kay: Yeah. You lived a life without them.

Jeanne: That first thing I did was get myself a hearing dog. Because I was working, and I thought that having the hearing dog would be beneficial to help people remember that I had a hearing loss. Because I speak so well, people forget all the time and they turn their backs to me, or they cover their mouth with their hands, and they don't engage in etiquette for communicating with hearing impaired. So, I thought maybe I should get a hearing dog. That will help people remember. It did not work. The dog became a work place mascot. Everybody wanted to talk to the dog and be friends with the dog and they just...

Lanie Kay: And their heads are down talking to the dog, huh?

Jeanne: My first one was a Brittany Spaniel. It didn't work, but I still really enjoy having a hearing dog. Because I live alone, it gives me a sense of security that there is someone that can hear in the home.

Lanie Kay: Absolutely.

Rama: She alerts you. What are the signals? Tell her all the different signals that she does as your dog.

Jeanne: Standard fare for hearing dogs are trained to alert for smoke alarms, telephone, alarm clock, doorbell, door knock and timer and then whatever else you want to add on to that. Name call, key drop, baby cry.

Lanie Kay: That's nice that they have that. Did you ever, Rama? No, you didn't.

Rama: No. I have a husband. So, I don't feel the need right now. I may eventually get a dog, but I don't really feel that I need one. At the time that Jeanne got Heather, I went up to CCI, Canine

Companion for Independence with Jeanne. I kind of went through the whole program with her, but she was the candidate, not me. I was just there as a team person to help her. Actually, I could get a hearing dog. At that particular time. I already had 3 dogs and I didn't think it was really fair to those dogs that I had to bring another dog in, and I am taking the dog out with me and they are not going out with me. Eventually, I probably will.

Lanie Kay: Your hearing impairment was caused from genetics, correct?

Rama: Yeah.

Lanie Kay: And then yours is from the tick. What are some of the causes for deafness? I mean, you touched on some. Genetics, sickness, a fever.

Jeanne: There are three types of hearing loss. Two are reparable and one is not. There is...

Rama: Conductive.

Jeanne: Yeah. I should have done my research before this interview.

Lanie Kay: That's alright.

Jeanne: There is the bone conductive, which is reparable. What is the other one? You can go online, Rama.

Lanie Kay: That's fine.

Rama: Sensorineural loss.

Jeanne: But the neurosensorial loss which is what we have is not reparable. So, the only thing that you can do with that is get hearing aids and amplifying existing sounds or go the cochlear implant route. 90 percent of deaf babies are born to hearing parents.

Lanie Kay: Oh, wow. That is a big statistic. 90 percent to hearing parents.

Jeanne: Yes. So, there are a lot of deaf children today. If you are born deaf, it is best to get a cochlear implant when you are very young. They fair the best. Like I said, there are all different spectrums of deafness. There is born deaf, there is getting a hearing loss while you are growing up and then there is a class called late deafened adults. People that were hearing their whole lives and then something happens, and they suddenly lose their hearing. A noise induced hearing loss. To be around a lot of loud noises. There is a tremendous influx of Vietnam vets coming home with a severe hearing loss.

Lanie Kay: Yeah. Because of the repercussion, the sound. Okay. When you were in school then, did you feel like they had good accommodations to help you while you were going through school at the time?

Rama: I sat up front and the teacher was always aware, and they always made sure that I was able to see them. I had a lot more hearing then than I do now. I've lost more hearing throughout my years. So, at that particular time, I didn't think I was doing that bad. I made really good grades. I was doing fine. So, I really didn't feel that it was a real problem until I became, like in seventh or eighth grade. Then I made myself wear the hearing aids. I wore the hearing aids from seventh grade on. Before, I would just play around with them, and stick it away, but at that particular time I needed it. I don't know how bad my hearing was at that particular time, but the school and my mother and father both made sure that they... They communicated with the teachers and let them know that they needed to accommodate me.

Lanie Kay: Did either one of you learn sign language when you were growing up?

Rama: No. There was nobody to talk to with sign. I went to a regular school.

Jeanne: Sign language is only good if you are with other people that sign.

Lanie Kay: Right and you were not really.

Jeanne: My family was not interested in learning to sign. Back to the accommodations. I think that today, because of the Americans With Disabilities Act, that there is a lot more awareness and there is a lot more knowledge out there, in how to accommodate people with many different

disabilities. When I was going to school, I believe that they just didn't know what to do for me. A lot of the technology that's there today, wasn't there.

The FM systems which is like a pocket receiver thing. The teacher wears a transmitter and you wear a receiver and it brings sound into your ears. Looped rooms for venues, for large groups where if you wear a hearing aid with a t-coil, you can switch that on and it sends the Speaker's voice directly into your ear. Like binoculars for the ears. Directly into your hearing aids. It's great. She has that feature with her CI it is called streaming. I think that when I was going to university, I had to advocate for myself and I had to tell them what it was that I needed. I even had to find that accommodation and bring it into the school and negotiate for an FM system.

Rama: We both did that the at the University of La Verne.

Jeanne: Yeah. Well, I wasn't going to name names but...

Lanie Kay: I think it's alright.

Jeanne: I mean, this is going public. I didn't want to embarrass anybody.

Lanie Kay: Well, the way that things happen is like a learning curve and like you say, the ADA, the American Disabilities Act helped tremendously, make it more a push for them to do things because they weren't doing things on their own.

Jeanne: The just don't know what to do. Most places just don't know what to do. It's the same thing. We are dealing with a tremendous problem with pet dogs being brought into businesses because they are buying vests off the Internet that say they are service dogs and they are not. The businesses just don't know how to deal with that problem. They don't know what the laws are. They don't know what they can and can't ask, and they don't know what they can and can't do. So, we are making an effort to educate the businesses on what's appropriate.

Lanie Kay: That affects you because your dog has the things that it needs to follow and do to help you and if people are bringing in dogs that really aren't service dogs then that...

Jeanne: It causes a problem because they bark, and they lunged at my dog. So, her safety is an issue. Also, I have gone into establishments like the large Costco warehouse and they say that the people that bring dogs in that are not service dogs, they're urinating and defecating on the floor. They are sniffing the food. Totally inappropriate behavior for a service dog in that type of environment.

Lanie Kay: What is it like, Rama, living a hearing-impaired life?

Rama: You feel very isolated at times. There have been times that I would not go to different functions because I couldn't hear, because I couldn't fit in. Since I've got the cochlear implant and I have a really good friend who, I told you about Julie Husting, who has a big Facebook page. We go horseback riding for a week in June. She and her brother with Tom and I. Because she has two cochlear implants and she acts like, what I would call a 'Normie', a normal hearing person. She is that good and she said, "Go to every single thing you can. Get yourself out there and do all these things."

She made me go to all the functions that they had at Honeywell, at the Horse ranch. We went square dancing. We went on the ladder. We did all these different things that I would not do. She said, "Do it." You know what, I lived. In fact, I went to a 50th high school reunion gathering. I had such a great time. Such a great time. I never would have done that before. So, I'm coming out of my shell and it has been pretty wonderful. It really has been. It's pretty wonderful.

Lanie Kay: Just to reiterate, because I don't think we have really touched on it, is that you got the cochlear implant and...

Rama: Five and a half months, no, six months ago.

Lanie Kay: Six months ago. So, your whole life, you lived without it and you were hard of hearing.

Rama: With hearing aids.

Lanie Kay: Yeah, with hearing aids. But even with hearing aids, you couldn't hear everything.

Rama: No. Even with the cochlear implant, I can't hear everything. I'm learning to hear. The speech is not completely clear yet. I'm told that it will be. I have the hearing aid on the other ear. That's doing the clarity for me. This is doing some really awesome, wonderful environmental sounds. I have a list of things that I write down, all these little wow moments that I'm experiencing. I write it down and I go back and look and say that's when this happened, that's when that happened. It's going to take a while. The Facebook page is really, really helpful for me because, like I would say, "I can't understand the complete speech. It's getting there, but not there." People on the page say, "Don't worry, it's coming. It will be a little bit longer, but you'll get there."

Lanie Kay: I take it whoever did the surgery, they have an office and they help you as well.

Rama: Kaiser

Lanie Kay: Kaiser? Okay.

Rama: Yeah, I go to Kaiser. They do mappings. What they do is, they put you in a soundproof booth, they measure your hearing. I'm going on the ninth on Friday, next Friday. I feel like I need to have more sound, I need to have more like, bass tones. So, I need to tell them what I'm hearing and what I like and what I do not like. So, they work with you. She is an audiologist. My surgeon is the one who performed the surgery. They work together. The implant is from Cochlear America and they will also sometimes have a representative go in there with us to plan, tweak it to where I'm hearing better. So, it's kind of a team effort.

Lanie Kay: They also help you with understanding what your hearing. Your speech, does it help with your speech too, or your speech was just what has evolved your whole life?

Rama: I think my speech has evolved my whole life. I'm not sure. To me, I sound okay. I know other people do notice that I have a hearing loss. Some people will know like immediately that I have a hearing loss, but I don't know.

Lanie Kay: Your speech sounds normal to me.

Rama: Does it?

Lanie Kay: Yeah. **To Jeanne:** Your speech sounds a little different. Like a different pattern. That's my interpretation.

Jeanne: I have been told the people that are trained in working with the deaf and hard of hearing will instantly know that I'm hearing impaired because of the way I pronounce things. Also, throughout my life, my family has helped me. I'm an avid reader, but I pronounce things like they are written and that isn't always correct. I have one daughter that if I say something wrong, she will tell me how to say it correctly and we practice on it a little bit until I get it right and then I forget.

Lanie Kay: But you do a little bit of sign language, it looks like you do? **To Rama:** But you do some sign language, because you came from a family that had hearing impairment, they signed?

To Jeanne: You sign too. Okay. A little bit.

Jeanne: I took a semester at JC.

Lanie Kay: Is it just like a habit that you do some?

Rama: Yeah, kind of a habit. I've taken classes also. I love the language, but I just sometimes use a little bit. I only know a tiny bit.

Lanie Kay: I think it's cool. Well, just on an aside from that, I've seen where there is research with babies, that it's a really cool now to do the sign language. Because they understand it and they can communicate before they can actually speak.

Jeanne: That would be so great if we raised our children using sign language. Because the deaf community is so excluded because no one knows how to communicate with them.

Lanie kay: Yeah, it would be a nice thing too. I think people would probably love learning that.

Jeanne: They do love it. They appreciate it if you learn their language. I used to have some deaf neighbors and when I was working, I had a deaf girl working with me and we used to

communicate and practice my sign language. She would make fun of me and show me how to do it right.

Lanie Kay: That's so cute.

Jeanne: But the thing about sign language, it is much easier to transmit than it is to receive. So, you can throw stuff out there, but to read what somebody is saying to you, I mean they go so fast.

Lanie Kay: It's a lot of brain power, huh?

Jeanne: It's like, slow down. I can't keep up with you.

Lanie Kay: Okay. That makes sense. Because when you see on TV, they will have the one sign language person doing their whole thing and it does seem very fast.

Jeanne: But they are very patient with us. They are very patient with us, and they appreciate us learning their language. It is a lot of fun. It is very expressive. It's like this is, "I don't know." This is, "Hell, I don't know!" You know, just with expression.

Lanie Kay: It makes sense what you're showing me and the mannerism from touching your forehead and bringing your arm down gently or really, really hard. When you are super "I'm not getting it!"

Jeanne: It's very expressive.

Lanie Kay: I get it. Even though I don't even know sign language. I get what you're trying to point out. Oh, so cool.

Jeanne: So, let me show you a thing with lip reading. Only 30 percent of what is seen on the lip is readable and you need to know the context in which it is being said. I'm going to give you an example. What did I say the first time?

Lanie Kay: One of them was I love you, and one of them was something I...

Jeanne: Olive juice.

Lanie Kay: Olive juice. Okay

Jeanne: Olive Juice and I love you look exactly the same on the lips. You need to know what the context of the conversation is in order to lip read and keep in the loop.

Lanie Kay: You can't even get all of it. You can't pick up all of it.

Jeanne: That's right.

Lanie Kay: Did you learn that Rama? Lip reading at all?

Rama: What you do is, when you are hearing impaired, you're always looking at their mouth and looking at their expressions. You are looking at their body language, you pick it up. You pick it up after a while. Sometimes I have seen conversations all the way across the room and you have to, I'm sure, that you think, okay, I can read that person's lips. Not all of it, not everything, but you can get the gist of it. I have seen things that I should not see. Like, "I'm pregnant, don't tell my..." You know, whatever. You strain, you look, you concentrate, and you don't even have to after a while, because that's how you communicate. We communicate by looking at you and reading your lips and your whole mannerisms.

Lanie Kay: Yeah. I was going to ask that question, like you're probably so in tuned to people's mannerisms or just general things that people do that have a meaning that we may not pick up on.

Jeanne: That being said, because it's so visual, having a hearing loss is very tiring. It's very tiring. When we have been around a large group gathering and we have been focusing and trying to hear so much, it can be exhausting. So, for me, it's time to go home and be by myself and not have to deal with speech.

Lanie Kay: I understand that. I mean, I don't understand it. I believe that. Because it made me think like if you speak a second language, but you don't know that language very well and then

you have to hear that all day long, it's the brain capacity to try and interpret it at all. You are trying to interpret so much stuff and using your brain power and it's tiring. That makes sense.

Jeanne: When I get tired I just kind of fade out. I just let it go on around me. I call it vegging out.

Rama: I agree.

Lanie Kay: Wow. So interesting. How did it affect your family and friends growing up and being hearing impaired?

Rama: All the neighborhood people knew that we were. My family talks very, very loud and when I would bring somebody home, a friend or whatever. I remember my brother's girlfriend came over one time and she said, "Why is everybody so...? Are they all mad at each other?" He said, "No, that's how they speak. We are hearing impaired." It was really disheartening for her. Anyway, but we did. The whole family talked very loudly and it was very comfortable for us, but when outsiders would come in, they would be shocked at how we talked to each other.

Lanie Kay: Do you feel like you are speaking lower now since you got the cochlear implant? Yes. Jeanne says yes.

Rama: Well, I notice that Tom is speaking so loud, and I keep saying, "down."

Lanie Kay: Your hubby? Okay. Because he was used to having to raise his voice all the time, so you could hear him.

Rama: His father was severely hearing impaired. So, he grew up around that and his uncles. That was good for me because Tom would talk loud and he would... But now it's very difficult for him to change and I keep saying, "shush." He will lower his voice and then it goes way back up again.

Lanie Kay: I can understand that because my mom has hearing loss and she doesn't have hearing aids because she just won't wear them, and she doesn't know how to, doesn't want to deal with that. So, she wants everybody to talk loud to her and most people don't. I noticed that,

because I tell everybody like at the doctor, "She can't hear." They will say one sentence to her loud and then they will go right back down to speaking at their normal level. She is attuned to my frequency. So, I have to repeat things and I have to say it loud and I do feel like I'm loud and I'm like kind of annoying to the office while we are trying to communicate so she can hear. So, I can kind of understand the perspective a little bit. What about for you with family and friends when you were growing up? How was it?

Jeanne: Like I said, I was ashamed of my hearing loss and I hid it.

Rama: The one thing is, I think that we are a lot more proactive now, I am. I'm very proactive. I go up to a sales clerk and I will say I need to see what you are saying and then I will have my conversation or I'm deaf, can you point me in the direction? Can you kind of show me, you know, but I need to see what you're saying. I'm very proactive now for me.

Lanie Kay: But you weren't when you were young.

Rama: Oh, no, no no.

Lanie Kay: You were embarrassed or not comfortable.

Rama: Yeah, but now we are able to let people know. I'm not ashamed. I'm hearing impaired. I'm helping you help me and hopefully I can help you if you need me.

Lanie Kay: What were you going to say, Jeanne?

Jeanne: The other thing that I wanted to say was that, parents, if you have children that are born with a hearing loss, talk about it with them and have them embrace it as a part of who they are. Give them a healthy self-esteem with that. Learn everything that you can learn on how to accommodate them and how to help them. Because it's something they are going to live with for the rest of their life. Having a healthy outlook with that is going to help them tremendously to be advocates for themselves and to learn how to communicate in a hearing world.

Lanie Kay: That's beautiful. I was going to ask that question. Do you have anything to add to that? What would you recommend to parents who have a child that is hearing impaired?

Rama: I would tell them, number one, make sure that they get all the help that they can get. Get the hearing aids, get the cochlear implant. Make sure that you are paying attention to them, you are listening to them, that you help them talk. Make sure that they are in a classroom where they are up close enough and that the teachers are told that they are having a hearing problem. I have gone into classes and people did not know and I was ashamed also. I didn't tell people. Now, when I go to any place, I'll say I'm hearing impaired. I think that would be really healthy for anyone, child or not child, to be able to say I'm having a problem. You can't see it, but I can't hear. Tell me if you are trying to get a hold of me and I'm not paying attention. I'm trying to pay attention and I can't hear.

Lanie Kay: Out in the world environment, what do you think would help for people who don't know you are hearing impaired or just even businesses and things like that. What things would you recommend that would help the hearing-impaired community better? Or even maybe educating their employees to be more aware.

Rama: The unfortunate thing about hearing loss is that you can't see it. You can see a broken arm, you can see somebody with crutches, you can see other disabilities. You cannot see that with hearing. So, people may be very well meaning, but they have no idea because we look normal. We look like normal people that are acting weird or maybe acting inappropriate to understanding what is being said and what's going on.

Jeanne: Or ignoring them. Because we can't hear them, but they don't know that we can't hear that. They think we are ignoring them.

Rama: They think we are rude.

Jeanne: We need to speak up. We, with the hearing loss need to speak up. We need to tell people what they need to do for us. You need to look at me when you speak to me. You need to speak slowly and clearly. Please don't chew gum while you are talking to me and don't put your hands in front of your mouth. Have a little light. I can't see your face in the darkness. We need to advocate for ourselves. We need to learn everything that we can do to help ourselves, so that we can share that with whoever we are communicating with.

Lanie Kay: Letting them know is number one. What other things do you think would help you guys in the environment when you are going about in the world?

Jeanne: Hearing loss for America has a group that actually goes around to businesses and teaches them about the loop system. The loop system is a system, it's just a wire cord that goes around the perimeter of the room and if the hearing person sits inside that electromagnetic field, the hearing aids pick up the sounds. It's like binoculars for the ears. We can hear the speakers better on the mics in them. There are groups that are going around and educating businesses and they are getting the entire facilities looped. There are two kinds of loop. It can be built into the wall or it can be a temporary drop.

Lanie Kay: That's very cool. Can you think of other things that would help?

Jeanne: Most of our movie theaters now have captioning or they have infrared. Some of them have FM systems. It's not so common though. Most of it is captioning now, so that we can go to the movies and we can watch a movie and see the speech in text script.

Rama: If they have it charged up because there is so many times, we call the theater and say we are going to come. We are going to watch this particular movie. We have to call ahead of time. Then we get down there and they didn't plug it in. So, I have to go home.

Jeanne: I have never had a problem at the theaters that I have been to.

Lanie kay: What is it?

Rama: It's kind of like a little gooseneck. You know how you sit in your seat and you have a place for a cup holder?

Lanie Kay: Yeah.

Rama: They give you like a little gooseneck thing that has a little screen on it. So, you put that in and then you say, okay, here's the movie. You put the captioning right underneath it, so you could read it and see the movie at the same time.

Lanie Kay: Oh, wow.

Jeanne: It's a portable captioner.

Lanie Kay: It's like subtitles that are going.

Jeanne: It's the subtitles, yeah. You check it out with your driver's license at the front desk and you turn it in when you are done with the movie. They program it to whatever movie that we are going to see.

Lanie Kay: Does it work well?

Jeanne: Yeah. It works great.

Rama: Yeah, it works wonderful.

Lanie Kay: That's cool.

Jeanne: They also have glasses that you can wear that have the captioning on it and you just have to put your head in the right place to see the caps.

Lanie Kay: You don't like it, Rama?

Jeanne: You have to watch the movie like this.

Rama: I don't like that one. I like the cup holder one.

Jeanne: I'm okay with either one. I mean, it's only about an hour and a half hour for a movie.

Lanie Kay: What about when you are at home? So, when you are at home and you want to watch TV, I guess you can just have the subtitle's going.

Rama: Right.

Jeanne: Right.

Lanie Kay: What about the doorbell? Do you have like lights or things like that?

Jeanne: There are devices that will do flashing lights for you or you can be like me and have a hearing dog. There is either technology or there is hearing dogs. But yes, there are things out there for us.

Rama: I have a husband.

Lanie Kay: So, your husband. What about for the phone though? Before, you couldn't do the phone.

Jeanne: They have flashers.

Lanie Kay: Is it like a reading device then, maybe for the phone?

Jeanne: Oh, yes, we have caption phones.

Lanie Kay: Okay. Captioned. Okay, that's what it's called, caption phones. Do you, Rama?

Rama: I have one, but it has been so garbled.

Lanie Kay: Not that good, huh?

Rama: No, it hasn't been that good. So, I just kind of quit using it because it was so garbled. I don't use the phone unless I absolutely have to. I love texting. People who know me would text me.

Lanie Kay: Okay. Same for you?

Jeanne: I use the phone all the time at home on my landline with caption call telephone. I never had garbles, but what I do experience is, the speaker is not clear and the captioner will put "speech is inaudible." So, I tell them, you need to put the phone by the mouth. Put your mouth by the mouthpiece and speak clearly because my captioner is not getting it. They also have a downloadable app for cell phones.

Lanie Kay: Oh, that's nice.

Jeanne: I don't like to use the cell phone because I can't understand speech on it, but if I must make an emergency phone call on it, I will use that and if the captioning is very good.

Rama: What, program is that?

Jeanne: Yes.

Rama: You need to help me load it online.

Jeanne: You have an apple phone and it already has the captioning built in. You don't have to download anything.

Lanie Kay: Well, in the school environment, what would you recommend that would help a child that is hearing impaired in the school environment now?

Rama: Make sure that they sit up a really close to the teacher. The teacher has to be aware not to be walking around. They need to be right in front of that child to be able to let them know that they can see what they are saying. That's very important.

Jeanne: I think most schools today are closely working parents. Because like I said earlier, hearing loss is so variable and so unique for each person. So, the accommodations that are required will be individualized to that child.

Lanie Kay: What would you say like, regular day to day things that are hard for you, Rama?

Rama: I don't like talking on the phone, but I do have my cell phone, and it has the captioning, not the captioning, but I have text messaging. My life is pretty rich. The fact that I have a husband and he's very, very good to me, makes it very easy for us. I think for me, it's kind of like with what Julie said to me, get out, do things. I did not for a long time. I don't do a whole lot of things that I would maybe have done if I was hearing. But I am venturing out.

Last Friday, was it yesterday or the day before? Thursday, I went out with a group of girls and we went to a big restaurant. I couldn't hear anything except for there was an older woman that

was sitting across from me that understood hearing loss and she talked to me a lot. But as far as like, I was there and could not hear anybody else at the table. That was kind of okay. It's like, okay, I did it. I went, I enjoyed it. I could hear people in the car talking, which was, okay. So, I'm, venturing out. I'm not in a little tiny bubble that I used to be in.

Lanie Kay: That was because you felt like if you were out by yourself you would miss so much or that you didn't feel safe? Is it because you can't hear that you kind of felt...? Was it uncomfortable or partly safety too?

Rama: It's uncomfortable and yes, it is a safety issue.

Lanie Kay: Yeah. Even if you are out walking your dog. For me, I'm listening for a car and you can't hear the car.

Jeanne: I walk my dog at the park a lot, and a bicyclist comes up behind me and they don't know that I'm deaf. They say whatever they say, move over, on your right or whatever they say. I don't know that they are coming until they are whizzing right past me and my dog might be a little bit ahead of me and I don't know to keep her in safety's path. Now, that's very difficult.

Lanie Kay: Absolutely.

Rama: You know, Jeanne, you may want to put a vest on you that says deaf.

Lanie Kay: It's not a bad idea because it's so true. I would not think like that. So, they are not thinking like that at all.

Rama: They think that people can hear.

Lanie Kay: Did you feel like you were isolated too? Were you afraid to go out places, Jeanne?

Jeanne: I'm not afraid to go out places, but I am isolated in group activities because I don't know what's going on. I miss all the jokes.

Lanie Kay: That's hard.

Jeanne: Yeah. A table with conversations, it's either me and the person right next to me and maybe I will get some of what they are saying or maybe they have to yell and maybe it's just too difficult. So, it's very challenging.

Lanie Kay: That's hard. I wonder, when you are one on one, how much of the conversation do you feel like you understand, Jeanne?

Jeanne: Everything. Because if I don't get it, I will ask you to repeat it.

Lanie Kay: Okay, and what about you?

Rama: Same thing here.

Lanie Kay: Same. But it's more now that you've got the implant, do you feel like you're picking up on more?

Rama: I am thinking of more, but the speech is not as clear. The speech is not as clear as I can hear with my hearing aids. When I had the hearing aid in this ear, which is my implant ear, I heard speech better. But on a different level, I'm hearing so much more environmental sounds normal, I guess everyday sounds I'm hearing. It's just the speech that is not quite there.

Lanie Kay: But everybody says that will come in time.

Rama: That's what they say.

Lanie Kay: What is the time frame? What do they say? It varies, huh?

Rama: Yeah. Some people will get it like, they are implanted and two weeks later they can hear everything. Some people, maybe three months. It will be six months on the 8th for me. So, it was kind of a long time in a way, but they are saying that it that it should be okay. So, we will see.

Lanie Kay: Are you happy that you got the implant?

Rama: I have good days and bad days. Some days, I think, oh my god, what did I do? Why did I do this? Then other times I'm thinking like, I will hear something that is like, okay. I went into a CVS store and did you know that they have music in those stores?

Lanie Kay: I do.

Rama: The thing is that I have never heard music in a store. I heard it and I thought, oh my god, am I hearing music? So, I went up to the clerk, I said, "Am I hearing music?" She looked at me like I was coming from Mars and she goes, "Yeah". I said, "Do they always have music in this store?" She said, "Yeah." Again, looking at me like I was from Mars. At that particular point I realized that I was hearing something that I haven't heard before and I broke down into what I call the blubbering moment. I broke down and cried. She said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I can hear the music."

Lanie Kay: That's beautiful. So, you are having a lot of wow moments like that.

Rama: Oh, Yeah.

Jeanne: When I got my first pair of hearing aids, you don't know what you are missing until you get hearing aids. For the first time in my life I heard water running in the sink. I heard paper rustling. You spend some amount of time when you first get your technology, whatever it is that helps you to hear, learning what sounds are. When I first got my hearing aids, I would hear things and I couldn't identify it because I had never heard it before. So, it was always, "What's that? What's that sound? What's that sound?" I know she has been going through that with Tom since she got her cochlear implants. I went through it when I got my hearing aids too.

Rama: It's kind of exciting.

Lanie Kay: Absolutely. It's magnificent and I'm glad. Okay. Tell me a little bit about the surgery. It's implanted?

Rama: Yeah. There is like a magnet up here that this...

Lanie Kay: Wow. So, kind of underneath your skin or is it in the bone too?

Rama: I'm not it's not exactly sure, you would have to look up the cochlear implant, what they do. But they have this magnet here and then they have the... I don't know how it works actually, except for I know that it does work. It doesn't make any sense to me because I'm not technical. It works like a hearing aid in a lot of ways, but it is a better sounding hearing aid. With this one, it has feedback and the cochlear is clear and it doesn't have all the external sound. Not the external sound, not even the environmental sounds, it is...

Lanie Kay: No feedback, I guess.

Rama: What is it? Like it would be...

Lanie Kay: Is it like an electrical impulse? It is a different way of...

Jeanne: They run wires. Her surgery was outpatient. She was in and out the same day. You go home, and you have a wrap on for three days.

Rama: About a couple of days. But it was a piece of cake.

Lanie Kay: Not Painful.

Rama: No. I really, really had no trouble. I went in. I went out. I came home. I was fine. I really didn't have any problems with it.

Jeanne: She had to wait like six weeks before you got your cochlear. For the surgery side to heal.

Rama: I had the surgery on April 11th and I was activated, meaning that the device was turned on, May 8th.

Lanie Kay: Okay. Very cool. Then there is the community, a Facebook community that helps you understand what you are going through too and gives you motivation and feedback because they have gone through it.

Rama: Yes, they have. They are wonderful. You can ask any questions no matter how dumb or how technical it is. Somebody knows the answer. Somebody can help you and if you are just down one day and say, "I just wish I hadn't done this or whatever," they encourage you.

Jeanne: There are three cochlear implant manufacturers and they all have monthly meetings in local areas for people that considering cochlear or that had recently been implanted. They have the old timers in there that are in there for support. She has a live meeting that she was attending very regularly before she got implanted. Then she likes the online, you know, Facebook stuff. So, she engages in that a lot. They have one called Cochlear Implant Experiences. But they also have them by the brand name of the cochlear that you have, which is their group exclusively.

Rama: Advanced Bionics

Lanie Kay: When you sleep at night, does it bother you?

Rama: Most people do not wear their implants to bed. I do.

Lanie Kay: Oh, you do?

Rama: Yeah, I do.

Lanie Kay: Are you talking about this piece over your ear?

Rama: Yeah. I don't take that off.

Lanie Kay: You just sleep with it.

Rama: I do because I hate the silence. I hate the silence. I hate it. I only take it off to go to bed for a while, but I either put it back on or I don't take it off. The only time I really take it off completely is when I am in the shower. I get in, I get out, I don't mess around in the shower. I blow dry my hair and put it back on. I don't like the silence. Some people enjoy it. Some people enjoy the silence.

Jeanne: Yeah. On the other hand, I'm very comfortable with my deafness. I don't wear my hearing aids to bed. I get up in the morning and I don't put them on for a couple of hours until

I'm ready to. I have breakfast and feed the animals and get dressed and do my hair and makeup and all that without hearing aids. Hairspray is very detrimental to hearing aids. So, I never put mine on until I am actually already to face the world. But I'm comfortable with my deafness.

Lanie Kay: Isn't that interesting? Yes, everybody is different. Before you had the implant, did you sleep with hearing aids in?

Rama: When I had hearing aids, I still had hearing. I had hearing, but it wasn't very good. But I could take my hearing aids off and I could still hear environmental sounds. So, I felt comfortable. I felt like if Tom moved around, I could hear different sounds in the house without the hearing aids. Then it came to a time where I wore the hearing aids sometimes to bed, but not all the time. When you get the cochlear implant, you lose all the hearing. All the residual hearing that you have, I lost it all. That freaked me out. Really did a number on my psyche.

Lanie Kay: Is that common? That's like part of the procedure?

Rama: I am assuming that it is. I think some people have been able to retain their hearing. I was not. That did freak me out.

Lanie Kay: That's scary.

Rama: It is. It's very scary. Very scary to know that I'm not able to hear. I can hear out of this ear, but it has gone down too, recently. I think since I got my cochlear, I think it has gone down somewhat. I just feel more comfortable having it on. I don't like the silence.

Lanie kay: I wonder if it's because your brain is working so hard to adapt to all the new sounds and understanding that. The ear that can hear is like, well, I don't... Your brain can only do so much. That's so interesting. Amazing. Wow.

Let's see, you guys had been part of a deaf community or organization from a young child or was it more as an adult that you became involved?

Rama: Actually, we haven't really been with the deaf community. The deaf community is kind of separate and it's not because of...

Lanie Kay: Does that mean you can't hear it all? If you say you are deaf, there is no hearing?

Rama: I don't know. There is a deaf community that has been kind of off by themselves. It's kind of like if you are hearing and you can hear with hearing aids, they don't really accept you. It's kind of like they have their own group.

Jeanne: Actually, they are coexisting now.

Rama: They are coexisting now?

Jeanne: Yeah. At one time they were pretty exclusive, but not today.

Rama: Really? Okay. That's an improvement because it was either you are deaf, or you are hearing impaired.

Lanie Kay: Have you been involved with a hearing-impaired group, like from the time you were young, did you get to interact with people who were dealing with what you were dealing with or no? More as adults.

Rama: My mom and dad belonged to a group called Hearing Loss of America. Was it Hearing Loss of America?

Jeanne: It was SHHH then, but it is HLAA today.

Rama: Okay. That's where I met Jeanne. Jeanne's daughter dragged her to this meeting and my parents dragged me to this meeting. It was the very first time for Jeanne and the very first time for me. I did not want to go, but I went because my parents wanted me to go. Her daughter dragged her because she wanted Jeanne to go to the hearing loss meeting. We were the youngest people at that particular time. So, her daughter said, "Oh, there is a gal that is about the same age as you. Why don't you guys get together and talk to each other?"

Then when we did, we found out that both of us were going to the university, the same university and we are going to the same class, not the same class, but we were going to the same university at nighttime getting our bachelor's degrees. So, that was a real common ground for us. Then we

started kind of getting together and going to some of these hearing loss meetings and we became friends. Kind of a weird thing. I mean, that particular day, if her daughter hadn't got her there and my parents hadn't got me there, we would have never met each other. Except for maybe at school, but we didn't have the same classes.

Lanie Kay: So, you felt like that group helped you guys, the association?

Jeanne: I didn't meet the hearing loss group until I was around 35. It was a tremendous help. I spoke about that earlier.

Rama: It helped my parents.

Jeanne: She has never really been involved with them.

Rama: No. I didn't really. They were a bunch of old people.

Jeanne: They have had a lot of young groups since.

Rama: Do they?

Jeanne: Oh, yes.

Lanie Kay: I think that's the one plus about the internet, it helps people connect. They are able to connect with people who are in dealing with the same things. So, that's nice. Very nice. What do you think society or governments could improve on to help with the hearing impaired?

Rama: I think they are really doing a pretty good job. I really do think that they are doing a very good job now. When I go to Kaiser and I tell them I'm sorry, I need to see what you're saying. They say, "Do you want an interpreter? Do you want somebody with you right now?" I said, "I can go by myself because my husband is with me." They will have somebody at the hospital or at Kaiser to go to my appointments with me if I wanted them to.

I think that the Americans with Disabilities Act has been really wonderful because going to different jobs, they can help you also. They can be like a liaison between the hearing-impaired person and maybe their supervisor if they needed to. So, there is an awful lot of access out there

that we didn't have a long time ago. If you want it. I feel like we are pretty forceful, not forceful, but we are pretty...

Lanie Kay: Independent?

Rama: Huh?

Lanie Kay: Independent?

Rama: We are independent. We can speak for ourselves and we can ask for what we need.

Jeanne: Assertive.

Lanie Kay: Assertive? Yes.

Rama: Assertive. Yes.

Lanie Kay: That's good. What about you? What do you think? Are there any other things that, I know you touched on the hearing in the rooms and things like that, but any other things that society could work on for the hearing impaired, our governments?

Jeanne: Yes. Caption all the stuff that aren't captioned that's on the internet. The podcast, the meditations, the online classes, everything that is offered. Have that caption available for those that need it. I am excluded from a lot of stuff on the internet because it's not captioned.

Lanie Kay: That is a really good point. Thank you. Those things you don't think about.

Jeanne: The rest of the world is doing fairly well.

Rama: They are. It is a lot better than it was.

Jeanne: It depends on what activities that you are engaging in too and I'm sure that my activities are curtailed because of my hearing loss. There are certain things that I won't do because I can't hear. There are a lot of people with hearing loss that won't let that stand in their way and they will forge a head and they will make it so that it's accessible for me when I get there.

Lanie Kay: That's so nice. Well, you are doing that. I mean, you are both doing that by talking about it and you are going to help people. So, I appreciate that. I guess at this point in time, would you recommend that somebody who is having hearing loss get the cochlear implant?

Rama: So individual. So individual. They would have to want to have it.

Jeanne: I'm a candidate. She has been trying to talk me into one since before she got one. She wanted me to go first.

Lanie Kay: What do you think? Still debating?

Jeanne: Well, it's a very individual decision. For me, as long as I can get by with hearing aids, that's my choice. The cochlear implant decision is irreversible. You can't get MRIs. They are not always successful. There is a tremendous oral rehab time period where you have to dedicate a lot of time. I'm not willing to do that at this point in my life. If I went completely deaf, I would get one in a heartbeat.

Lanie Kay: Okay. Now I see. It depends on the level. Everybody is individual.

Jeanne: And your level of comfort and your desire to hear external things.

Lanie Kay: Right and you are comfortable.

Jeanne: I'm okay. I'm functioning.

Lanie Kay: Is your hearing loss stable, then? It doesn't go down?

Jeanne: I lose a little bit every year. It is a part of the natural aging process to lose a little hearing. I hope that it lasts me for the rest of my life, you know, what I do have.

Lanie Kay: Yeah. What about when you are driving? Does it affect anything when you are driving or not really?

Jeanne: You have to be very visual. You have to know what's going on. You have to watch. You have to look for those flashing emergency sirens.

Lanie Kay: Okay. Yeah. Because you wouldn't know they are coming

Jeanne: I don't always know what is happening, but I'd follow my cue, what the traffic is doing in front of me.

Rama: Well, I think a lot of people have the radio on and they probably can't hear outside either, can they?

Lanie Kay: It does affect you hearing the sirens. Absolutely. But at some point, you hear them. As they are getting closer. Yeah. Wow. Things I don't even think about.

Jeanne: Yeah, we see them.

Lanie Kay: Yeah. So, you have to be very visual.

Rama: Also, if you see people pulling over. If you are watching, you can see that there is a pattern and if something is going on with that pattern, you are thinking something is happening here.

Jeanne: Yeah. The first thing is, why are they pulling up? What's going on? You look for it.

Rama: Right. Why are they slowing down? What's going on here?

Lanie Kay: Yeah, that makes sense. Can you think of anything else to share that you feel would be important for people to understand?

Rama: That people should be patient. They need to be patient with people and not say, pay attention or...

Jeanne: “Never mind.” The favorite one. “Never mind.” You are not worth me repeating that. “Never mind.”

Rama: It didn't matter anyway. Yeah.

Jeanne: I want to know what you said.

Rama: That is very offensive. Very offensive.

Lanie Kay: That's a good point. I do that to my mom.

Rama: Do you really? Oh, don't do that.

Jeanne: Everybody does it.

Lanie Kay: It's so hard.

Jeanne: Everybody does it. My family does it. Never mind. It is too much trouble.

Lanie Kay: It's hard. It's hard because they have to yell. Like with my mom, I have to yell at her, and she sometimes doesn't even hear if I yell.

Rama: Did you say that she does have hearing aid?

Lanie Kay: She doesn't.

Rama: You know what, have her go to Costco. I had the best hearing aids I ever had through Costco. Loved them.

Lanie Kay: Is it a cost issue or she has them?

Lanie Kay: Part of it is a cost issue. Yeah.

Rama: They are pretty inexpensive. They are like \$1500 for a pair, which is unheard of. It used to be like \$6000 for a pair. So, they are a heck of a lot cheaper now and she can wear them for six months. They will work with her and they were really the best hearing aids ever.

Lanie Kay: That's good to know. That's good to know for her, but for just everybody in general to know that.

Rama: I think probably with Costco now, there are so many companies that would just like... I wanted to get my hearing aids adjusted and I went to this hearing aid group. I walked in, I said I just need a hearing test and I would like you to check my hearing aids. But what they did was,

they stuck me in a booth, and took my hearing aids. I would love to name the name, but I will not do that. When I left out of the booth, they had a pair of brand-new hearing aids sitting right there. Stuck me in there, stuck them in my ears right away. They said these are \$6000. They wanted me to buy these. I said, "I came here for you to look at my hearing aids and check my hearing. I didn't come here to buy another set of hearing aids and especially not for \$6000." So, I got up and I was very, very upset. I contacted somebody who I knew that was kind of over them. I contacted him. I said this should not have happened and he would really let them know that they really screwed up.

Lanie Kay: Oh, that's too bad. But Costco is very accommodating. They did a great job.

Rama: Wonderful. Not only that, they don't make commission. So, they are not trying to sell you something that you don't need. They really are very good with hearing aids.

Lanie Kay: That's fantastic. That's good information. How often do they need to get adjusted?

Rama: For me, a good three, four, five months. You wear it all the time. At first, it's like you take it off and on, off and on. Then you leave them on a little bit longer and a little bit longer. It takes a while.

Lanie Kay: To get used to it.

Rama: It does take a while to get used to it.

Lanie Kay: Okay. I think that's part of it, because we have tried doing hearing aids and I think that's it. She doesn't have the patience for it.

Jeanne: When your mom starts wearing the hearing aid, tell her to break them in slowly. An hour a day, two hours a day, three hours a day, four hours a day until she is wearing them all day.

Lanie Kay: Okay, yeah.

Jeanne: That's the way to do it. You get bombarded because you are hearing a lot of stuff that you have never heard before. It can be very overwhelming.

Rama: And exhausting.

Jeanne: It depends on what kind of aid she has got. You don't want irritation to the ear from an ill-fitting ear mold or something.

Lanie Kay: Wow, that's good information.

Jeanne: When you get there just call me. I will help you out.

Lanie Kay: Okay. That's such good information. I appreciate that. Alright. Just so, I would love for you to go over if we didn't... I am going to read it. This is Hearing Loss Association of America - Tips for Hearing People. Communicating with people who are hard of hearing. When audio is poor, emphasize the visual. So, use your hands and be kind of, that's what they mean.

Rama: Yeah. Whatever you can do.

Lanie Kay: Practice special speaking skills. That means speaking slowly and facing them, so they can see you.

Rama: Like you said, something about the visual. I could say, "Would you like a glass of water? Would you? Do you know where your glasses are? How do I get out the door? Whatever."

Lanie Kay: Yeah, that makes sense. Face the audience directly. Spotlight your face in lighting that you are not in darkness, so it makes it easier for them to see. Avoid noisy backgrounds. A lot of things going on. Even myself in a restaurant, like what you were saying with the restaurant having no fabric now and the booths being short and so the sound goes everywhere and if the roof is low, I feel like when the roofs are low, the sound is very loud. The things that you are paying attention to, so you can go somewhere and hear and communicate with the people that you are with. Also, just from speaking with you, I'm learning that in a group environment, you can only really hear the person and speak with the person right next to you. It's hard to pick up everything and you are missing out on a lot of the conversation.

Rama: Yeah.

Jeanne: Absolutely.

Lanie Kay: People are just, myself, I didn't realize that.

Get their attention. So, make sure that you are ready to listen. Like touching them. Yeah. That makes sense. Ask how to facilitate the communication. How can we communicate better? Project your communication. It says don't shout. Okay.

Jeanne: Because shouting distorts sound. Higher volume is not necessarily good. We want clarity.

Lanie Kay: Okay. That makes sense. Speak clearly at a moderate pace. Don't hide your mouth, chew food, gum or smoke while talking. Rephrase if you do not understand, you are not understood, like rephrase that. Say different words. Use facial expressions and gestures. Give clues when changing subjects. All of this is really good information.

Rama: Very good. Where did you get that list?

Lanie Kay: This is from Jeanne.

Rama: That's from you, Jeanne?

Jeanne: It's from the Hearing Loss Association.

Rama: Okay.

Lanie Kay: Empathy. So, be patient if the response is slow. Stay positive and relaxed. Talk to the hard of hearing person, not at them. Offer respect to help build confidence. Beautiful.

I like to ask a question to people that I interview. I will ask each of you separately. So, Rama, what do you think humanity needs to work on to make the world a better place?

Rama: You mean all of humanity? Be nice and kind to each other. Be understanding. Be patient with everybody because everybody has, I mean, hopefully everybody wants to get along and be included.

Lanie Kay: I like that. What do you think, Jeanne?

Jeanne: Yeah, we want to be included. What do I personally need to work on to improve?

Lanie Kay: Not you personally. Humanity as a whole. What do you think we need to work on to make the world a better place?

Jeanne: I pray for the earth every day. That the earth, the oceans and the air would be healed because we damaged her so much. I wish people would be more conscientious that without the earth, the ocean and the air, our life is not sustainable.

Lanie Kay: Alright. Well, I want to thank you both for taking the time to share about yourselves.