Learning Objectives

After this course learners will be able to:

- Describe the challenges hearing care professionals face when working with tweens and teens with hearing loss.
- Describe the benefits and limitations of thin tube and open fit hearing devices for tweens and teens.
- Identify candidacy considerations for open fit and thin tube hearing devices for tweens and teens.
Agenda

- The Development of the Teen Brain
- Tween and Teen Identity
- IDA Institute Transitions Management Project
- Hearing Care Professionals Survey and Tweens and Teens
- Tween and Teen Focus Group Project

Tweens and Teens
“A Period of Curative Madness”*
(English, 2012)

- Adolescence is a turbulent time, where the brain is going through significant changes.

- While their bodies are nearing adult development, their neurocognition is still growing.

- The frontal cortex, the area tasked with judgment, organizing, decision-making, and planning is at the center of this development.

*Ginott, 1969
Merrel (2007) described frontal cortex development and presented the following errors typically found in adolescence:

- **Binocular Vision** – viewing events/actions in a way that makes them seem bigger or smaller than they actually are. Example: Josh came in last place at his swim meet and now believes he is the worst person ever to compete in swimming.

- **Black and White Thinking** – taking a perspective of a scenario in extreme or opposing ways: good or bad, never or always. Example: Paula did not enjoy leaving class for math tutorials. She felt it would never help anyway.

- **Dark Glasses** – considering only the negative aspects of something or someone. Example: Tim’s tennis coach was impressed that his serve was improving and congratulated him on his efforts. He now instructed Tim to practice more on his backhand. Tim feels he will never be any good at tennis.

- **Fortune Telling**: Trying to predict the future without any facts or knowledge. Example: Emma found out that the boy in her class she liked had a girlfriend. She decided to give up on boys anymore since none of them were single.

- **Blame Game**: Rather than take responsibility for your actions, you blame others. Example: Craig missed the school field trip because he forgot to hand in his consent form. This was his parents fault as they did not remind him to turn it in on time.

_Teens are not fixed in this development stage forever. While we may want to attempt to correct these errors, it is more likely to result in defensive behaviours, rather than provide constructive feedback and guidance._
Changes in Self-Identity
(Stepp, 2000; English, 2012)

What Kind of Person am I?

- Teens begin to reflect on and criticize their self-concept and decide on whether they accept it or reject it.
- Hearing loss is a part of that self-concept, and having access to peers and role models who also have hearing loss is crucial for its integration into their identity.
- They may define themselves with one category, “I am hard of hearing” or multiple categories depending on the situation, “I am deaf when I am with my friends who use sign language, I have hearing loss when I am with friends and family with typical hearing.”

Hearing care professionals (audiologists and educators) can help by discussing self-concept/identity at early age.

Changes in Self-Identity
(Stepp, 2000; English, 2012)

How do I fit in with Friends?

- Friendships are crucial to tweens and teens.
- For those with hearing loss and wear hearing devices, this may seem like a huge barrier to social acceptance.
- Navigating social situations can be challenging and stressful, and damaging to self-esteem.
- Females seem to be more at risk for self-esteem difficulties than males, as their social circles are based upon verbal communication, where males are more connected to physical events, like sports (Jamieson, 2010).
Changes in Self-Identity
(Stepp, 2000; English, 2012)

What am I Learning In and Out of School?

- Codes of Conduct
- Authority
- Expectations
- Values
- Conflict and Resolution

How Can I Create Distance yet Remain Connected to Adults?
Creating a support system for teens that allow them to develop:

- Autonomy
- Relatedness
- Competency
- Self-Confidence
- Self-Awareness

Hearing Care Professionals have an important role in supporting transitions, allowing the responsibility for hearing care moves from parents to the tween or teen.
The Importance of Transitions for Teens

Successful transitions support a positive sense of identity and emotionally healthy, resilient young people and adults.

www.idainstitute.com

The Ida Transitions Management Framework
Transitions Management Tool
(Gregory, 2016)

An online framework on the Ida Institute website consisting of:

1. **Background information on transitions management:** Key issues and challenges for patients, families and professionals

2. **Tools for professionals, patients and their families about how to manage key transitions:**
   - 3-5 years of age (from family centered to child centered)
   - 10-11 years of age (from primary to secondary school)
   - 14-18 years of age (from teen to young adult)
   - 21 – 25 years of age (from university to job/career)

The online framework will contain one support tool for professionals, patients, and families respectively for each of the above four transitions.

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**Tween and Teens with Hearing Loss Research Projects**

- Hearing Care Professionals Survey Research (Canada and United States – November, 2016)
- Tween and Teen Focus Groups (Canada and United States, December 2016 and February 2017)
Hearing Aid Selection and Teens: Perspectives from Hearing Care Professionals

(Gordey, 2016)

- Web-based survey
- Sent out to approximately 500 clinicians in Canada and the United States
- 113 participants responded, who identified themselves as clinicians working with tweens and teens with hearing loss.
- Objective was to understand the challenges clinicians face with hearing device use when working with tweens and teens.
In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges when working with teens who have hearing loss? (Select all that applies)

- Finding a hearing device that was cosmetically appealing
- Getting the teen to wear hearing device consistently

In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges when working with teens who have hearing loss? (Other Comments)

Convincing them that they do not hear “good enough” and need to wear hearing aids and that not hearing well is connected to personal and professional happiness and success. A problem for those with mild hearing loss.

Getting the parents to understand the importance of their teen wearing hearing aids

Respecting teens choices to stop using hearing aids.

Cost for families to purchase hearing devices.
At what age do you consider selecting an adult hearing device for a teen? (Ex. thin tube receiver-in-the-ear hearing aid)

Rank the qualities of a hearing aid in terms of their importance to you when you consider selecting a new hearing aid for a teen with hearing loss:
When teens talk to you about their hearing device, their biggest complaints are: (select all that applies)

- Sound quality for music
- How hearing aids make them look different
- A hearing device that will seamlessly connect to all electronic devices without the need of an interface.
- Hearing device reliability when active in sports etc. moisture/sweat
- Loud and very noisy environments.
Do the majority of teens you work with, who wear hearing aids, use FM or remote microphone technology?

They don’t like to be different so they sacrifice their listening needs to try to be more like peers. In doing so, they make themselves stand out more as they cannot hearing the teacher.

The inconvenience and visibility of using something that sets them apart from their friends with typical hearing.

Most tweens ask to stop using it in grade 6 or 7, because if the teacher is wearing a microphone, it implies that they need help, and that’s not ok for them.

The school stops providing it for older students.
Focus Groups
Tweens and Teens
(Gordey and Spangler, 2016)

- Purpose: To understand the experiences and hearing device preferences of tweens and teens with hearing loss.

- Tween/Teen focus groups were held in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio (28) and Victoria, British Columbia (24).

- Shark Tank/Dragons Den Activity – groups were tasked with designing the perfect hearing device.

- Letter to Your Younger Self Activity

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Tween and Teen Focus Group

- **Favourite Things:** Video games, sports, friends, dance, Italian food, pizza, iPad, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr.

- **Dislikes:** Homework, Facebook, slimy vegetables, tattle-tails, bossy people, show offs.
What do you like about your current hearing aids?

- They work well in quiet rooms
- Cool colours
- Great sound
- Helps me hear my friends and teacher

What do you wish you could change about your hearing aids?

- Slimmer, so they can fit behind my ear better when I am wearing glasses.
- No streamer, I would like to be able to hear music without all the cords.
- Have an app that controls my hearing aids.
- True skin colors that match my ears and hair better.
- No battery; I want rechargeable batteries; batteries are expensive and inconvenient!
What do you wish you could change about your hearing aids?

- Lighter weight, more comfortable ear piece.
- Easier way to manage ear wax.
- Truly water resistant; I am not confident that I can wear them in the rain.
- Waterproof.
- Help me hear better in the movie theater. The sound is sooooo loud and often distorted!

When/where do your hearing aids not work so well? How do you manage that situation when they are not working so well?

Restaurants, hallways and cafeterias; even with FM it is too noisy to hear in these places.
- I try and lip read.
- I ask my friends after what was being talked about.
- I turn them off.
- If I can, I try and move to a better listening location.
If you could create the perfect hearing aid, what would it look like? What are the things it could do?

- It would have rechargeable batteries that would last all day.
- Lightweight, slim, small
- Eliminates all feedback
- Video captions can be created from sounds going into hearing aid, displayed on my phone, making it easier to understand when in really noisy rooms.
- Mute function for FM, on FM receiver, so I can turn off the teacher when needed.

If you could create the perfect hearing aid, what would it look like? What are the things it could do?

- Better retention options for sports; Sports mode for hearing aid so they can work well underneath a hockey or football helmet.
- Tracking device via an app in case they get lost.
- Hearing aid could connect to electronics, computers, internet.
- All controlled by my phone.
- Waterproof, I could hear with my device underwater.
What are important qualities/characteristics for you feel confident when you wear your hearing aids?

- Small, slim, invisible, reliable, durable, waterproof.
- Comfortable.
- No interference.
- Matches my hair colour.

Learning about Hearing Aids

- I learn about hearing aids from my audiologist, doctor, dispenser. I trust them to select the hearing aid that is best for me.

- I do not go online to learn about hearing aids.
Letters to My Younger Self/Younger Student

- Students were asked to write a letter to their younger self or a younger student.

- We believed that this activity might allow students to express the personal impact that hearing loss has had on them.

- We also thought we could learn from their stories and it might help us to consider additional strategies when working with children, tweens, teens, and parents.

Student Advice Letters to Younger Self/Younger Students

- Having a hearing aid is not a bad thing.

- Listening in the classroom can be hard.

- Everything will be ok. Just focus on being yourself.

- Getting a bad seat in the classroom makes it hard to hear what your classmates are saying.
Student Advice Letters to Younger Self/Younger Students

- Hearing loss is ok, it does not define you, no matter what people might say to you.
- Wearing glasses and headbands with hearing aids can be hard!
- Everything was going to be ok, and not be ashamed of having a hearing loss.
- Accepting who you are can be difficult, when you do not know anyone with a hearing loss.

- When all the students in the room are talking it is hard to hear.
- Use your FM system always. It helps make it easier to concentrate.
- No one is better than you.
- I wish someone would tell me what it will be like when I get older.
- Having hearing aids does not effect your personality.
Student Advice Letters to Younger Students

- Just because you have hearing loss, does not mean you can’t do everything!

- I was embarrassed to talk to my friends about my hearing loss.

- Teachers sometime don’t understand what it is like to have hearing loss. You have to explain it to them.

- Ask your teachers for help when you need it.

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Student Advice Letters to Younger Students

- I wish I could have met other children with hearing loss.

- It is ok to be nervous going to school and meeting new people.

- I was afraid in school that I was going to miss something someone said.

- It was hard to talk with my hearing classmates.
Parents and hearing professionals can help tweens and teens understand their hearing loss, develop strategies to live with hearing loss and work with them to internalize these skills.

For tweens and teens with hearing loss, not having typical hearing is only one part of their identity.

Children with hearing loss benefit from peer mentoring, and peer workshops, beginning at an early age. This is critical to their ability of successfully integrating hearing loss into their identity.

Tweens and teens rely on their hearing care professionals to understand their needs for hearing technology.

This discussion is best communicated using concrete language and examples of its practical applications.

Hearing care professionals need to be interested in their tween and teen patients and other parts of their lives, outside their hearing loss.

This is the first step to developing a trusting relationship, facilitating open discussions, and hopefully, if they arise, talking about challenges that may affect future hearing aid usage.
Teens and Tweens Articles


