



Ronnie's story

A broken heart landed the retired speech-language pathologist with hearing loss in Israel.

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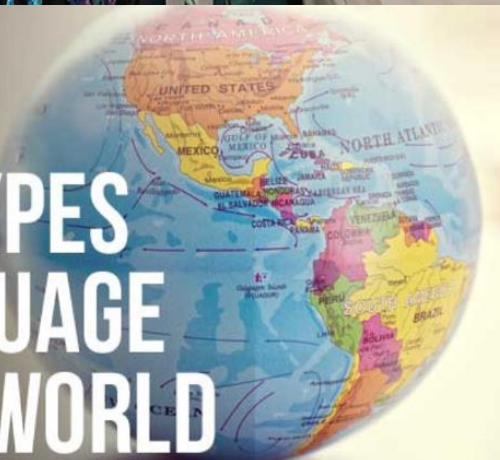
Let's look at 9 examples of sign languages from around the planet.

For many people with hearing loss, working in an office can be difficult

Loud, open office spaces, meeting rooms with people talking over each other, and phone conferences can make it challenging to communicate. But there are ways to make working in an office with hearing loss easier.

Setting free your hearing loss emotions

It can be difficult to express the emotions of hearing loss. Whether it's speaking up about a challenging listening environment or sitting down with our partners and letting it all gush – it's just not easy, even if we are normally open about other issues. Why is that?





A broken heart, a new beginning, and a support group for hearing loss

By Clint McLean writing for the Ida Institute

A broken heart landed Ronnie Kaufman in Israel and at the resolute age of 65, the retired speech-language pathologist with hearing loss was starting over. But Ronnie is no stranger to second acts. Or to third or fourth ones. And each time she resets, she takes two steps forward for each step back. The move from the US to the Middle East was no exception.

Ronnie was raised in Queens, New York. She started college there in 1969 but dropped out two years later and moved to San Francisco for a fresh start. She married her high school sweetheart and became a mother a year later. The marriage didn't last, and she raised her son mainly on her own. For two decades, she worked as a marketing rep in California before leaving the security of her career to return to New York. At age 40, Ronnie went back to school where she graduated with honors in Speech-Language Pathology. From there she worked in schools and hospitals, helping people with communication difficulties until her own hearing loss developed to a degree that she couldn't work anymore. Now, she's using her knowledge and experience with communication challenges to lead a support group for people with hearing loss in Jerusalem.

Ronnie's son, Joshua, moved to Israel from the US with his wife and three children in 2012. "This event nearly killed me," Ronnie says from her high-rise apartment overlooking HaMesila park in Jerusalem's southwest. "I developed paroxysmal AFib which could strike any time, any place. I was often rushed to the emergency room. I felt as if my world had been torn apart. I didn't see them for four years because I couldn't or wouldn't fly. I lived on antiarrhythmia meds, beta blockers, and anti-depressants. I almost died in 2013 from an AFib episode and developed PTSD as a result."

The obstacles weren't enough to keep Ronnie away from her son and in 2016 she sold her home and moved to Israel to be with him and his family. "I didn't want to die alone," she says. "And I wanted to see my grandchildren and help my son raise them."

But while the move solved one problem, it introduced another. In the US, Ronnie ached for her family. Now, in Israel, she had them, but felt isolated from the world around her.

"It was very difficult for me living here," she says. "I can't learn Hebrew because I can't hear it well enough and I often can't understand people speaking English with Hebrew accents. Part of what happens when you become deaf is you get isolated. I was happier being by myself because it was frustrating going out in the world trying to communicate with people. It's exhausting."

Ronnie soon discovered there was little to no support for people like her — English speakers with hearing loss. But rather than letting it be another weight that made navigating the city harder, Ronnie did something about it. In February 2017, six months after stepping off the plane at Ben Gurion airport, she founded a hearing loss support group for English speakers.

The meetings are held in a small room of the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel which helps new immigrants navigate healthcare, housing, language, and the bureaucracy of their new home. The space is simple. There are no smart boards or snack machines, just some plastic chairs and a kettle for making tea. "It's small potatoes," Ronnie says plainly, "but it's a vital volunteer organisation that helps new immigrants like me get settled."

The twenty or so people who attend the meetings are mostly regulars who had nowhere to turn for hearing care help and advice before Ronnie arrived. The group discusses topics like: What to expect from an audiologist, how hearing loss affects relationships, and auditory fatigue.

Dr. Gary Heller, a retired teacher who wears a cochlear implant and a hearing aid, joins Ronnie's meetings often and considers them a social lifeline as well as hearing and communication support. "This group is very important," he says. "Firstly, because people who have hearing impairments find it very difficult to achieve fluency in a new language after a certain age. Secondly, the healthcare system is completely unfamiliar to most of the participants, especially rights, obligations, and availability of things like assistive listening devices. Thirdly, many people with hearing impairments are socially isolated, especially at the ages of most of the group members. So, this group gives members an opportunity to socialize with like-minded people who are in a similar situation."

The group has become a place where friendships develop, people feel less lonely, and a sense of community thrives.

As well as being able to provide unlimited amounts of love to each of her grandchildren, Ronnie's heart is beating as true as a metronome after having surgery for her irregular heartbeat while living in Israel. She hasn't had any AFib attacks since.

"You know, don't feel sorry for me." Ronnie instructs. "Hearing loss gave me the opportunity to relocate to Israel to be near my son and my grandchildren. And to start this support group to help other people. I was always in a helping profession and now I'm able to help people in a different capacity. Hearing loss has given me the opportunity to help others, and that gives me great satisfaction."

https://idaoinstitute.com/what_we_do/news/detail/a_broken_heart_a_new_beginning_and_a_support_group_for_hearing_loss/?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Ronnie%20Interview



DIFFERENT TYPES OF SIGN LANGUAGE AROUND THE WORLD

One of the most common misconceptions about sign language is that it's the same wherever you go. That's not the case. In fact, there are somewhere between 138 and 300 different types of sign language used throughout the world today. New sign languages frequently evolve amongst groups of deaf children and adults.

With that in mind, let's take a look at 9 examples of sign languages from around the world:

British Sign Language (BSL), Auslan and New Zealand Sign Language

Around 150,000 people in the UK use British Sign Language. BSL evolved at Thomas Braidwood's schools for the deaf in the late 1700s and early 1800s. From there, it spread to Australia and New Zealand. Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and New Zealand Sign Language are therefore quite similar. They use the same grammar, the same manual alphabet, and much of the same vocabulary.

In fact, some sign language experts consider BSL, Auslan, and New Zealand Sign Language to be dialects of the same sign language, called British, Australian and New Zealand Sign Language, or BANZL for short. That said, despite the high degree of overlap, there are also differences between the different branches of the BANZL family. For example, New Zealand Sign Language includes signs for Māori words. It also includes signs from Australasian Sign Language, a type of signed English used by New Zealand schools for the deaf in the 1980s.

Auslan includes some signs derived from Irish Sign Language, as well. Deaf Indigenous Australians may use Auslan or one of the native Australian sign languages that are unrelated to Auslan. The Far North Queensland dialect of Auslan incorporates features of these indigenous sign languages, too.

French Sign Language

French Sign Language (LSF) is the native language of approximately 100,000 native signers in France. It's also one of the earliest European sign languages to gain acceptance by educators, and it influenced other sign languages like ASL, ISL, Russian Sign Language (RSL) and more.

Charles Michel de l'Épée is sometimes credited with inventing LSF. In reality, all he did was take the rich sign language already used by the Parisian deaf community, add a bunch of rules to make it impossibly complicated, and then establish a free school for the deaf to teach his version of the language.

But even though he couldn't resist tinkering, he was willing to accept sign language as a complete language on its own merits. And because he founded a school where deaf students could gather and were encouraged to use sign language to communicate, French Sign Language flourished until "oralism" became all the rage in the late 19th century.

Students were discouraged from signing in schools from the late 1800s until the late 1970s. However, the deaf community continued to use French Sign Language to communicate with each other, and in 1991 it was once again incorporated into education.

American Sign Language (ASL)

Americans and Brits are often said to be "divided by a common language." But the deaf communities in the two countries don't even have a common language. BSL and American Sign Language are not even in the same language family.

250,000-500,000 people in the United States claim ASL as their native language. It's also used in Canada, West Africa and Southeast Asia. ASL is based on French Sign Language, but was also influenced by Martha's Vineyard Sign Language and other local sign languages. Like French Sign Language, ASL uses a one-handed fingerspelling alphabet.

Irish Sign Language (ISL)

Today, most people in Ireland speak English. But deaf people in Ireland speak Irish Sign Language (ISL), which is derived from French Sign Language. Although ISL has been somewhat influenced by BSL, it remains quite distinct. As of 2014, around 5,000 deaf people, primarily in the Republic of Ireland but also in Northern Ireland, use Irish Sign Language to communicate.

One interesting footnote about ISL: Many Irish deaf students were educated in Catholic schools that separated students by gender. So, for a time, men and women each had their own dialects of ISL. However, these differences have diminished over time.

Chinese Sign Language (CSL or ZGS)

Anywhere from 1M to 20M deaf people in China use Chinese Sign Language to communicate. However, it's difficult to determine how many people actually use it because the Chinese education system has discouraged and stigmatised its use for most of the past five decades. Most deaf Chinese children are treated at "hearing rehabilitation centres," which favour a strict oralist approach. That said, more Chinese schools for the deaf have opened in recent years, and Chinese Sign Language is slowly gaining acceptance.

The first Chinese school for the deaf was founded by American missionaries. However, Chinese Sign Language is not related to ASL. Many signs incorporate aspects of Chinese language and culture. For example:

"There is no generic word for brother in CSL, only two distinct signs, one for "older brother" and one for "younger brother". This parallels Chinese, which also specifies "older brother" or "younger brother" rather than simply "brother". Similarly, the sign for "eat" incorporates a pictorial representation for chopsticks instead of using the hand as in ASL."

Brazilian Sign Language (Libras)

Around 3 million signers in Brazil use Brazilian Sign Language, which was given official status by the Brazilian government in 2002. Brazilian Sign Language may be related to French Sign Language or Portuguese Sign Language. However, it is so distinct that linguists classify it as a language isolate.

Indo-Pakistani Sign Language

Indo-Pakistani Sign Language is the native sign language in South Asia. However, it lacks official recognition and support. While it's not taught in public schools, some NGOs do use it to teach both academic and vocational courses. Unfortunately, the interpreter shortage for Indo-Pakistani Sign Language is dire. In India, there are only about 250 certified sign language interpreters, and between 1.8 million people who are Deaf.

From The Language Blog, <https://k-international.com/blog/different-types-of-sign-language-around-the-world/>

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14th Biennial CHARGE Syndrome Conference

We are so excited to be hosting the conference in Hobart next year. It is a little further to travel for many, but why not make a holiday out of it? Start saving or fundraising now! You may be able to include the registration cost for your child with CHARGE syndrome, in their funding plan.

When, where?

Friday 3rd to Sunday 5th April, 2020. Wrest Point, Hobart, Tasmania.

Accommodation

Use this link to [book your room](#) at the special conference rates. There are three different styles of accommodation, which start from \$169 per night. Breakfast is not included.

Program

[See the draft program here](#) (some items are still to be confirmed)

[Meet the speakers](#) (more bios to come)

[Register on Trybooking](#)



CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL COCHLEAR IMPLANT DAY

Join us to celebrate!

Sunday 23rd February 2020 11am-3pm

Stalls, sausage sizzle,
outdoor entertainment.

SCIC Building 39 Old Gladesville Hospital;
Enter from Punt Road Gladesville.

This event will be live
captioned and live streamed.

To join us remotely,
please click on this link

<https://vimeopro.com/pascoeberry/cicada-live>



HEARING FOR LIFE

**WITH SPECIAL GUEST:
VIKTORIJA MCDONELL, GLOBAL AUDITORY
REHABILITATION PROGRAMS**

Viktorija's daughter Holly was the first child to receive a cochlear implant in the Sydney CI program in June 1987 and still wears the original CI. In 1998 Viktorija completed Master of Special Education – Hearing Impairment, from Renwick College, Newcastle University.

Viktorija has a long association with Cochlear; as a Teacher of the Deaf, she was Coordinator of Paediatric Habilitation at Cochlear Asia Pacific from 2000 to 2006. Then until 2016 she was Co-ordinator of Rehabilitation for Central and Eastern Europe, providing information, resources and workshops to parents and professionals working with children who have CI's. In 2015, Viktorija helped to set up a new early intervention centre called Casa Koala in Bucharest, Romania and provides ongoing support. She continues to be involved in the development of new rehabilitation resources for Cochlear.

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Tips for working in an office with hearing loss



For many people with hearing loss, working in an office environment can be difficult.

Loud, open office spaces, meeting rooms with people talking over each other, and phone conferences can make it challenging to communicate.

But there are ways to make working in an office with hearing loss easier.

Here are tips for working in an office if you have hearing loss:

Finding the right desk

Finding the right desk is important to ensure a successful working environment for people with hearing loss.

Office workers with hearing loss will often spend time and a bit of trial and error before finding the best placement for their desk within a room. Ideally, they don't want to be too close to walk-through areas, coffee machines, water cooler corners, and such. Too much background noise can wreak havoc with hearing aids, making them useless. Trying to find a desk in a well-lit area is also important. A lack of natural light from windows or artificial lighting can make lip-reading difficult.

Working in an office with hearing loss might mean dealing with hot desks. This working style basically involves a first-come, first-served attitude when it comes to desks. The result is people take over the nearest available empty desk each time they start work. For the average hearing person, this might seem a great idea. However, for anyone with hearing loss, this can lead to all kinds of challenges.

The hot desk system will only work for those who are equal in needs and strengths. All too often deaf people will hesitate to make a fuss. This is a pity because often a quiet but firm word to HR will enable a compromise to be reached. Some firms will even allow a deaf employee to have an anchored desk; this can be done easily by having a reserved sticker large enough for anyone to see.

Avoiding Noisy Rooms

Having hearing aids switch background noise for foreground sound is a feature that anyone with hearing loss knows only too well. In an office, this can make working very difficult and greatly increase stress levels. One solution to decrease unwanted noise while leveling out other noises is quite simple. If the office is an open plan or a similar design, a screen can be introduced. Think of the old changing screens which generally come as three panels hinged together. These can be erected instantly. Covering them in a thick cloth will soften and deaden noise from surrounding areas.

These work in the same way as restaurants with thick heavy drapes and table cloths. The cloth works to soften the sharper louder background noise. This is intended to make for better conversation but also really helps those of us with hearing loss. Some restaurants and bars also feature cloth-covered baffles that hang from the ceiling and serve the same purpose. Certain forward-thinking companies are even putting in ceiling baffles for this very reason, which is certainly a step forward.

Find a Quiet Place to Connect

A frequent meeting place, which is often unofficially used as a place to exchange ideas and updates in offices, is the water cooler or tea and coffee making area. This might make perfect sense to those who have so-called normal hearing, but for those with hearing loss, it can be especially challenging.

In an attempt to communicate with colleagues, mistakes and miscommunication can all too easily occur. It's often at times like these that those hearing colleagues can easily make assumptions and expect that the deaf person has understood all that has been discussed.

Instead of a noisy cafeteria or kitchen space, try to find a quiet place to connect. Maybe there is a lobby with couches that you can invite colleagues to catch up or step outside for some fresh air and quieter space. Let people know where they can best communicate with you, whether that's in a reserved meeting room, or in a quiet corner.

Being Open about your Hearing Loss

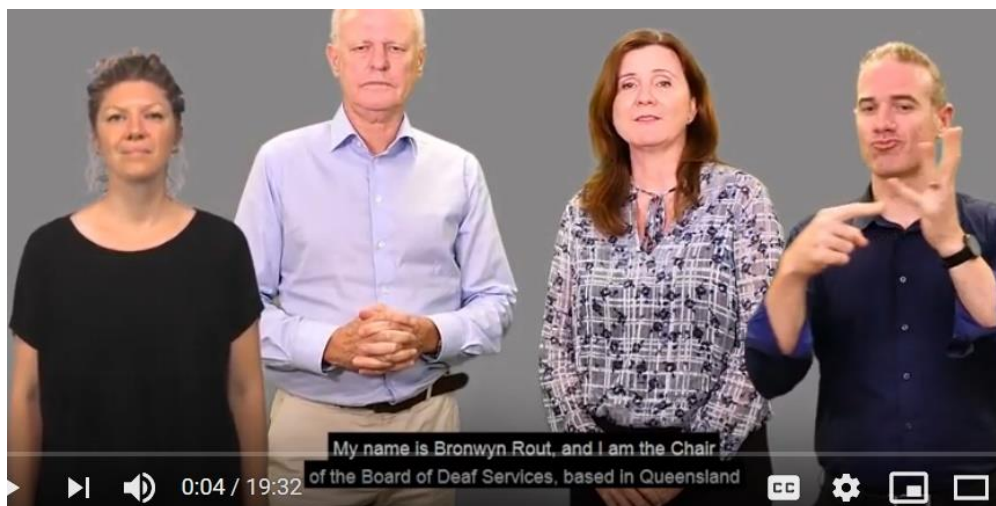
It makes sense to be upfront and perfectly honest about your own hearing loss and subsequent needs. One of the biggest problems we face with the mainstream hearing community is a general lack of understanding. Because hearing loss is an invisible disability, unless it is brought out into the open, it remains invisible.

"It makes sense to be upfront and perfectly honest about your own hearing loss and subsequent needs."

It can too easy to blame others because of their lack of understanding. But if they fail to understand because of ignorance and lack of education, it isn't really their fault.

We, deaf people, have a responsibility to help educate others about our ways and needs. Only in doing so will we help create a healthy, beneficial work environment for all.

<https://www.hearinglikeme.com/working-in-an-office-with-hearing-loss/>



The Deaf Society NSW will merge with Deaf Services Queensland to create a super service provider for deaf people.

You can watch a video of the announcement of the merger at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruIKocswVCY&feature=youtu.be&mc_cid=7c295140fb&mc_eid=36ad0f6b73

These two organisations were formed by and for the benefit of Deaf people whose native language is Auslan. Traditional Deaf societies will shift their focus away from people whose first language is Auslan so that they can survive and profit through providing services to bigger, lucrative markets.

There are around 10 thousand native Auslan users spread throughout the nation according to the most recent Census. 2,693 live in NSW; 2,342 live in Queensland. It's not a big market if you have an eye for profit.

An organisation that makes a living from selling things to a group of consumers cannot be an unbiased, independent advocate for these same people. The need has never been greater for both independent grass roots and systemic advocacy for the Deaf community and for the future of the language of Auslan.

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<https://iced2020.com/>



Government announcement

The Australian Government is inviting the community to help with the design of the **National Centre for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse**.

The establishment of a National Centre was a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Royal Commission recommended the Australian Government, along with state and territory governments, establish a National Centre to address child sexual abuse by reducing stigma, promoting help-seeking and supporting good practice.

The National Centre will provide a national strategic focus to coordinate research and build service capability to both respond to and prevent child sexual abuse.

Community input is critical to the future success of the National Centre. The Royal Commission recommended the National Centre should partner with survivors in all its work, valuing their knowledge and experience.

The Australian Government is inviting interested stakeholders to have their say on the scope, function and priorities of the National Centre via an online survey. We particularly welcome input from people with lived experience, their families and the broader sector.

To access the survey, and an accompanying information paper, visit engage.dss.gov.au

<https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children-programs-services-children/national-centre-for-the-prevention-of-child-sexual-abuse>

Read the Royal Commission's Final report [here](#)

This video explains the Royal Commission in [Auslan](#)



Setting free your hearing loss emotions

By Gael Hannan for Hearing Health & Technology Matters



Most people, upon getting the news that they have hearing loss, don't receive the diagnosis as if it were nothing. "Oh, I've got hearing loss? Alrighty then, thanks a lot for telling me."

Maybe some people take the news calmly, both inwardly and outwardly, but if we could read the thoughts of most people, we'd see something more along the lines of:

"OMG! Tell me this is a MISTAKE! I'm too young! OMG! People are going to look at me funny; they'll think I'm old, disabled, a wash-up, incompetent. OMG! No way! I am NOT doing this hearing loss thing! Are you sure it's not wax? Hearing aids look like crap! "

This might go on for weeks and months, with few external clues that the person is going through hearing loss hell. Maybe he or she doesn't always wear their hearing aids. They become quieter, with a perpetual frown plastered on their face. They may not join in conversations or activities as much as they used to.

It can be difficult to express the emotions of hearing loss, even for people like me who've had it for a long time.

Whether it's speaking up about a challenging listening environment or sitting down with our partners and letting it all gush – it's just not easy, even if we are normally open about other issues.

Why is that?

There is a number of reasons, according to psychologist John M. Grohol, Psy.D., in his online article 10 Reasons You Can't Say How You Feel. Although the article doesn't refer to any specific disability, I have experienced all these barriers as a person with hearing loss. Dr. Grosol mentions fear of conflict, wanting to be seen as capable of handling problems, our desire not to be seen as less than

perfect (i.e., not disabled), trying to punish others with the silent treatment, fear of rejection, low self-esteem, and expecting the people who love us to be mind-readers, to know what we're going through and what we need. Dr. Grohol goes on to say that learning why we have trouble in telling others how we feel, is a big step towards changing our behaviour.

From experience, I know that when people first enter the world of hearing loss, it can be a scary place, a whole new world that doesn't come with a manual. Information on hearing loss is not easy to digest when emotions are raging.

People who have always heard well may not have the words to describe what they are now feeling. Change takes time. Time to learn and adapt to new rules, especially in the way we receive and understand the spoken word. And what many people don't realise, is that we still have the same right to participate and be involved.

By learning as much as we can about our particular type of hearing loss and the ways it will affect different aspects of our life, we can explain our needs to other people. But if the emotions of hearing loss are too overwhelming for you to articulate (and you would not be alone in that), try using someone else's words, those of the people who have faced this challenge before you.

The internet is full of forums and sites where people share their hearing loss thoughts, their rage, their frustration, and their joy in finding some answers. Copy them – use their words and their ideas.

There are many books about dealing with hearing loss, including my own, *The Way I Hear It* and those by my friend Katherine Boulton. We've been there and done that; we would be honoured if you considered trying what worked for us.

Even better, try writing down the feelings to which you can't put a voice. Just let 'er rip – and write down all the rage and grief and anger that you feel. You don't have to show it to anyone, but you may realise that someone in your life does need to read it, you can decide whether to show them the raw draft or a cleaned-up version.

I care about how hearing loss affects your life, because other people cared about me whenever I've suffered hearing-related emotional pain.

However you find your way through – whether it's reading, writing, or speaking with others about your feelings – by setting free those inner, corrosive emotions, you will start dealing better with your hearing loss life.

<https://hearinghealthmatters.org/betterhearingconsumer/2019/setting-free-your-hearing-loss-emotions/>





World Hearing Day

Tuesday 3 March 2020

HEARING awareness **WEEK** 1 - 7 March

www.hearingawarenessweek.org.au



'Audiology at the Cutting Edge: Shaping Your Future' will bring audiologists and other professionals together to forge a proactive and positive approach to the future, by sharing and expanding current knowledge, skills and expertise to meet the clinical and operational demands facing audiology.

<https://auda2020conference.asn.au/>

Know someone who might like their own One in Six?

Drop us a line: hello@deafnessforum.org.au

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional custodians across the lands, waters and seas and thank Elders past, present and future for their continued custodianship. We acknowledge the challenge of overcoming high levels of ear health issues and its role in Closing the Gap. We acknowledge the risk to indigenous sign languages disappearing.

People with disability have and continue to be subjected to isolation, exploitation, violence and abuse in institutions. We thank the Australian Parliament for its bipartisan support of a Royal Commission into the evil committed on people with disability.

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