

Support 2020 Noise Awareness Day

By Nancy Nadler, MEd, MA

It is well accepted that noise is harmful to our health. As far back as 1930, the Noise Abatement Commission of New York City reported that noise hurts our hearing, affects attention and concentration, strains the nervous system, and interferes with sleep. The dangers of noise to hearing are of particular importance to audiologists and any of us in the field of hearing health care. There are 466 million people worldwide who have a hearing loss. With 20 percent of teens 12-19 years old reporting a hearing loss due to loud noise, and 1.1 billion young people ages 12-35 at risk of hearing loss due to noise exposure from recreational activities, this number is destined to grow. As we age, untreated hearing loss impacts communication, increases our risk of falls and cognitive decline, and can cause isolation and depression. Anything we can reasonably do to reduce the risk of hearing loss must be considered.

In response to the growing concern about noise and its impact on hearing, the Center for Hearing and Communication (CHC) created International Noise Awareness Day (INAD) in 1995. This year, April 29 will mark the 25th Annual INAD. The day was established to raise awareness and educate the public about the harmful effects of noise on hearing, health, and quality of life. Since

its inception, INAD has grown to include participants in every state in the United States, as well as groups in countries on virtually every continent around the world. From conducting hearing screenings to promoting campaigns that address noisy toys and urban noise to seeking quiet spaces in their communities, participants highlight the importance of reducing the noise in our lives. Through these many years, the goal has remained the same—to educate the public about the negative impacts of noise on our lives and the importance of quiet on our overall well-being.

The message of INAD and CHC's Noise Center has always been clear: Turn down the volume, limit exposure to noise, and wear hearing protection to protect yourself from this pervasive pollutant. In other words, just say no to noise. But that's not enough. We must also say yes to quiet. Consider what we gain when noise is not present—the intrinsic benefits of quiet. When quiet is defined, it is associated with words such as calm, tranquility, gentleness, easygoing, unobtrusive, etc. Quiet is central to meditation, which has been shown to improve health and well-being. The phrase “peace and quiet” is often used to reflect what so many of us seek after a hectic day at home or at work, and suggests that one cannot

have peace without quiet. When noise is limited, we not only reduce the negative effects associated with noise but also add the richness of quiet to our lives.

Join this year's observance of International Noise Awareness Day on April 29. Consider providing free hearing screenings your community, teaching a lesson at your local elementary school, or asking your gym to lower the volume. Let us know at CHC what you're doing to promote INAD or request ideas for activities in your community. Participation can be as simple as observing one minute of silence from 2:15-2:16 pm (regardless of location/time zone).

And remember, on April 29 and always: Protect your hearing, protect your health. 



MS. Nadler is the director of the Center for Hearing and Communication's (CHC) Noise Center. She developed, coordinated, and implemented International Noise Awareness Day, a worldwide campaign established in 1995 to educate students and the public about the impact of noise on hearing, health, and quality of life. She has served in an advisory capacity to the mayor of New York City, helping revise the city's Noise Code. She is also the deputy executive director at CHC.