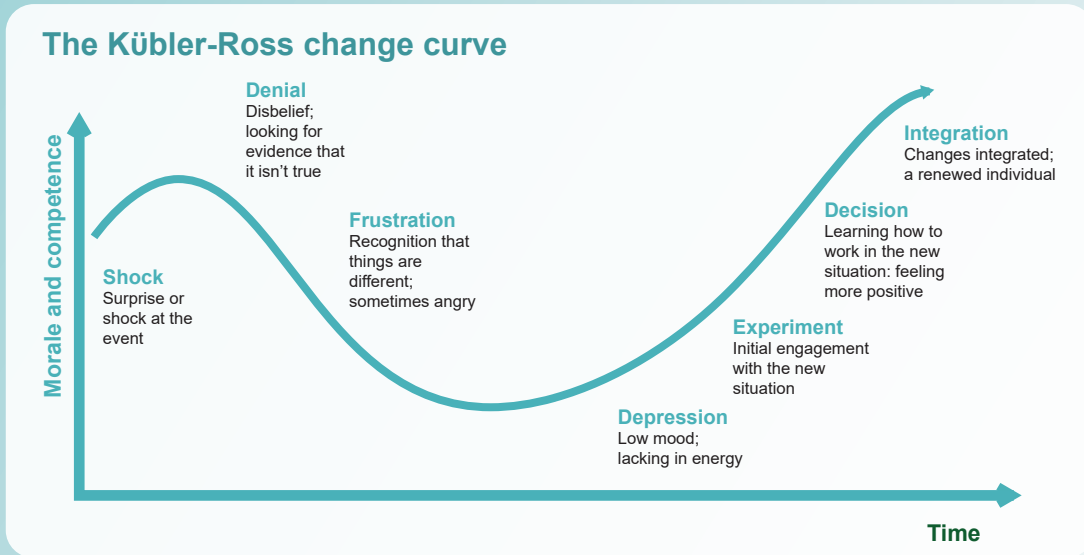


Coming Full Circle: Speechreading can help!

As we know, adapting to hearing loss is a process. In fact we often call it a hearing (loss) journey. It takes time and can be quite difficult for some. In many ways, this journey can be compared to the stages of grief/ acceptance first developed by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross in 1969. In the CHIP speechreading classes we see much evidence of these stages, as the program encourages, supports and inspires members along their journey.



Members often talk about the **shock and denial** they felt when they first suspected hearing loss and even more so, when it was actually diagnosed. **Statistics indicate that it takes, on average, 10 years for individuals to address their hearing issues!** They may get hearing aids and put them in a drawer to maybe try later on. They may cringe at the thought of actually wearing them. It's a new reality and seems so unfair and unwanted.

Anger and frustration are often expressed in the classes as well. Anger at family members who seemingly will not make the extra effort to speak more clearly. Frustration with friends who seem unwilling to make things easier for them. Sometimes it is frustration at even having to make those requests. Frustration with the sound of speech through a hearing aid. Why aren't hearing aids like glasses -- just put them on and hear fine?





Periods of depression are also apparent from group discussions. Members speak of giving up on social interactions, preferring to stay home and read. Phone conversations can be reduced to a minimum as it just seems too difficult to maintain friendships that way. Members have described real sorrow at the reality of a new life without the interaction they previously had.

A period of **partial acceptance** may follow this time with some exploration of possible solutions. It's at this stage that people may think to join a group, such as the speechreading classes at CHIP. Members often talk about coming to the classes somewhat reluctantly but, at the same time, rather hopefully. The first few classes can be a time of quiet listening for some people and relieved sharing for others.



The journey of each person is unique, with some moving into the **acceptance** stage rather quickly and others a little more hesitantly. They become more adept at learning to read speech on the lips, face and jaw and how to make challenging situations easier. It's quite amazing to witness members excited because another felt comfortable enough to give friends detailed suggestions on how to make conversation easier -- and they did! They cheer when someone describes their success at managing a complex phone call to a doctor's office.



They listen to suggestions from those who have been in the classes a little longer and talk about what might actually work for them. They may decide to join an advocacy group or make suggestions at their house of worship, city hall or book club. They may not be 100% comfortable all the time but they have arrived at a good place.