

Articles | Sound Therapy Through The Listening Program

By Ann M. Davies, TLP Provider

Editor's Note: The following article has been reprinted from the May 2002 issue of the Patoss Bulletin, The Journal of the Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties. We would like to thank Authorized Provider Ann Davies for her efforts in writing the article and submitting it to the Bulletin so that others in her field in the United Kingdom can learn more about sound stimulation and The Listening Program.

Sound therapy is a science which has evolved over the past fifty years. This therapy is for those with auditory processing problems and is quite distinct from music therapy, or any interventions for hearing problems. It is particularly relevant to those children and adults whose language difficulties are linked to auditory processing problems, which often occurs among dyslexic and dyspraxic children.

Sound therapy is rooted in the science of neurology, physiology, psychology, acoustics, and music. Sound therapy began with Alfred Tomatis, MD a French ear, nose and throat specialist. After years of research into the function of the ear, and studying the role of the ear in processing sound, its effect on the brain, and neurological system, from the womb into old age, Dr. Tomatis developed a system of auditory training know as the Tomatis Method. There are 200 Tomatis centers throughout the world, where many dyslexic children/adults, other learning disabled children, musicians, singers, and people from all walks of life have benefited greatly from the sound therapy treatment. However, the time and cost of the Tomatis Method has been prohibitive for many. So from this sound therapy training has evolved the more accessible, The Listening Program, and it is this which I describe below.

I attended The Listening Program Training Course in November 2001. This course has had a powerful effect on me. I know that I have found a tool that will help some of our pupils. Three of the system creators, Ron Minson, Alex Doman and Richard Lawrence conducted the course. Before I explain it, I wish to refer to its origins.

Dr. Minson, a practitioner in Psychiatry had a 19 year old dyslexic daughter who benefited from the Tomatis Method to such an extent that her literacy skills improved so much that she changed from being suicidal to becoming a vibrant and employable young woman. Because of this, Minson studied in France under Tomatis, and has been delivering the Tomatis Method in America for the last ten years. His experience contributed to the development of The Listening Program.

The second originator of The Listening Program was Alex Doman. He followed in family footsteps in providing neurodevelopmental programs for children, from those severely brain damaged to others whose problems are less overt and yet debilitating on their lives - a prime example being dyslexia. Among the many therapies provided for these children is sound therapy. Doman has years of experience working with sound therapy programs many of which are rooted in the Tomatis Method. He himself benefited as he had suffered from tinnitus which was cured through Sound Therapy.

Doman, together with Minson and Richard Lawrence Music Director of the Arcangelos Chamber Ensemble and acoustic engineer, produced The Listening Program. The aim of the team has been to bring this powerful therapy within an attainable price range so that many more people can benefit from the therapy. To do this they have pooled their wide expertise, and employed modern acoustic tools to produce The Listening Program.

These were some of my impressions during the Training course:

- The integrity of the team. For me these people had come to share their expertise not to 'sell a product.' They made it clear this was not a cure, and that some people have reported not having benefited from the programme. This is what one would expect, as with any therapy, teaching programme etc, it will not be the answer for 100% of people. However, there are countless testimonies from those children and adults who have had significant benefits from the program.
- The extent of knowledge each brought to the program from their respective professional fields.
- Their genuine care for people whose lives are affected by auditory processing difficulties and their desire to pass on the benefits of sound therapy.
- The THOUSANDS of hours that have gone into the production of The Listening Program. This is no ordinary music, you can be in no doubt as to the quality of research behind the program and the musicianship underlying the music.
- The team made it clear that sound therapy is not a cure of auditory processing problems but a powerful tool to reduce the problem. The Listening Program is not a once in a lifetime course, but a therapy to which you can return when the inner energy of the ear starts to become depleted. Using the headphones, you select beneficial sections and 'top up.'

The program is being found to be particularly beneficial to dyslexic and dyspraxic children and adults who have auditory sequential memory difficulties; unclear speech, a problem with the articulation of multi-syllable words such as - preliminary or statistician; reading, spelling, or writing difficulties, with the source of these problems being rooted in poor auditory function. The program can also help to raise confidence and self esteem among those dyslexic pupils who find their learning difficulty a frustration and school burdensome. It can help in some cases to lift depression.

The Listening Program is designed to improve the pupil's processing of sound. This is quite different from hearing. Every individual has a dominant ear for processing sound, even though both ears pick up sound waves and hearing is perfectly normal in both ears. Likewise, we all have a dominant eye, hand, and foot. Ideally, it would seem that for maximum brain function it is advantageous to be totally right dominant or totally left dominant. The Listening Program is used educationally to re-train the ears in those individuals where it is found that their dominant ear is not the same as their dominant writing hand. In addition it enables pupils who have no right and left awareness to establish this skill. It has been shown to bring improvement to reading, spelling and handwriting. The program is also used for wider applications in the fields of health, and musicianship.

The Program consists of eight CD's which are listened to over an eight-week period. They have to be listened to through high quality headphones using a good quality personal CD player. Listening takes place for five days on and two days rest. The Program is only available through a trained authorized provider. To become an authorized provider it is necessary to attend a two-day course presented by members of the team.

While on the course I realized that I was left ear dominant and wondered whether this explained why I was tone deaf, as well having the problem of tiring very quickly when listening to music. I have followed The Listening Program and am now right ear dominant. I am able now to distinguish between different bird songs; am developing an 'ear' for recognizing when music is out of tune, and can listen to music with more enjoyment for longer periods of time. Furthermore, my colleague Antoinette who has also gone through the Program no longer has mild tinnitus, and is beginning to have a much stronger sense of direction. Her sense of direction has always been poor, to the degree that even coming out of a shop in our own home city she would have no idea whether to turn right or left to go back to the car park. This developing sense of direction has made her driving feel more competent and comfortable.

The power of sound processing is amazing and the effect of these CD's on one's whole being I have found remarkable. Having worked with dyslexic children now for over twenty-five years this is the first intervention which has taken a major step forward in the auditory field. The program is scientifically researched (details to be found in the book *The Conscious Ear* by Tomatis and *The Power of Sound* by Joshua Leeds.) Its roots lie in a thorough understanding of the physiology of the ear and its affect on human development and behaviour; neurology, psychology, learning theories, musicality, acoustics and the production of high quality CD's.

It must be re-iterated that sound therapy is quite different from music therapy. Music therapy seeks to benefit the psychological structure of the individual. Sound therapy works on the physiological and neurological structure of the person, aiming to bring about an increased efficiency of the functioning of the whole neurological and physiological system so that educational gains can be made.

Anyone interested in this therapy would find reading the book 'The Power of Sound' by Joshua Leeds extremely informative about the system. The book is available by mail order from Listening and Health Products Tel: 01603 264724. The website www.advancedbrain.com gives further information about the team behind The Listening Program and also links to other sites with information about sound therapy.

I look forward to writing a follow-up article next year reporting on the outcomes for those pupils who have now embarked on this course of therapy.

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