

Can Your Brain Remember What It Did Not Hear?

By Crystal Chalmers, Au.D.

I'm sure you are familiar with this ages old debate: "If a tree falls in the forest, and there is no one there to hear it fall, did it make a sound?"

If sound was defined as only *what we hear*, then there would be no debate; the answer would be "no".

However, "sound" is not just what we hear. Sound is vibrations traveling through space, And those vibrations are caused by waves from some sort of action or force. So the tree itself – while standing upright and still in the forest – does not make sound. But when it falls, its movement and impact with the ground does indeed make a sound; lots of sound in fact!

Now what in the world does this have to with hearing difficulties, brain function, and the title of this article "Can your brain remember what it did not hear? Plenty, because of the matter of *assumption*.

We *assume* that if no one was nearby to hear the tree fall, that it did not make a noise.

And for many people with hearing loss, they often *assume* that if they did not hear what was said to them, that it wasn't said at all. After all, their brain has no recollection of someone saying something to them, so it obviously was never said. Right? Wrong!

There are many instances of couples who come to my office with one of the two – admittedly or not – having hearing/communication issues, while the other spouse is growing increasingly frustrated with their partner's "forgetfulness".

But the spouse didn't "forget". He/she may have never heard what was said to them in the first place, and since the brain cannot remember what it did not

hear, that person also becomes frustrated with the perceived lack of communication from the partner. Left untreated, this is an unhealthy situation that can continue on a downward spiral.

The good news is that treatment options exist. When I sit down and have a conversation with a couple (or family members, such as a parent and an adult child) I start by pointing out to the patient and companion that while we *hear* with our *ears*, we *listen* with our *brain*.

To fix the brain/memory issues we first need to treat the ears, oftentimes with the use of hearing aid technology. After that, there may be need for consultations and brain exercise programs. It is something that can be accomplished, but the first step is really up to you. Make an appointment with a Doctor of Audiology who is not only an expert in diagnostic assessment and hearing aid technology, but who is also educated and trained in the relationship between the hearing system and human brain function. Before you know it, you'll forget about all the times you used to forget everything that you didn't know was said to you ... Because hearing is a wonderful gift!

Want to learn more about hearing issues? Visit North State Audiological Service's internet website at www.nsaudiology.com, where you can find all sorts of great information including an archive of articles by Dr. Chalmers. Once on the site, simply click on the "Ask Dr. Chalmers" banner ... Because hearing is a wonderful gift!

About the writer: Crystal Chalmers, Au.D., is an AudigyCertified™ Doctor of Audiology, the owner of North State Audiological Services in Chico, and a member of AudigyGroup, the nation's largest member-owned association of independent hearing care professionals.

Since 2006, AudigyGroup has interviewed over 5,000 of the 18,000 audiologists in the United States, yet has selected only 250 to be members in this elite association. Dr. Chalmers is the only AudigyGroup professional in the entire northeastern part of California. AudigyCertified™ is a trade-mark of AudigyGroup, LLC.

To learn more about Dr. Chalmers, her practice, and AudigyGroup visit online at www.nsaudiology.com or call toll free at 1 (888) 893-1352