

# **The impact of concentration fatigue on Deaf children should be factored in**

**By: Ian Noon:**

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I went to a great conference today. It was riveting, and I was hooked on pretty much every word. And then I got home and collapsed on the sofa. I'm not just tired, I'm shattered. I've had to turn my ears off to rest in silence and my eyes are burning. I've also had about 3 cups of tea just to write this paragraph.

Boo-hoo, so the Noon is tired, so what? True. People go through worse. But I do also think the fact that the impact of being deaf doesn't just manifest itself in communication is ever really that well understood. It's about the energy involved in lipreading and being attentive all day long. It's about processing and constructing meaning out of half-heard words and sentences, making guesses and figuring out context. And then it's thinking of something intelligent to say in response to an invariably random question. It's like doing jigsaws, Sudoku and Scrabble all at the same time.

For Deaf children and young people, especially, I don't think this impact is as widely recognized as it should be. Advice to teachers on working with Deaf children tends to talk far more about language and communication, rather than concentration fatigue.

And some Deaf children and young people I've met haven't been given the space to talk about what impact being deaf has on them and to work out strategies to deal with it; like taking regular breaks and being honest to tell grown ups that they're tired, without fear they'll be labeled as lazy.

When I was younger, I was a little embarrassed to be so tired all the time. I would force myself to go out and be busy when really all I wanted to do was crawl under the sofa and nap for a hundred years. Nobody ever really told me that being tired was 'OK'.

It follows through to when Deaf young people grow up and become Deaf professionals. It was a long while before I started to openly admit to colleagues that long or successive meetings are the enemy of me, and that I need extended breaks to be able to function later. And to get friends to realize that if I wasn't saying very much in the pub, it's probably because I was too tired to think.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that Deaf people can do anything and everything. We can change the world. But we might need a nap and a cup of tea every once in a while, so don't judge us.

*Ian Noon has been profoundly deaf since birth, giving him an interesting perspective “on what needs to change for deaf children and young people in the UK. It also means he have very questionable taste in music.” When he’s not stealing the biscuits in the office, he runs, does yoga and plans his next backpacking holiday. He works for a Deaf charity but his views expressed [on his blog](#) and here, are his own. Follow him on Twitter as [@IanNoon](#)*