

Things I Wish I Had Known...

About Hearing Loss

(For newbies with hearing loss)

Hopefully, this article will become something that you will add to for the benefit of others new to hearing loss. There are so many "I wish I had..." that it is difficult to remember them or to write them down...

1. I never realized or thought of hearing loss as a "Participation Activity." It is not a spectator sport. No one is going to "cure or fix" me. I have to become assertive/aggressive in developing my own communication comfort and assistance. There are many possibilities from **H**earing **A**ids (**HA**) to Assistive Devices (**ALDs** or **HAT**) to sign language. I personally have to learn new communication skills and teach them to my family and friends so we may communicate most effectively.
2. Hearing Aids are just that— "aids". They do not cure hearing loss. They do not get me back to a "20 X 20" hearing of my youth. (Please note: There is no such thing as 20x20 hearing unlike vision.) Hearing aids do help and are an important aspect of aural therapy but not the only part. It is important to understand that **"You never get back to hearing as well as you did"**
3. Once I experience hearing loss, it is important to wear hearing aids to help maintain the hearing I do have. The longer I wait the harder it will be for aids to help me.
4. There is a difference between an **"I**nstrument **S**pecialist" (**IS**) and an Audiologist both in skill and training. An audiologist can do things an IS can't do. It is important to know with whom I am dealing. This does not imply that one may necessarily be more helpful to me than the other. Both have their role and purpose. Learning the difference is helpful.
5. There are organizations and agencies designed to help me. I need to know of their existence in order to better help myself. If I don't know they exist, they can't help me:

- a. The **K**entucky **C**ommission on the **D**eaf and **H**ard of **H**earing (**KCDHH**) is one. They are my state hearing advocates that also assist me with free specialized phones and ALDs. They are a major resource and referral program.
 - b. **H**earing **L**oss **A**ssociation of **A**merica (**HLAA**) is a self-help organization dedicated to education Advocacy and support for people who do not hear well and those around them.
 - c. **K**entucky **A**ssociation of the **D**eaf (**KAD**)
 - d. Hands and Voices
 - e. First Steps
 - f. Kentucky Speech-Language-Hearing Association
 - g. Alexander Graham Bell Association
 - h. Do a hearing loss agency/organization search.
6. Hearing Aids have many types and models. I need to learn about them to become an effective participant in my aural therapy. There are many bells and whistles that can help me in particular situations. I need to be able to discuss my lifestyle with my **H**earing **P**rofessional (**HP**) in order to find the best aid for my circumstance. Do I need the bells and whistles...some people do some don't.
7. **A**ssistive **L**istening **D**eVICES (**ALDs**) other than hearing aids and **H**earing **A**ssistive **T**echnology can assist me in situations that HA can't. Special microphones, Personal Communicators, Flashing Lights and Bed Shaker alerting devices can make my life easier and safer.
8. My Hearing Expectations need to be considered. I may expect my aids to do too much or too little. I deal with my expectations with my HP and with my peers who have hearing loss.
9. Hearing aids are great but buying them is not fun. I think cost comparing when purchasing hearing aids is crucial as well as understanding features in layman's terms not just the manufacturer's vague product descriptions. There are so many terms and technical descriptions that I need to prepare myself to understand better and to be an active participant in my aural health.
10. Recognizing the importance and experience of other **H**ard **o**f **H**earing People (**HOH**). Peer support is an important aspect in understanding hearing loss and hearing assistive technology.

11. I am not alone. 20% of people age 16 to 25 have some degree of hearing loss. Nearly 50% of those over 60 have some degree of hearing loss.
12. Audiology is not an exact science. Much of the programming of hearing aids is a trial and error process. I need to be assertive and keep going back until my aids are tweaked to the best possible level for me.
13. I see my dentist twice a year. Seeing my Hearing Professional 2 to 4 times per year is not too often. In the tweaking process 4-6 times is not uncommon.
14. Hearing aids are expensive because of bundled services. I pay for the aids and (in the past) services for the life of the aids. Unbundled services allow me to pay a lower initial cost but a fee for each additional service—office visit, cleaning, filters, tubes, programming, and retesting.
15. There is no best aid; Only what is best for me. I need to be a participant in this process.
16. Finding a Hearing Professional that will work for and with me is important. Word of mouth information is helpful in selecting a compatible professional. At the same time, my personality may not match. This too is a trial and error process.
17. Depression, introversion, dementia, isolation may/can all be a product of hearing loss.
18. There is much an individual can learn beyond the typical audiologist visit that makes living with hearing loss easier. Many of us do benefit as we learn over time.

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