

Anxiety And Hearing Loss

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My first bout of anxiety occurred several years ago. After a lovely dinner at a noisy Paris restaurant, my husband and I were strolling back to the apartment we had rented. The evening was warm. I remember the mid June moon being bright and full. Though we were in my favorite European city, I suddenly began to feel uneasy as if something wasn't right. Waves of hot and cold washed over me. My stomach flip-flopped. I was on the verge of being sick. My husband took notice of my clammy hand and asked what was wrong. I couldn't make sense of any of what was happening to me. All I knew was that I wasn't feeling right. Since we were a short distance from the apartment, my husband talked me through the remainder of the walk. When safely inside, he suggested that I lie down. After settling myself in bed, I began feeling as if I couldn't breathe. I started shaking, uncontrollably. My husband, a physician, didn't know what to make of my odd symptoms. He stayed by my side as I suffered through the nausea and tremors, assuring me I would be okay. An hour later, I fell asleep.

The next morning, I woke and felt fine. My husband suggested that I might have had a reaction to something I ate or perhaps I had a medical condition brewing. We decided that I would see my doctor when I returned home.

Thankfully, the remainder of the trip and our return to the USA was uneventful. But a few weeks later, I suffered the same symptoms after going out to eat with a large group of friends. I decided to see my doctor. After several tests failed to show any sign of disease, my doctor turned to blood tests and discovered that I had low levels of estrogen and progesterone. Being menopausal, I was put on hormones. However, even after 3 months of hormone therapy, the odd symptoms, the same I had experienced in France, popped up from time to time, usually after an evening of being in a noisy venue.

I went back to my doctor who diagnosed my problem as acute anxiety with panic attacks. It was difficult for me to accept what my doctor stated. I thought of

myself as a strong person, someone able to weather any storm. Yet, periodically out of the blue, I would experience these unusual symptoms. Puzzled I searched the internet and learned that anxiety and panic attacks are common among those suffering from hearing loss. My audiologist confirmed my findings, saying he had many patients with the same symptoms. He said more and more research is being done on hearing, balance, and anxiety. Certainly more is needed.

Working with my audiologist, we decided that I should have the best hearing aids and peripheral devices that I could afford. I had resisted purchasing a mini mic but decided that trying one was worth the money. I also had my audiologist activate the hearing loop on my aids so that in public spots with loops, I could better hear a speaker or a concert.

I wish I could say that better hearing aids and peripheral devices solved my anxiety problem. They did not. I still have bouts of anxiety and panic attacks though I've become better at recognizing the symptoms when they begin. Anxiety and panic attack symptoms might range from vague feelings of something not feeling right to physical feelings of nausea, rapid heart rate, and tremors. Often attacks occur while traveling or in social situations. If you suffer from anxiety or panic attacks and have hearing loss it is important to get help. Equip yourself with the best hearing devices for your type of hearing loss. If your symptoms persist, see a doctor. You might need medication to help manage your attacks. My doctor prescribed medication to help me get through my panic attacks, but I also find that doing breathing exercises helps mitigate a full-blown panic attack.

We should never let hearing loss or other associated problems get in the way of leading the best life that we possibly can. Treat your hearing loss. Speak with your audiologist and doctor if you have anxiety and panic attacks. Do your own research. A Google search will reveal many internet articles dedicated to this subject. Take control of your situation. A little help and guidance from a trusted audiologist and your physician might be just the thing you need to control your anxiety about hearing loss.