

Auditory Rehabilitation For Hearing Aid Wearers

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If you have a cochlear implant, chances are you participated in an auditory training program post surgery. These programs last three to six months and help you utilize your implants for the best hearing results. A proper auditory training program teaches you to distinguish words, environmental sounds, and musical notes. You might be taught concentration skills and how to deal with various hearing situations, particularly when in noise. It is generally agreed upon that such programs are necessary and benefit those wearing implants.

But what about hearing aids users? Could these programs benefit them? There is no general agreement amongst audiologists regarding the advantages of auditory rehab programs for hearing aid users. In fact, Dr. Larry Humes, an audiologist and professor emeritus from Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, states that research on auditory training programs for hearing aid wearers with mild to moderate hearing loss is in its infancy. Outside of university settings, not too many audiologists offer programs for hearing aid wearers.

In spite of the ambiguity surrounding these programs, I decided to give auditory training a try. I spoke with my audiologist and though he did not offer a program, he suggested that I see an ENT physician to obtain a referral to a speech therapist who specialized in hearing loss patients, a necessary step if I wanted my insurance to pay for appointments. I was able to establish weekly, one-hour visits. The therapist's treatment plan included word and sound recognition exercises in quiet and in noise as well as developing better concentration skills. She also recommended speech reading. My training included watching her lips move as she formed vowels, consonants, and words.

I found these sessions exhausting as my therapist packed our sessions with task after task. There were homework assignments between sessions. My therapist highly recommended that I play music or have the television on, anything to

create background noise in my quiet house.

She also recommended many apps to me, some were free, some I had to purchase. Many of these apps were games that were designed to improve my ability to concentrate. Some involved listening to and identifying environmental sounds. Others focused on vowels and consonants. Most were made for children with hearing loss and used cartoon characters. She also recommended an online speech reading program. I was instructed to work with that program every day.

At the end of the six weeks, I had to stop seeing the speech therapist due to insurance limitations. I felt the therapy was a benefit. I came away with better concentration skills and a good ability to speech read.

If your medical insurance will not authorize auditory training, there are online courses you can take. Each program is a little different. Some focus more on speech understanding, while others, like Lace, help with concentration and speech reading. The cost of each program is posted on their individual websites and vary from \$100.00 to \$400.00.

The following list is posted on the Hearing Loss Association of America Website as recommended sites to explore.

1. Angel Sound
2. Customized Learning Exercises for Aural Rehab
3. Lace (Listening and Communication Enhancement Therapy for the Brain)
4. Posit Science: Brain Fitness Program

On the same page there are listed online programs for cochlear implant users. Hearing aid users may also access some of these programs.

If anyone is interested in trying these programs, I recommend you speak with your audiologist before diving in. If your audiologist agrees that you would benefit, you might find that participating in auditory rehab might improve your ability to hear.