

Connect The Dots Between Exercise, Hearing And Age

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Not many of us get through life without our friends, family members, or physicians reminding us about the importance of exercise. Yet, a recent study conducted by the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and John Hopkins University states that people with hearing loss between ages 60 and 90 tend to exercise less than their hearing counterparts.

I have my own love/hate relationship with exercise. I know the physical and emotional benefits of exercise. Studies have shown that 30 minutes of daily activity aids in building and keeping muscle tone, increasing energy level, and preventing depression, osteoporosis, and cardiovascular disease. Other studies have shown that regular exercise improves or prevents diabetes. A study conducted by University of Florida concluded that since exercise increases blood flow to the auditory system within the cochlea, it may help to maintain or improve hearing.

Given, why would older adults with hearing loss not want to exercise? Three separate studies conducted by NIA and John Hopkins were inconclusive, These studies did note that those with treated hearing loss tend to score better with fast walking ability and balance than those with untreated hearing loss. However, study participants with treated and untreated hearing loss exercised less frequently or not at all as compared to their hearing counterparts.

It is well known that untreated hearing loss can lead to cognitive decline, depression, and isolation. People with hearing loss have a tendency toward isolation and depression. It is unfortunate to think that those who chose not to

exercise might experience a physical decline as well.

I suppose that is what motivates me to exercise. But as I age, I've come to think about expertise differently. I am aware of the limitations of my age. I'm unable to jog 3 to 4 miles daily. I don't always have the stamina to exercise daily and now that I am retired, I like some flexibility in my life.

There are many available exercise options, including: walking, swimming, and bike riding. Yoga and Pilates are very popular. One can dance, stroll on a beach, or through a shopping mall with friends. For those 65 and over, there are Silver Sneaker plans attached to many Medicare supplementals that provide free access to gyms and exercise classes. I took a Tai Chi class through Silver Sneakers for free. Blue Zones and other community offerings often have free or reduced cost fitness programs for those 65 and over.

Don't discount dancing, gardening, dog walking or hiking. It's doing something with regularity that counts. If your life is busy, consider splitting exercise into ten minute sessions. I keep in mind that exercise need not be strenuous, a chore, or done before noon.

I vary my exercise routines, participating in walking, swimming, lifting weights and occasionally taking classes. Because I live in tropical Southwest Florida, I tend toward swimming and other indoor exercise opportunities in the summer months and outdoor options in the winter months.

No matter what your age might be, if you have hearing loss, consider exercise. Going for a walk, a run, a bike ride, or a hike might improve your ability to hear, while contributing to your mental well being, thus helping you meander through the hearing world with a zip in your step.