

Partner Up For Hearing Help

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My husband was very aware of my hearing loss when we married. Since we had worked together and had known each other for ten years prior to our marriage, he knew I had trouble hearing socially, that I didn't hear well on the telephone, and that the best way to communicate with me was to sit and face me. When he proposed, I was concerned about how our life together would be. He assured me that he had thought long and hard about his role as the spouse of someone with hearing loss. As a physician, he foresaw that my sensorineural loss would worsen, and that I would need more and more help as the calendar pages turned.

On our wedding day, we said traditional wedding vows, each promising to be there for the other. We took the words in sickness and in health seriously. Our twenty-one-year old marriage has taken us from the working world into retirement. We've moved from the mid-west to southwest Florida, exchanging a life we knew for the unknown. Together, we built the house where we currently reside. As we aged, and as my hearing diminished, we've stood hand-in-hand, helping each other.

My marriage isn't perfect. We've had our share of arguments and disagreements. It is no secret to the spouses and partners of those who suffer from hearing loss that life with someone who doesn't hear normally is full of problems. I don't know how many times my husband has been frustrated because he was at the grocery store and wanted to talk to me about substituting one brand for another. I don't hear my phone ring unless I'm close to it. Even if a text message comes through, I don't always know.

Recently, my husband has noticed that my voice is flat and that I speak in a monotone. With no inflection in my speech, he finds it hard to know when I've finished a thought. He takes it in stride when I accuse him of interrupting me. Thank goodness he has the patience he has. Kindness and consideration helps as we work through our communication problems.

In spite of all we deal with, we've managed to stay together, taking care to keep to our vow of for better or for worse. Overtime, my husband has developed some age-related hearing loss and tinnitus. The quiet life brought on by the coronavirus pandemic caused him to be more accurately aware of the constant ringing sound that he was able to ignore when we were more active socially.

To help him, I participated in a webinar about tinnitus and discovered that listening to music is one of the therapies used to treat tinnitus. Being a music enthusiast, my husband was fascinated. He went online and signed up for a three-week free subscription to Spotify. For those of you unaware, Spotify is like the Netflix of the music world, with hundreds and hundreds of musical selections available. Now we play music daily. Music distracts his mind away from his tinnitus. Listening to Bach, Beethoven, and the Beatles helps me to concentrate and hear in noise, something all suffering from hearing loss should work on. We applaud how we solved two problems with one solution.

Not everyone is suited for living with a person suffering from hearing loss. It takes partners who are patient, kind, and willing to give of themselves. My husband always said we have to work together and be honest with one another when we have communication issues. He is right! Good communication is one of the secrets of a long and happy partnership.

Through the years, and through good and bad times, our willingness to accept what is, and our ability to work together against hearing odds has made our meanderings through the hearing world delightful.