

Trying It On For Hearing Size

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A few weeks ago, an email popped into my box that made me stop and consider. My audiologist wanted to know if I was willing to test two new devices to help me hear better in noise. Like many with hearing loss, I have always hoped and prayed that technology would improve in that area. Even with current advancements; hearing aids with artificial intelligence, mini mics, and aids that instantly pair with smart phones and pads, many of us still have trouble hearing a waiter or waitress talking at warp speed, describing the dinner specials in a restaurant. We all know that having hearing loss means that attending parties, gatherings, and doing business in this big noisy world, causes issues.

I responded to the email and requested an appointment. When seated in my audiologist's office a week later, he showed me the two devices: Oticon's EDUMic (used primarily by children in a classroom setting) and Phonak's new Roger ON pen. (Used as a mini mic with various types of Phonac hearing aids.)

My audiologist explained that hearing aid companies are expanding their offerings across manufacturers instead of only focusing on hearing solutions for their line of products. Until recently, Phonak accessories were not compatible with ReSound hearing aids. Even within a company, not all accessories work with every aid. People often find that upgrading their hearing aids means upgrading their accessories, thus increasing the cost of solving one's hearing issues.

Phonak and Oticon have been working together to solve that problem. Using the EDUMic as a receiver, it is now possible to pair the Phonak Roger ON pen to your Oticon More hearing aids. There are two advantages to this system. Working in

tandem, these devices have the ability to reduce most background noise. The new Roger ON mini mic can be used in a one-on-one situation or the device can be set on a table and used when conversing with a group of people.

I was excited to try out this system. My Oticon mini mic works great in a one-on-one situation, but it does not function well as a table mic.

My audiologist went through the pairing process, which only took 5 minutes. I noticed he had added a 4th function to my Oticon hearing app, which allowed me to control background and volume. After a learning session, I drove home, ready to try the devices that very evening.

That evening, and after being seated in a noisy restaurant, I turned on the EDUmic and the Roger On pen. Though my husband and I were seated outside, there was a great deal of background noise from the street and from other diners. I adjusted the volume and lowered the background as much as I could. Though I was able to subtract a great deal of background noise, to my disappointment, I was finding it hard to hear my husband.

I tried several settings, powered my hearing aids on and off, and made sure I had everything connected correctly. I could not find anything wrong with my aids or the devices. The following Monday, I made another appointment with my audiologist to let him know what was going on.

After reviewing my setup and what I had described, my audiologist delivered the bad news. Unfortunately, the system was not strong enough for my profound hearing loss. He said the patients who had received the greatest success with these devices were those who had mild, moderate, and severe hearing loss.

As he re-paired my original Oticon mini mic to my hearing aids, my audiologist must have noticed my disappointment. He looked at me and said, you tried and that's all you can do. Technology is advancing all the time. Be patient the solutions will come.

I took heart in his words. I've worn hearing aids for over 40 years. I've seen the advances. I do believe that more technological solutions will come. For now, I will keep that hope with me as I as I meander through the hearing world.