

## **The World is a Noisy Place**

### **Get a Boost in Your Hearing And Give Yourself and Edge Up**

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Provided by Oticon Sound Advice

The world is getting busier, more crowded and noisier. Understanding conversations, especially in the presence of noise, is more difficult than ever. Combine the fact with a lifetime of exposure to loud music, and noisy working environments and you have a recipe for difficult speech understanding.

A boost in your existing hearing ability can do wonders to improve your speech understanding and will make a positive and immediate difference in your life. If a person has waited a long time before getting help for their hearing, the immediate boost in their hearing may make some sounds seem uncomfortably loud. Luckily the plasticity of the human brain is remarkable and before long it will learn to focus on sounds which are most important and filter out other noises.

#### **Train Your Brain**

Hearing is a very complex system that starts in the outer ear, where sound is captured, and ends in the brain where all the information is stored, decoded, and transformed into something we can understand. With hearing devices, the brain registers so many new sounds that the initial adjustment period can be quite tiring. It's a bit like training a muscle that hasn't been used for a long time. But what a difference it makes when you finally regain that lost strength!

With consistent use of hearing devices, it doesn't take long before they can be worn comfortably. Just as a personal trainer would offer guidance during fitness sessions, a hearing care professional can be of similar assistance during consultations. Your audiologist will offer good advice with regards to expectations and experiences.

#### **Help from the professionals**

Audiologists are highly qualified at guiding people through the adjustment process. With hearing devices, listening becomes much easier most of the time. However, noisy environments can still present a challenge. During follow-up appointments, hearing care professionals can provide practical recommendations about how to cope in difficult listening situations and how to maximize the ability to hear and understand in those settings.

#### **Hearing in Noise**

Hearing in noise can be difficult, even for people who don't have a hearing loss. Conversations in a restaurant, talking at a basketball game or even trying to hear while the water is running are difficult for anybody. It's useful to have strategies ready for those settings.

There are some easy ways to deal with the most common noisy settings. It is a good idea to avoid standing near a noise source. It is also a good idea to avoid communicating from separate rooms: face to face contact makes talking much easier. Finally, keep in mind that listening in noise is even more difficult when you are tired or under abnormal stress.

### **Practice Makes Perfect**

And last, but not least, practice makes perfect! Hearing devices pick up many sounds – some wanted, some unwanted. Separating the noise from the conversation can be tricky at first, but as each day passes, focusing becomes easier. Two good exercises are to practice talking with a friend outdoors and practice following a conversation in a moderately busy restaurant.

With practice, tangible improvements can be achieved within weeks however on average it will require a year of consistent amplification use for the brain to use sounds at it's best. There are lots of benefits – easier communication with friends and family, increased self confidence and more energy to enjoy the good things in life. Even family and friends will notice the difference.

This article was provided by Oticon's Sound Advice publication. For the complete publication please contact Mary Maddock Au.D. or Candace Jernigan Au.D. at Wilmington Hearing Specialists 3909 – 110 Wrightsville Ave 791-4755 Wilmington Hearing Specialists provides a full range of audiology services to both children and adults.