

The Emotions of Experiencing A Hearing Loss

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From: Hearing Loss and Hearing Aids A Bridge to Hearing

A hearing loss is a physical condition in your ear. Hearing difficulties pertain to a specific listening situation. A hearing problem is how to deal with these listening situations. The emotions that a person feels when their hearing loss is confirmed incorporate a full range of experiences. Some people are relieved or even grateful. They, at last, know the reason for their hearing difficulties and can now deal with their hearing problem in a more constructive manner. Other are horrified. How could this have happened. Certainly the hearing difficulties cannot be totally their responsibility.

The confirmation of a hearing loss places us at a point of either acceptance or denial. Accepting the hearing loss allows you to reassess situations where the hearing loss has caused a problem – seek solutions for improving those situations – and moving forward with those solutions to reduce your hearing problem. Denial of the hearing loss will negatively impact every facet of your life – destroy relationships – and decrease your quality of life.

Denial Of Hearing Loss

Thirty one million Americans experience a “nerve” hearing loss. However, when a person is advised that they have a “nerve” hearing loss they feel alone. If that person chooses to ignore or not believe the news they are either in denial or resisting the diagnosis. Common phrases from someone resisting the diagnosis are: “I hear everyone but a lot of people mumble.” Or “Most people don’t have anything that I want to hear anyway” or “ I just ask people to speak up.” If you are reading this article and have a hearing loss you are likely resisting the hearing loss. Those who are in true denial would not even read this article.

Isolationism

Situations that make life enjoyable include going to plays or movies, being part of special relationships and enjoying that special restaurant or family gathering. When a hearing loss, even a mild one, causes hearing difficulties that leads someone to avoid these situations isolation is the result. The separation that the hearing loss creates between the person and those previously enjoyable situations causes the hearing impaired person to feel alienated or develop a sense of fear about having to deal with those situations.

Frustration

Frustration occurs not only to the person with the hearing loss but also to those family and friends who are close to the hearing impaired person. Because hearing loss is an invisible disability your friends and family forget that you do not hear well. Your spouse may continue to talk to you from other rooms or with their back turned to you. Your physician may tell you that it is normal to get a little hearing loss as you get older. You might hear sometimes and misunderstand words at other times. Your family does

not understand how this can happen and may accuse you of selective listening. The longer that untreated hearing loss persists, the greater the frustrations for everyone.

Embarrassment

The single most common experience among people with untreated hearing loss and their families is embarrassment. Missing the punch line to a joke, getting instructions wrong, and offering inappropriate responses in conversations are just a few examples of what the hearing impaired person and their loved ones experience.

To many the thought of wearing hearing aids is embarrassing. However, the failure to get help may prove to be more embarrassing. The embarrassment about hearing aid use has significantly been reduced with the introduction of the new open ear hearing aid fittings.

Acceptance

Understanding the emotions associated with hearing loss is the first step to acceptance of the hearing loss. Acceptance of the hearing loss can lead to positive changes in communication strategies, pursuing amplification and ultimately re-joining friends and family in social settings thus reducing your isolation.

The Realities of Amplification Use

Once the reality of the hearing loss has been accepted the understanding of amplification must be addressed. We live in a world where we think everything can be fixed. We want the hearing aid to give us normal hearing. Hearing aids are exactly what they say they are. They are an AID to hearing better. A hearing loss cannot be corrected to normal but hearing difficulties can be improved. After the fitting of amplification the hearing problems will be addressed.

Use of amplification must be consistent. Wearing the amplification only when you go to a restaurant or only when you play bridge will not yield positive results. It is important to use amplification during most of your waking hours.

In conclusion, the confirmation of your hearing loss will likely cause a variety of emotions for both you and your family. How you and they deal with your hearing loss will mirror how you deal with life. We all develop patterns early in life. Those patterns become part of our personality. While reaching the point of accepting your hearing loss may be difficult and may require you to develop new and unfamiliar personality patterns those changes will lead you to increased ability to deal with the hearing problems that have been created by your hearing loss.

This article was submitted by Mary Maddock Au.D. of Wilmington Hearing Specialists. The content of this article was obtained from Chapter One of Hearing Loss and Hearing Aids – A Bridge to Healing by Richard Carmen Au.D. To learn more about hearing loss, hearing aids contact Wilmington Hearing Specialists PA at 791-4755