

EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF HEARING LOSS

Research shows that most adults wait approximately 7 years before seeking any help for hearing related difficulties. In addition to communication challenges, untreated hearing loss has significant emotional effects that impact on important and joyful moments in one's life.

Even though it is a well understood medical condition, for which solutions have existed for years, many individuals living with hearing loss choose not to have their hearing tested or choose not to be fitted with hearing devices.

Hearing loss can affect many aspects of communication in our everyday lives but first and foremost it is an emotional obstacle that we have to overcome.

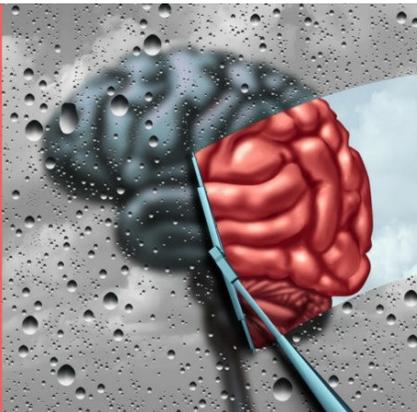


The inability to hear can result in feelings of shame, frustration, humiliation and inadequacy. It can be highly embarrassing to be unable to follow a conversation in a social situation as well as in a professional setting. Most individuals may think "How stupid I must look!" or "What will others think?"

Feeling inadequate, awkward, embarrassed or different are some of the negative emotions that plague individuals with hearing loss when it manifests itself in an unpleasant way.



PROTECT YOUR
MENTAL
HEALTH BY
TREATING
YOUR HEARING
LOSS



Treating hearing loss begins with a comprehensive hearing test to determine the severity and nature of the hearing loss as well as the impact on one's life (social interaction, professional environments, psychological impact). In the event that surgery cannot be recommended to treat the hearing loss, hearing aids are the best solution. With hearing aid technology advancements over the years, a hearing device is visually discreet, provides clear, concise speech and reduce background noise to a larger extent than before.

The desire to hide hearing aids often arises from feelings of shame. Hearing aids are a physical occurrence of hearing loss. Society's value on physical perfection and beauty, affects everyone. Many who are hard of hearing report subtle and sometimes clear judgment toward those with hearing aids.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that current hearing aid technology is so advanced that they can now be as discreet as possible, so that you don't have to compromise on your quality of life.



How Can We Help?



Coping with hearing loss involves an adjustment process. It's critical to come to terms with the impact of hearing loss on one's identity. Many describe feeling demotivated. One often hears a response like: "Never mind, it's not important." The implication is that the individual wasn't important enough to repeat or explain further. Help hard-of-hearing individuals find ways to avoid embarrassing and awkward situations. Good communication requires the efforts of at least two people, even when one of them has a hearing loss.

Helping one grieve and find meaning in the loss of hearing, is therapeutically crucial. Rarely are hearing-impaired individuals given permission to express the felt, perceived, and feared losses they associate with this limitation. The anger felt by one with hearing loss is frequently displaced onto the hearing professional and/or the hearing aid prescribed to help them. It may be one reason why so many hearing aids are not worn or end up in the draw.

It is important to speak openly and naturally to individuals with hearing loss. Take all feelings seriously and show respect. If a question is unheard, repeat it clearly or rephrase it and allow the individual time to answer for themselves.

In a recent study, adults with untreated hearing loss were more likely to report **depression**, **anxiety** and **paranoia** than peers who wore hearing aids.



Exclusion from communication can cause feelings of **loneliness**, **isolation** and **frustration**, particularly among older people who have hearing loss.