

Just starting out on a hearing loss journey?

Here's a reply to the question: "What would a person with a lot of experience living with hearing loss suggest to someone just starting out in that same journey?" Hope it helps you be successful as you deal with your hearing loss.

- 1) Vanity and denial are self-inflicted wounds; Don't fall victim. Accept that you have a hearing loss and vow to be good at it.
- 2) No one else cares whether you have a hearing loss or wear hearing aids; but they do notice if you answer incorrectly, misinterpret what's said, or say "What?" when anything is said.
- 3) It's up to you to hear your best: that means not only using hearing aids, and perhaps assistive listening devices, but it also means you need to learn all about the features of those things can make you hear your best.
- 4) While many audiologists and hearing aid dealers are excellent, they won't always tell you everything you need to know about hearing aid features, assistive listening technology and strategies that can help you cope best with hearing loss.
- 5) Hearing aids are terrific now compared to even a few years ago. They can make a huge improvement in your ability to understand speech, but you'll still have difficulty in noise, at a distance, or in large rooms where reverberation is a problem.
- 6) Choose hearing aids that have the right features for your needs ... learn what they are and when and how to use those features.
- 7) Never buy a hearing aid that's advertised as "so small no one will know" ... remember, those hearing aids don't have the features you might need, and no one cares about your hearing aids any more than they care about your glasses. And ask yourself, "Why would anyone advertise their product in a way that implies you don't really want one?" Hint: I think the answer is "Stupidity" J
- 8) It usually takes a while to have your brain adjust to all the new sounds you haven't heard well for a long time. Expect a period of adjustment.

- 9) Before you buy any hearing aids, learn what you can about at least telecoils, directional microphones, and assistive listening systems.
- 10) Hearing aids are not like glasses; the prescription for glasses usually is spot on and doesn't need any tweaking. That's not usually true for hearing aids.
- 11) Take advantage of the trial period and be prepared when you work with your provider to explain what things sound like ... what sounds are irritating ... they can usually tweak the settings to improve things.
- 12) If your loss is more than minor, do consider hearing aids that have telecoils. About 70% of hearing aids do have them, but you have to ask for them or you won't necessarily get them. You also have to make sure your provider activates the telecoils, adjusts them to your needs, and explains what you need to know about how to use them
- 13) Also consider (especially if your hearing loss is more than moderate) other assistive listening options like Pocketalkers, neckloops, FM, Bluetooth and the new 2.4 Ghz systems.
- 14) Join Hearing Loss Association of America (www.hearingloss.org). Not only will you be helping everyone with hearing loss, you'll be helping yourself.
- 15) If you're near a local HLAA chapter, go to their meetings and events and meet others members and volunteers who know a LOT about hearing loss and have more time than your provider to fill you in on all you'll need to know about being better at hearing loss.
- 16) Learn strategies you'll need to know ... where to sit in restaurants, what to say when job hunting, how to ask for a repeat (Hint: Don't just say "What?" or "Huh?")
- 17) Keep your sense of humor.
- 18) Don't withdraw... you can still be part of society. You can still go to plays, the movies, museums and hear if you know about all the resources to help you hear better.

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