

## Guidelines for Better Adjustment to Hearing Aids



*Obtaining hearing aids has taken you a long way toward improving your hearing and your life. But to successfully adapt to the new sounds you hear and to obtain the maximum benefit possible from your new hearing aids you will need a little time. To help you in your adjustment you may want to follow these guidelines.*

### **Start out slowly.**

While some people can put on hearing aids for the first time and wear them all day in any environment, most cannot. It may be advantageous to begin use in your own home where you have more control over the variety of sounds you will hear and their intensities. Use your comfort level as a guide. If after several hours you want to take off your hearing aids then you should. Allow your ears to rest and then put them on again later.

### **You can live with background sounds.**

Your new hearing aids will amplify all of the sounds of your life, not just speech. When your hearing was normal, all the extra noises you could hear were placed into your background so that they did not distract you. Until you become accustomed to the sounds of life again you will have difficulty “tuning them out.” Listen for the background sounds in your life and learn to recognize them. Those who wear their hearing aids only for special times never fully adjust to and benefit from their hearing aids.

### **Enlist the assistance of a learning partner.**

You may find it helpful to begin listening with your new hearing aids by conversing about familiar topics with only one person (spouse, neighbor, or friend) in the absence of any other distracting sounds. After a day or two you may want to introduce some background noise from the television or a radio. It may be helpful as you become accustomed to your hearing aids to listen to your learning partner read aloud from a newspaper or magazine while you read along silently.

### **Practice speech sound discrimination.**

Prepare a list of words that may differ by a single sound (for example, fish/dish, mop/top, bike/bite, etc.). While your learning partner clearly pronounces the pairs of words watch the lip movements and become familiar with the visual aspects of sound discrimination. Then repeat the task without watching and concentrate on the subtle sound differences between the word pairs. Keep in mind that some speech sounds are identical on the lips (for example, pan/man, bat/mat, sell/tell, etc.). Also keep in mind that auditory discrimination with impaired ears can be difficult and you may not be able to make some sound distinctions. But with practice you will improve.

### **Gradually extend your horizons.**

As you become more experienced with your hearing aids, gradually expand the variety of listening environments and the variety of people you communicate with. You will find that some situations and some voices are easier for you. Certainly listening within groups will be more difficult than one-on-one conversations. When listening in groups concentrate primarily on the person who is talking the most. You may miss an occasional word or phrase. This can be normal in any conversation. Try not to get “hung up” on single words but listen for the idea behind what is being said. And always watch the speaker’s face. Even without formal training in speech reading (lip reading) understanding improves significantly when you have a clear view of the face.

### **Work toward a higher volume setting.**

Most often, new hearing aid users wear their hearing aids at a volume setting that is less than optimal. This is normal, as they are not fully familiar with the amplified sounds they hear. After you have attained a full time use of your new hearing aids, try using them at a slightly higher volume setting for short periods during the day. If this is not uncomfortable, expand on this higher level until you are using it full time. If your hearing aids do not have adjustable volume controls, check with your hearing care practitioner to see if the volume should be reset. Unless you are around loud sounds that potentially could damage your hearing (power tools, lawnmowers, some work environments) you need not limit your hearing aid use. If you are around such sounds it is best to remove your hearing aids and wear hearing protection. The plastic casing of hearing aids turned off in your ears will not adequately protect your hearing. If you have concerns about hearing damage from loud sounds, discuss them with your hearing care provider.

### **Do not become discouraged.**

Remember, you did not lose your hearing overnight. Nor will you become fully adapted to your new hearing aids right away. But by practicing these suggestions and using the communication guidelines in this pamphlet, you will continue to improve.

### **Additional assistance.**

You will find that hearing aids may not help in every situation. If you find you continue to have problems hearing the telephone ring, hearing the smoke alarm, hearing in the car, hearing at the theater or cinema or at religious services, etc., discuss this with your hearing care provider. There are devices designed specifically for a variety of difficulty areas. Talk with your hearing care professional at HearUSA for specialized assistance.

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