HEARING LOSS: THE COMMON INVISIBLE DISABILITY

Hearing loss has been shown to negatively impact nearly every dimension of the human experience, including physical health, emotional and mental health, perceptions of mental acuity, social skills, family relationships, and self-esteem, as well as work and school performance.

Diminished hearing can be a barrier to healthy, independent aging and is compounded by the associated stigma that can make people hesitate to get help. Many people give up doing the things they love, like attending live theater, volunteering, even leaving their careers or jobs—simply because they can’t hear well. Untreated hearing loss has been associated with isolation, depression, family stress, and even cognitive or balance issues.

There’s hope for people with hearing loss. You’re not alone.

Today’s hearing devices, coupled with assistive listening systems, assistive listening devices, and captions, are changing the lives of seniors and others with hearing loss around the world. Additionally the Hearing Loss Association of America and local hearing loss support groups like Hearing Loss Association of America Washington State Association provide information, education, support, advocacy and networking to help people live independently and fully. An extensive list of HLAA membership benefits can be found on page 3.

How can someone help themselves or a loved one?

A visit to an audiologist is a good place to start. They can determine if you have a hearing loss, evaluate if you would benefit from hearing aids and advise you about appropriate models. Make sure you ask for a telecoil in your hearing aid so that you can connect to public assistive listening systems such as hearing loops.

You have the right to hear

Hearing loss is considered a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). That means you have the right to effective communication in places of employment, the programs and services of state and local government, public accommodations, and telecommunications. Look for the international symbol of access for hearing loss. This symbol indicates communication access for hearing loss is present. If you don’t see a symbol, ask what hearing access is available.

Accessibility
Hearing Aids Aren’t Enough

Assistive listening systems are key

Hearing aids, cochlear implants, and bone conductive devices work remarkably well for one-to-one conversations. However, many people continue to struggle to hear and understand in public places: city council meetings, parks and recreation activities, workshops, classes, work meetings, museums, theaters, places of worship, and health care settings. Missing a boarding announcement or getting off at the wrong station may quickly turn travel into a stressful and frustrating experience.

To hear and understand in situations like these, assistive listening systems and devices are necessary. Many people with hearing loss experience difficulties in loud, crowded, or noisy situations. But many people have never heard about or don’t understand assistive listening systems or devices, or how they could benefit from such hearing assistive technology (HAT). Perhaps they see someone with an assistive listening device at the theater but don’t know where to find one, or they don’t realize it could help them.

- 1.5 million people in Washington have some degree of hearing loss
- By age 65, 1 in 3 people has some degree of hearing loss
- Over age 75, 1 out of 2 people has some degree of hearing loss

Because hearing loss seems so common, many individuals who have hearing loss may not consider themselves to have a disability and do not ask for communication access. They are unaware that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides protections for people with hearing loss, including the right to effective communication.

**Bluetooth Technology**

Although it is well established that Bluetooth is beneficial for watching TV or using a mobile phone, this newer technology is currently not capable of connecting multiple users to a large public assistive listening system. Consumers need access to both Bluetooth and telecoils.

**Connecting to Assistive Listening Systems**

Currently, direct hearing device compatibility with assistive listening system can be accomplished via an activated **telecoil** in a hearing instrument.

Many people miss out because their audiologist or hearing health care provider didn’t counsel them about the advantages of using telecoils in public places. While experienced hearing aid users praise telecoils, surveys have shown that fewer than half of all providers counsel clients on the use of telecoils in hearing devices. Less than a third of all providers counsel clients on the availability and use of hearing assistive technologies, specifically assistive listening systems in public venues that can supplement hearing instruments.

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Learn how to live well with hearing loss

1. Learn how to improve your life and technology that can help

2. Receive tips on using the telephone, watching TV, communicating in the car and noisy environments

3. Relax with people like yourself, who understand. You don’t have to apologize

4. Experience the benefits of captions and a hearing loop at chapter meetings

5. Learn how to advocate for yourself

6. Become educated on issues that affect you—potential Medicare coverage for hearing aids

7. Attend dynamic, state of the art presentations about hearing loss issues

8. Receive Hearing Life Magazine

9. Become part of the grassroots Get in the Hearing Loop Movement

10. Be part of a National organization advocating for people with a hearing loss

Find a local HLAA Chapter:
www.hearingloss-wa.org/chapters
Membership Form

☐ New Member  ☐ Renewal
☐ Give a gift membership (USA only) / Below is the gift recipient's information:

Name: __________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________
City: __________________________ State: ______ Zip: ______
Email: __________________________________________ Phone: ______________________

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

Regular Membership (Includes Hearing Life in print and digital format)
☐ Individual $45  ☐ Professional $80  ☐ Corporate $500
☐ Couple/Family $55  ☐ Nonprofit $80

Online Membership (Includes Hearing Life in digital format only)
☐ Individual $35  ☐ Student $25

Veteran Membership
☐ COMPLIMENTARY one year Regular Membership and lifetime Online Membership

Non-USA Membership: ☐ Individual $55

BILLING INFORMATION

Name: __________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________
City: __________________________ State ______ Zip: ______ Country ______
Email: __________________________________________ Phone: ______-______-______
Chapter I belong to: __________________________

CREDIT CARD PAYMENT INFORMATION
☐ American Express  ☐ Discover  ☐ MasterCard  ☐ VISA
Card Number: __________________________ Expiration Date: ______/______ CSV Code: ______
Name: __________________________________________ (as it appears on your credit card)
Signature: __________________________

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