



Are You Aware of Your Hearing Loss?

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“What? You think I have a hearing loss?” If you are like many people, you may be surprised when friends and family suggest that you have a hearing problem. You may think to yourself “I hear what people say. I don’t know why they think I have a hearing loss.” Many times, you probably do hear them when they are talking, but you may be missing some of their conversation with you, or you may not realize that what you think you heard is not exactly

what they were saying. This can lead to your loved ones accusing you of not listening or of not paying attention. There may actually be times when you do not realize that someone is speaking. In this case, you may appear to be ignoring the person, or you may start talking, causing your communication partner to view you as quite rude. Faux pas such as this can lead to annoyance, resentment, and/or exasperation on the part of your communication partner.

You are not alone! Many people experience this, because hearing loss usually comes on very gradually. If you woke up one morning and suddenly could not hear your alarm clock, or the coffee brewing, or your neighbor’s lawnmower, you would probably know right away that you had a hearing problem. The hearing loss experienced by most people is not sudden, but instead comes on little by little. Even when people’s hearing losses have advanced to the point where they are missing the punch line during a joke, or failing to hear the tea pot whistle, they still are likely to know when someone is talking and to understand much of what is said, especially in an ideal listening situation where there is only one talker and no background noise.

Although your spouse, children, coworkers, and friends may nag you to do something about your hearing difficulties, you yourself may not realize how much you are missing in every day conversations. Even if a full hearing evaluation confirms that you have a significant hearing loss, you still may insist that even if you do, it is not causing any problems.

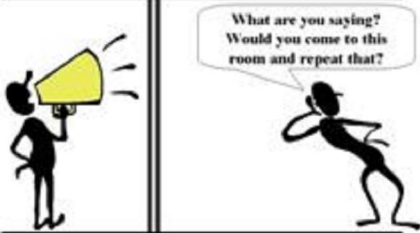
If this sounds like you, it may be helpful to start consciously monitoring situations in which you may be experiencing communication problems due to hearing loss. It is important to realize that hearing loss not only affects your ability to understand what people are saying, it can also have other consequences. For example, you may not realize that lately you feel tense in social situations, that you become tired more easily, especially after a busy day at work or during a social situation, and that you want to bow out of previously enjoyed activities such as bowling. These changes may be occurring because, without realizing it fully, you may be straining to understand your communication partners and experiencing communication situations as stressful. Again, these experiences may happen so slowly over time that you do not even realize the connection between hearing difficulties and your emotional response to these difficulties.

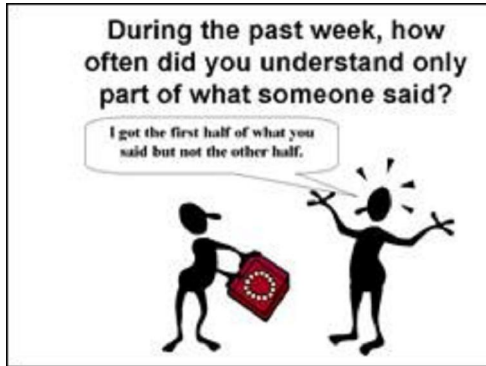
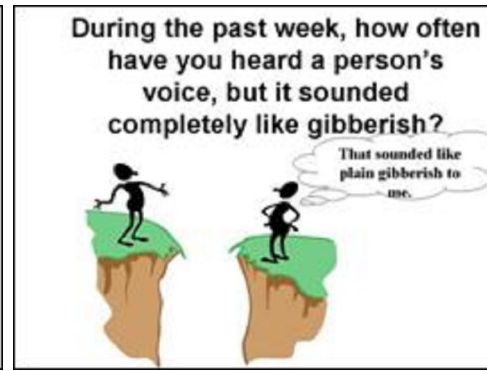
Let’s say that your family and friends have suggested that you have a hearing loss, and a hearing health professional has confirmed that test results indicate a significant hearing loss. You, however, are still doubtful. Try monitoring your hearing for a few weeks so that you may become more aware of how your hearing loss may be affecting you, as well as your family and friends. When you realize not just that you have a hearing loss, but that it is affecting your family, social, and work place, you may be a better candidate for hearing assistive technology. When you monitor your conversational experiences, you will probably become more aware of

everyday communication problems that you are experiencing. Your awareness of difficulties, such as hearing female voices, understanding in background noise, and participating in conversations when multiple speakers are talking, may help your hearing health care provider choose hearing assistive technology that would be most helpful for your particular problems.

To increase your awareness of how hearing loss might be affecting you, try periodically (e.g., every week) looking at the sample communication situations below and answering the question “How often does this happen to you?” using one of the following answers:

1. Never
2. Once or twice a week
3. Several times each week
4. Many times
5. All the time

<p>In the past week, how often has a friend or family member accused you of not listening?</p> 	<p>How often do you find yourself intently watching the speaker's mouth?</p> 
<p>How often do family members complain that you turn up the TV or radio much too loud?</p> 	<p>How often do you have difficulty with hearing alarm signals?</p> 
<p>How often do you have difficulty with hearing a voice from another room?</p> 	<p>How often do you have difficulty with hearing during conversations in a moving car?</p> 



Self-monitoring may help you realize that your family and friends are not just picking on you, but rather, that you do have hearing difficulties. These difficulties can cause problems not only for you, but also for family members, coworkers, and friends. If you scored 3 or more on these items you may have a hearing loss. For further information about your treatment options, go to the Better Hearing Institute web link titled [Hearing Solutions](http://www.betterhearing.org/hearing_loss/online_hearing_test/index.cfm) http://www.betterhearing.org/hearing_loss/online_hearing_test/index.cfm