

Communication Aid

Adjusting to a Hearing Aid

- ***Learning to use a hearing aid*** - A hearing aid is an electronic device designed to allow one to hear sounds which are missing without it. Such sounds as birds singing or the knock in the car engine may be heard once again, along with dishes clanking and paper shuffling in the background. Time and practice are required in order to learn to use a hearing aid to one's advantage. This requires patience on the part of all concerned. Encouraging hearing impaired people in these learning experiences is helpful, while being overly demanding about the use of the aid only adds frustration. No one wearing a hearing aid for the first time should expect or be expected to understand or even to like all that is heard.
- ***Amplified sound*** - In the beginning, amplification may exhaust the user because of the quantity of unaccustomed auditory input. By gradually lengthening wearing time, one builds endurance to the amplified sounds and increased hearing range. Relatives and friends can help a great deal by maintaining an attitude that anticipates and encourages any effort to adjust to this valuable instrument.
- ***Adjusting to the aid*** - Knowing what to expect will help you make this adjustment. If your loss is a mild one, you may be delighted with your hearing aid from the beginning. Suddenly, listening is easy again, and your fear of gradually being shut off from the world is relieved. The adjustment period may last only a few hours.
- ***Some adjustments take longer*** - But if your hearing loss is more severe, particularly if it developed gradually over a long period of time, the adjustment period may last longer. The *absence of sound* may have become a familiar part of your everyday world and the use of a hearing aid could be an unpleasant or even shocking experience. There is a confusion of sounds and some of the individual sounds at first may seem meaningless. It takes time and practice to select what you want to hear from what you don't want to hear.
- ***When there is an adjustment problem*** - If you find that sounds continue to be unpleasant after a reasonable period, have your dispenser or audiologist check the aid. It may have some design fault which exaggerates the noises around you to an unbearable degree. You may be using more amplification than you need. The earmold may not fit properly or you may not be inserting it correctly. These are examples of problems to be solved and are certainly not reasons to abandon the hearing aid.
- ***Help is available*** - The audiologist or dispenser should have the patience and skill to help you through the adjustment period as you become accustomed to wearing the aid.

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Communication Aid (Continued)

● *Here are some suggestions* - These suggestions will also help make this period easier for you.

1. *Begin with a comfortable volume level:* In the beginning keep the volume at a level which feels comfortable even if you miss a few words. As you get used to wearing the aid, you can gradually increase the volume.
2. *Begin with easy challenges:* Treat yourself to easy listening during the first few days. Don't be upset if at first you cannot understand soft voices or hear a conversation perfectly in a noisy room. Stand close and face the person with whom you are talking, and don't be afraid to ask people to speak more clearly or slowly.

It makes good sense to learn to use your hearing aid with confidence before you attempt to use it for a large family gathering, church or a noisy restaurant.

3. *Re-learn the trick of concentration:* Because of your hearing loss, you may have developed the habit of "tuning out" when conversation gets difficult to follow. With the hearing aid your efforts to pay close attention are more likely to be rewarded. Make a conscious effort to attend to conversations, to listen to music, to enjoy the quality of the sounds within your new hearing range.

4. *Be patient:* Patience is the watchword in learning to use a hearing aid. As your mind adjusts, noise and meaning will gradually sort themselves out, and within a short time you should be using your hearing aid with maximum effectiveness.

Homework

This week identify three enjoyable sounds which your hearing aid allows you to hear.