

## **New and Improved... Life With My Hearing Aids**

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Wearing bilateral hearing aids for the past several years has made a vast difference in my ability to communicate both at work and at home. However, I found myself going through several different stages as I made the adjustment. Hopefully, the experiences I am going to share will benefit those considering hearing aids.

**Stage One:** "I don't need a hearing aid!" Studies show that Americans wait an average of 7 years before doing something about their hearing loss. Think about it-that's 7 years of denial while struggling to hear, missing words, per- haps pretending to understand or even avoiding people and conversations. That's a long time to miss opportunities and pleasures, as the world slowly grows smaller. I finally decided I needed a hearing aid when I did not understand if my husband had said, "I went to bed." or "I wet the bed." Hearing the correct word really makes a difference!

**Stage Two:** "Okay, I need one but I don't want an ugly thing hanging out of my head."

In reality, hearing aids are simply not as noticeable as hearing loss itself. I wear behind the ear (BTE) aids and have short hair, and most people don't even notice the aids until I point them out.

**Stage Three:** "I have one. It's too loud and I don't like it." People who own hearing aids know they can be a mixed blessing in the beginning. For me, there was a time of playing the game, Name That Sound! The first sound I heard distinctly (and loudly) with my new hearing aids was the singing of birds. The sensory overload from all these "new sounds" can be tiring. It's important to allow sufficient time to get the most out of our new technology. Don't get discouraged. Some people benefit from wearing new aids for short periods of time at first, scheduling quiet time that "rests the brain" and gradually increasing the "wearing time". If the sound still seems too loud or uncomfortable, an audiologist may be able to help by making adjustments in the hearing aid.

**Stage Four:** Prayerful Appreciation. I often say, "Please don't let anything happen to these hearing aids. I can't do without them!" To get the most out of my hearing aids, I store them in the drying container overnight, which keeps them safe and dry. Keeping extra batteries close at hand remedies "power outages".

Although hearing aids are not corrective (like eye glasses), they can make a tremendous difference and allow people with hearing loss to enjoy and

participate in life more fully. My two "best friends", my hearing aids, help me hear my grandchildren's voices, the birds by the front porch, and my favorite TV program. The time it took to work through all the above stages was well worth it!