American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

AUDIOLOGY Information Series

Helping Others Cope With Hearing Loss

Do you know someone who often asks you to repeat what you've said or just ignores you when you speak to him or her? Do you think the person is not paying attention to you or lacks knowledge and understanding? Or do you know this is a possible sign of hearing loss? The person with the hearing loss may not be aware that he or she has one.

Having a hearing loss can affect quality of life and cause changes in behavior and mood.

Hearing loss requires more effort and energy to hear and communicate. People with hearing loss can become stressed and tired if it is left untreated. In addition, feelings of embarrassment and shame can occur and can affect a person's self-esteem.

Sometimes people with hearing problems deny the hearing loss and blame others for mumbling or talking too softly. Other people with hearing loss try to control conversations by doing most of the talking. By doing most of the talking, they don't need to listen. And still others choose to withdraw from difficult social activities to avoid the strain and fatigue needed to hear.

When a person first learns that he or she has a hearing loss, the person often grieves the loss as he or she would any other loss of body function. Grief is not just one feeling but a group of feelings. These are some common grief emotions associated with hearing loss:

- Denial
- Anger
- Guilt
- Fear
- Sadness
- Confusion
- Loneliness

How can you help someone cope with a hearing loss?

There are a number of factors that can affect a person's ability to cope with hearing loss; these include:

- Social support from family and friends
- Educational background
- Economic status
- Work demands
- Age
- Religious beliefs and customs
- Additional health issues

You can help the person with hearing loss come to terms with the loss and get treatment to hear better.

The first step is to seek out the services of an audiologist certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). The audiologist is the professional most qualified by training and experience to test and diagnose nonmedical types of hearing loss. Audiologists counsel people with hearing loss and their families and build a plan of care that often includes hearing aids and other hearing assistive devices. It is important to know that hearing aids alone may not solve all the problems resulting from the hearing loss.

Successful treatment for hearing loss is a lifelong process and involves ongoing evaluation, education, training, support, and advocacy. Therefore, a comprehensive program of audiologic rehabilitation should follow the evaluation, fitting, and purchase of a hearing aid.

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NOTES:

For more information about hearing loss, hearing aids, or referral to an ASHA-certified audiologist, contact the:

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

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