

Treating Hearing Loss is More Important Than Ever

Everyone has heard the saying “use it or lose it” mostly in the context of strength exercises for muscle groups or brain exercises to maintain your cognitive function for life. For the past few years, this same concept has been used for hearing loss. Researchers identify hearing loss that is acquired after you learn to speak, auditory deprivation. Basically what this means is that if your brain doesn't receive the auditory signal (sound), it forgets how to use it, sometimes permanently. This knowledge has prompted many advertisements for hearing aids with the “use it, or lose it” slogan. Some may see it as a sales gimmick but that isn't the case. In fact, even more recent research from John Hopkins University has found a strong link between untreated hearing loss and dementia ([www.hopkinsmedicine.org/otolaryngology/.](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/otolaryngology/))



With this knowledge, it's more important than ever to treat hearing loss...the sooner the better. The first step in the process is to get an evaluation by a hearing care professional. Once the tests have been completed and your hearing loss identified, a recommendation for hearing aids will be presented. Today's digital hearing aids can do remarkable things in getting sound back to your brain. This is the first and most critical step in treating your hearing loss. But, there are many more steps you need to take to complete the treatment and help you cope with communication difficulties and emotional adjustments. Your hearing aid will provide you with the structure to hear but your own commitment, education, and motivation are what will determine your success in treating your hearing loss.

A good start in this process is to join the Hearing Loss Association of America (www.hearingloss.org). HLAA is the largest, consumer focused organization for people with hearing loss. You will find a wealth of information from their website and will receive a bi-monthly magazine with the latest research and advocacy updates. North Carolina was the first state to organize a state association of HLAA and is called The Hearing Loss Association of North Carolina (HLA-NC, www.ncheatingloss.org). HLA-NC organizes the Walk4Hearing fund-raising/awareness event and advocates for hearing loss issues in various State programs. Locally, there are Chapters of the HLAA, which meet regularly throughout the year with various speakers and programs to help people understand and “treat” their hearing loss. One-on-one discussions with others can help identify and apply other assistive technologies and strategies that are available including the CapTel Telephone, fm/infra-red/bluetooth/tele-coil assistive devices, aural rehabilitation programs, emergency preparedness issues, and much more. Attending your first meeting will be a game changer in your commitment to treat your hearing loss.

For more information on HLA-Wake Chapter activities contact: Janet at (919-469-0924)
Or
Steve at steve.barber@earthlink.net

The current schedule of HLA-Wake Chapter: Meeting Place is Umstead Park United Church of Christ, 8208 Brownleigh Drive, Raleigh, NC. 7:00 pm

September 20: Latest in Telephone technology

November 1: Triangle wide meeting – Personal stories of hearing loss from people around the Triangle

December 4: HLA Holiday Social (location tbd)

Julie Bishop is Vice-President of the Hearing Loss Association of North Carolina and a leader in the HLAA-Wake County Chapter.