

Introduction to Hearing Loss

The Basics by and for Consumers



- Introduction
- Demographics
- Getting Past Denial and Vanity
- Getting the Help You Need
 - Hearing Health Care Providers
 - A Proper Evaluation
 - Hearing Aids and Features
 - Financial Considerations
- Beyond Hearing Aids
- Strategies
- Resources

Why I Say “Consumer Focus”

I’m Not a Hearing Health Professional



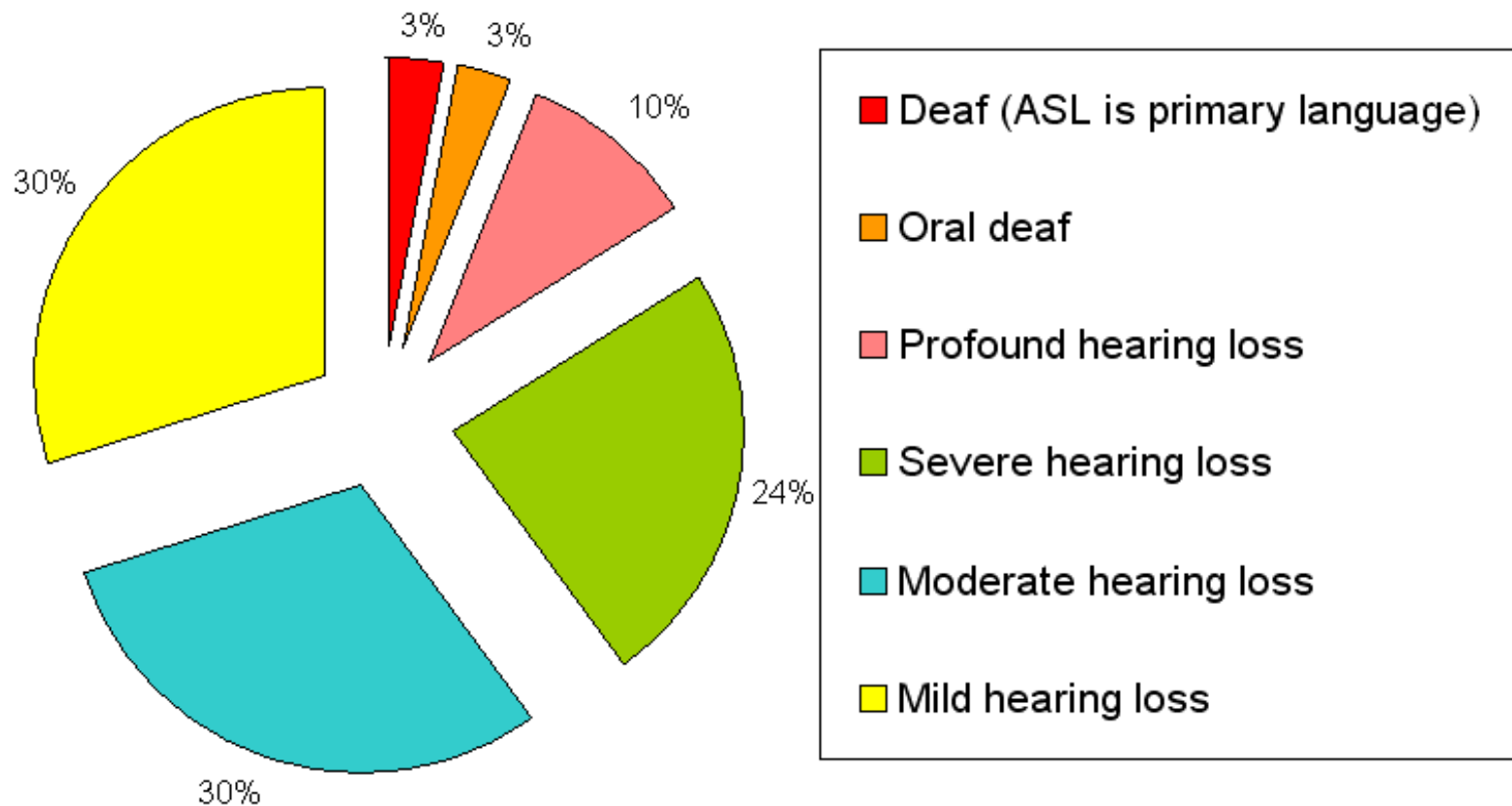
- Grew up with normal hearing
- Gradual hearing loss for 30 years
- Barely Understand Speech now
- Typical Case of “Denial and Vanity”
- Finally Decided “I Must Take Charge”
 - Joined Hearing Loss Association of America
 - President of Local Wake Chapter Several Years
 - President of State Association for Several Years
 - Chair of NC Council for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Big Numbers; Wide Range

Over 30 Million People



Approximate Deaf and Hard of Hearing Population in the United States



Developed by HLA-Wake County, Raleigh, NC

Getting Past Denial and Vanity

Just Do It!



- It's Your Hearing Loss (and it's probably worse than you think)
 - People Aren't Mumbling!
 - The TV really is TOO LOUD for others!
 - You have trouble understanding some words if its noisy?
- It Matters to Your
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Job
 - Happiness
- People Respect Your Efforts to Solve
- People Care That You Can Communicate
- They Don't Care Whether You Have Hearing Aids
- Realizing I had NOTHING to be vain about worked for me 😊

This part is easy:
ONLY You can do it!

Getting Others Past Denial and Vanity

Not so Easy



- Nagging probably isn't effective (just makes YOU their problem).
- Better to make it their problem, not yours
- Get them with others successfully dealing with hearing loss.
 - Hearing Loss Association of America
 - Not Aunt Tilly who doesn't know how to operate her hearing aids.
- Get age out of the equation. (It's about communication.)
- Focus on positives:
 - Technology (It really is better now.)
 - Fashion (Hearing aids are now fashion accessories.)
 - Ear-level devices for phones and music (Make hearing aids invisible)
- Which is better?
 - Can't hear well; try to hide it and look like a fool?
 - Wear hearing aids; hear better and look like you're proactive?

Getting The Help You Need

Your Role



- Get a real Audiological Evaluation
 - Pure Tone (the beeps at different frequencies)
 - Tympanogram
 - Bone Conduction
 - Word/sentence recognition
 - Maybe other measurements (balance, ABR)
- See an Ear Doctor
 - Can it be remedied or improved medically?
 - Are there other medical implications?
- Then Deal with the Hearing Aid Question
 - What to look for?
 - Where to buy?
 - Financial Help?

Get a copy of your audiogram and learn what it means.

Never buy a hearing aid based only on a "Hearing Screening".

Getting The Help You Need

Hearing Health Providers



■ Doctors

- Assume your GP knows nothing about hearing loss.
- Assume even your Ear Doctors knows little about hearing aids.
- ENTs, Otolaryngologists, Otologists, Otorhinolaryngologists

■ Audiologists

- Can evaluate hearing and fit hearing aids
- About half have Masters degree (usually identified by CCC-A)
- About half have Doctorate degree (either a Ph.D. or Au.D.)

■ Hearing Aid Dealers (Hearing Instrument Specialists)

- Can measure (screen) hearing and fit hearing aids
- Most states require passing a test and apprenticing for a year.
- Often have lots of credentials such as "Board Certified, BC-HIS ..."

Getting The Help You Need

Finding Providers



- “Find an Audiologist (or HIS)” sites
 - American Academy of Audiology
webportal.audiology.org/Custom/FindAnAudiologist.aspx
 - American Speech and Hearing Association
www.asha.org/proserv/
 - Audiology Foundation of America
www.audfound.org/doctors/
 - International Hearing Society
www.ihsinfo.org/ihsv2/Directory/040_HSNY.cfm
- Ask someone who knows
 - Not “Aunt Tilly”
 - HLAA can’t recommend
 - But individual members will often share their experiences (good and bad)



Getting The Help You Need

Factors to Consider



- Credentials
- Facilities (sound proof booths?)
- Brands Offered (proprietary vs. multiple)
- Screening vs. Full Audiological Assessment
- Dr. Connected? (if that matters this time)
- Return policy (no NC law, but most will offer 30 days or more)
- Fitting hearing aids is an art, not a science
 - Will they listen to you?
 - Personal Attention
- Auditory Rehabilitation Program?

Getting The Help You Need

Other “Techs”



- Audiology Techs
- Otolaryngology Techs
- Oto Techs
- May use words like “Certified”

All of these are non-degreed, helpers you may run into. They may “assist” the Audiologist or Doctor but should not be measuring, analyzing, diagnosing or treating hearing problems.

Hearing Aids

Better Than Ever



- Almost all are digital
- Still have style choices
 - BTE
 - ITE
 - ITC
 - CIC
- Much more adaptable to your loss
- High Tech, Stylish, Colorful
- Smaller than ear-level phone and music devices
- New "Open Fitting" tiny BTEs are very popular

Smaller aids often do not have the room for the best features.

Trend is toward

- High Tech
- Stylish

Hearing Aid Features

Can You Name 3? ... Any?



■ Definitely Consider:

- Volume Control
- Telecoil
- Multiple Microphone Directionality
- Ear mold/Vent vs. Open Fitting

■ Consider If You Want

- Direct Audio Input
- FM

■ Commonly Included

- Compression
- Clipping
- Wind Noise Suppression
- Feedback Suppression
- Programmability
- Channels/Bands
- Speech Enhancement/Noise Reduction

■ Special Needs/Interest

- Frequency Shifting
- Remote Control
- Cros/Bi-Cros

Financial Considerations

They are Expensive



Low of \$1000 to High of \$3000 or more

- Per Aid
- Without Fancy Stuff
- Insurance
 - Medical usually covers Dr. and Audiologist
 - But Hearing Aid Coverage?
 - Rare
 - Some company plans provide limited coverage
- Tax advantages: None yet
- Useful hearing aid life probably averages about 5 years

Financial Considerations

Other Financial Help



- Veteran's Administration (Service Related)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Work Related)
- NC Program (1 Aid Free for Very Low Income)
(Most states do NOT have hearing aid programs)
- Audient Alliance (Big Discount for Med/Low Income)
www.audientalliance.org/
- Lions Club International
www.lionsclubs.org/EN/content/lcif_gr_ahap.shtml

Assistive Technology

Assistive Listening Devices



- In some cases, hearing aids aren't enough
 - Noise
 - Distance
 - More Severe Losses
- ALDs (or ALSs) Can Help
 - Personal Amplifiers
 - Personal FM
 - Bluetooth
- Without a Hearing Aid (headphones or ear buds)
- Much Better Interfaced with Hearing Aids
 - Loop (room, area, neck, silhouette) to Telecoil
 - Direct Audio Input (DAI)
 - Integrated with Hearing Aid

Other Assistive Technology/Services

Lots of Stuff



- Phones and Features
 - Amplified
 - Caller-ID
 - Hearing Aid Compatible
- Relay, IP-Relay, CapTel (free phone in NC)
- Conference and Directional Microphones
- Special Alarm Clocks
- Alerting Devices
- Hearing Assistance Dogs
- Captions (movies, TV)
- CART, CAN, C-Print (live captioning options)
- Weather Alert Radio (Free in NC)

Beyond Traditional Hearing Aids

Implants



- Implantable Hearing Aids
 - Partial
 - Full
- Bone Anchored Hearing Aids
 - conductive losses
 - unilateral losses
- Cochlear Implants (120,000 in the US at end of 2007)
- Auditory Brainstem Implants (a few hundred)
- Mid-Brain Implants (only a couple in Germany)

Strategies

Getting Good



- Tell people what you need from them
 - Normal voice; shouting doesn't help
 - See your face
 - Slow down
 - Make sure you know subject (especially if it changes)
- Don't Bluff
- Confirm Understanding
- Explain, Don't Just Say "Huh"
- Choose or Change Your Situation (noise/position/lighting)
- Plan Ahead
- Keep Your Sense of Humor

Resources

Major Organizations



- HLAA www.hearingloss.org
www.nchearingloss.org
- DSDHH dsdhh.dhhs.state.nc.us
 - Hard of Hearing Specialists
 - Hearing Aid Program
 - Relay Program
 - Telecommunications Equipment Distribution
- Voc Rehab dvr.dhhs.state.nc.us
- NC Assistive Technology Program www.ncatp.org
- Beginnings www.ncbegin.org

What is HLAA?

HLAA



- Hearing Loss Association of America
- Mission: to open the world of communication to hard of hearing people by providing education, information, support, and advocacy.
- Small National Office in Md
- About 15 States have State Level Associations
- Grassroots network of Local Chapters
 - Over 250 chapters/groups across U.S.
 - All volunteers
 - Most with hearing loss

Non-Profit Organization

HLAA



- **HLAA (the National Organization)**
 - Education and Advocacy
 - \$35 Membership (Join at www.hearingloss.org)
 - Great Magazine and National Convention
 - Discounts
- **HLA-xx (where xx = State Abbreviation)**
 - State-Level Associations of HLAA
 - Coordination and Advocacy at the State Level
 - Established in many states, now
- **Local Chapters (HLA-Wake)**
 - In many cities across the country
 - Real "End-User" Support through volunteers

**You may have to
DRAG someone
you care about!**

My Wife Dragged Me!

Developed by HLA-Wake County, Raleigh, NC

Questions and Answers

Any Time



■ Now

- Just ask
- If I can't answer, I can find out and get back to you

■ Later

- Email me
 - steve.barber@earthlink.net
 - stebar@sas.com
- Attend HLAA Chapter Meetings
 - Other members are glad to help.