

Savvy Hard of Hearing Consumers

How to Be One; How to Serve One



- Growing Pains
- Seeds of Revolution
- Becoming a Savvy Consumer
- Serving Savvy Consumers

Permission is hereby granted for anyone to present this presentation to promote the interests of people with hearing loss. The PowerPoint and the PDF of it are both available at www.ncheatingloss.org/programs.htm

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Most people with hearing loss have not been particularly savvy in the past. Many aren't today. But a revolution is in the making. Several things are contributing. Hearing aids, Cochlear implants and assistive technology are dramatically better now. They are even becoming fashionable. People are starting to move beyond hiding and denying their loss and are learning how to make the most of their hearing ... with technology, strategies and behaviors. This presentation covers that revolution and suggests to people with hearing loss (and to those serve them), that it's time to get on that band wagon.

Ancient History

Until a Couple Hundred Years Ago



- Good news
 - Most people didn't live long enough to lose much hearing.
 - No Boom Boxes or IPODs
 - Hearing Aids were Cheap and didn't need batteries
- Bad News
 - Early Death was a primary fallout from hearing loss.
 - If the SaberTooth Tigers didn't get you, your "Friends" would stone you as a witch.
- Vanity
 - Not really a problem compared to the tigers and witch thing.



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Until recently there wasn't much that could be done about hearing loss.

19th Century

Between 200 - 100 Years Ago



- Good News
 - Manufactured Hearing Aids
 - Shells are out
 - New technology is all the rage!
- Bad News
 - They were expensive
 - They didn't work well
 - You still had to keep a wary eye on your "Friends".
- Vanity
 - Crude attempts at hiding and fashion
 - Some built into canes
 - One built into a chair for a king



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This should make you feel happy about today's hearing aids.

Early 20th Century

Starting About 100 Years Ago



- Good News
 - First Electronic Hearing Aids
- Bad News
 - They were expensive
 - They were somewhat bulky
 - They didn't work well
 - They were rare
- Vanity
 - Some were table models
 - Later they were body worn and "concealed".



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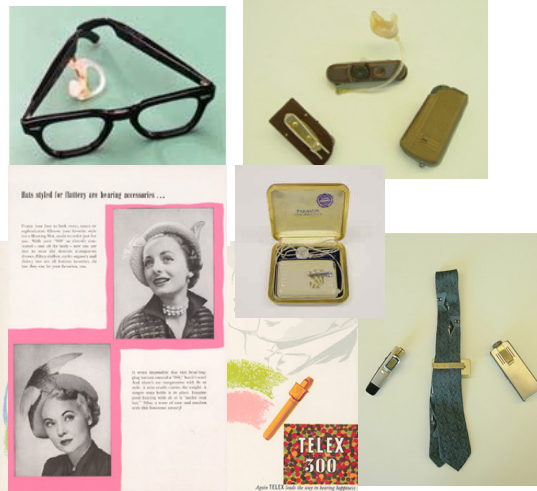
Early electronic aids weren't so hot either.

Mid-20th Century

Starting About 50 Years Ago



- Good News
 - Electronic Hearing Aids
 - Smaller
 - Fashionably hidden?
- Bad News
 - They were expensive
 - They didn't work all that well
- Vanity (aids badly hidden in)
 - Pens
 - Rings
 - Barrettes
 - Glasses
 - Hair-Dos
 - Tie Clips
 - Bras



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Hearing aid creativity mainly focused on hiding the aids, since they didn't have much else to crow about.

50's Through 1990

Analog Moves to Ear Level



- Good News
 - Behind The Ear
 - In The Ear
 - In the Canal
 - Completely In The Canal
 - Telecoils and the Dawn of ALDs
 - SHHH is Born
- Bad News
 - Technology Still Limited
 - Still largely linear amplifiers
 - "Two Screw" adjustments
 - Few Know about Support Groups
- Vanity (Hiding is still the Rage)
 - Flesh Colored
 - So Small; No One Will Know



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Ear-Level aids were reasonably useful, but technically were not very advanced, and the focus was still on hiding the aids and making them smaller. Making them “flesh colored” didn’t do much to make them appealing or “invisible”.

Why 10 Pages of History?

The Themes of Our History



- Not A Whole Lot You Could Do, Really
- Denial
- Vanity
- Hiding (badly)
- Nobody Cared (even us)

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We took this quick tour through history to give you a sense of just how far we've come. And how much better the future can be for people with hearing loss.

Revolution?

What are the Seeds?



- Large Numbers of people (whose needs are not being met)
- A Potential for Improvement
- Technology
- Resources/Communication
- A Few People (who believe they can make a difference)

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There are depending on the estimates, well over 30,000 people with hearing loss. There's an explosion in technology and resources available to help people with hearing loss. A small, but enthusiastic nucleus of people are effectively helping themselves and others with hearing loss through HLAA and Internet resources.

Seeds of Revolution

Large Number of People



- About 30 Million People in the US
- Growing Numbers Growing Percentages
 - Noise Pollution
 - Living Longer
 - “Born Deaf” → “Hard of Hearing”

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The number of people with hearing loss is large and getting larger. Noise is everywhere and many young people are losing their hearing as they abuse music players. In 1900, the average lifespan was 49, but now people routinely live much longer so the percentage of people with hearing loss is increasing. The majority of children who are “born deaf” are getting Cochlear Implants and will have a hearing loss instead of being deaf. The range of losses that can be helped with Hearing Aids, CIs and assistive technology has dramatically broadened the potential for a meaningful improvement for people with hearing loss.

Seeds of Revolution

Potential for Improvement



- Beginnings of a “Community”
- Hearing Assistance Works Better
 - Hearing aids and features
 - Connectivity and Accessibility
- Manufacturers Finally Focusing on Fashion
- Hearing Assistance is Common Place
 - Rock Stars, and Presidents
 - Two Recent Miss Americas
 - People with Normal Hearing
 - Cell Phone users
 - Music Players
- Strength and Confidence in Numbers

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These things are signs that a revolution is underway.

Seeds of Revolution

Technology



- Digital Hearing Aids
- Cochlear Implants
- Bone Anchored
- Implantable
- Features, Features, Features
- ALDs
- Computers
- Special Phones/Blackberries/CapTel
- Captions

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A technology explosion is helping spur the revolution, too.

Seeds of Revolution

Resources/Communication



- SHHH → Hearing Loss Association of America
- Internet
 - Web
 - Listserves, Chat
 - IP-Relay
- Telecommunications Act
- ADA
- State Services Expand to Cover the HH in their Names

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None of these were available 30 years ago. All of them can make a huge difference for people with hearing loss.

Seeds of Revolution

A Few Committed People



- 30 Years ago, there was
 - nothing like SHHH
 - No leaders
 - No followers
- Now we have a "community"
 - Hearing Loss Association of America
 - Several State level associations
 - Hundreds of Chapters
 - Internet breeds leaders and volunteers
 - Hard of Hearing Specialists

(State Services Expand to Cover the HH in their Names)



Are you a
George Washington?
John Hancock?
Benjamin Franklin?
Thomas Jefferson?
Thomas Paine?

Now is the Time!

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“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

Join the revolution!

Seeds of Revolution

Acceptance



- Beginnings of a “Community”
- Hearing Assistance Works Better
 - Hearing aids and features
 - Connectivity and Accessibility
- Manufacturers Finally Focusing on Fashion
- Hearing Assistance is Common Place
 - Rock Stars, and Presidents
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Everybody’s doing it ... it works better and people are recognizing that the “stigma” was a mirage.

Where Are We Now?

Not There Yet



- Vanity Still Has a Grip
- Avoidance Still Reigns
- Ignorance is widespread

Skit!

- But, the Revolution is Underway!

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You can leave this one out, but I had a member of the audience come up and I put them in a bright red sports coat and we did a brief skit of me buying a car the wrong way. They were the used car dealer, and I was the “customer”.

Customer: My wife says I need to buy a car. I don't really want one, but if I have to have one, I'd like one that solves all my transportation problems and doesn't require me to know anything about it.

Dealer: I've got exactly the car for you, and you won't have to know anything about it.

Question: do you think that customer is going to be a happy car owner?:

The Revolution is Underway

Why I Think That's True



- Technology has bounded ahead
 - Hearing Aids are dramatically better
 - Cochlear Implants are effective
 - ALDs are fairly common
- Information is Everywhere!
- Hearing Loss Association of America
- Everyone's got something in their ears
 - Cell Phone users
 - Music Players
 - Bluetooth
- Fashion (Manufacturers finally focus on design not hiding)
- Hearing Loss Population Explodes
 - People are Living Longer
 - Noise is Multiplying Us (Music Players, Auto Stereos, Concerts)



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Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Participating in the Revolution



- Preaching to the Choir
- Helping Yourself
- Helping Others

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This presentation was designed to be presented at a major hearing loss conference in NC. Most of the attendees were, indeed, already savvy.

But for those who weren't it's easy to join the revolution. All you have to do is help yourself and help others. That's what HLAA is about.

Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Get Beyond Destructive Behavior



- Vanity and Denial
 - Get Over It!
 - Nobody Else Cares
- Your Attitude Matters
- Confidence and Determination Inspires
 - Admiration
 - Support
- Corrected Hearing Loss → Strength
- Uncorrected Hearing Loss → Weakness
- Insecurity and Weakness are Self-Inflicted

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The destructive behavior of the past is being replaced with practical behavior that is much more effective.

Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Learn How Hearing Works



- What's on your audiogram?
 - Ski Slope
 - Reverse Slope
 - Cookie Bite
 - Speech Recognition
 - Tympanogram
- How does sound travel?
- Why is noise important?
- Why localization is important?
- What's with vowels vs. consonants?
- What is recruitment all about?

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To help yourself, you need to understand a few things about hearing and hearing loss. There's not time to teach all that here, but it's widely available for those who want to learn.

Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Understand Your Needs



- TV?
- Phone?
- Meetings?
- Restaurants?
- Cars?
- Work?
- Relationships?

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Be prepared to discuss which of these needs are important to you and your hearing. If your hearing health care professional understands your interests, they can better focus on satisfying your needs.

Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Learning from People Who Know



- Hearing Loss Association of America
 - Conferences
 - Hearing Loss Magazine
 - Chapter Meetings
- Internet
 - Yahoo Groups and Listserves
 - Beyond Hearing
 - Better Hearing News
 - Hearing Loss Association
 - Web and Google
- State Agencies and Services

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Seek out people who are successfully dealing with their hearing loss and learn from them. Don't ask someone who's hearing aids are in the drawer.

Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Learn and Use Effective Strategies



- Don't Bluff
- "I heard ..., but missed ... " vs "HuH?"
- "Let's Move so I can hear you better."
- ~~Fools~~ Rush in and Get the Best Seats!
- Choose restaurants carefully
- Know when to override automation
- Help People know what works
- Put Others at ease (It's not their problem, it's yours)

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Some common strategy tips. Making the most of your hearing means managing the situation effectively. It's a lot more than just buying a hearing aid.

Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Get Professional Help



- Get a real Audiological Evaluation
- See an Ear Doctor
- Choose a Fitter
 - Audiologist vs. Hearing Aid Dealer
 - House Brand vs. Multiple Brands
 - Knows what they are doing
 - Willing to listen and help

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Never buy a hearing aid based on a “hearing screening”. Get all the free screenings you want, but a professional evaluation can have a much better chance at identifying the cause and best options for your dealing with your hearing loss. It’s also important to rule out causes that could be more serious than just a hearing loss. In rare situations, hearing loss can be a symptom of serious medical problems that need attention (or else).

Choosing the fitter may be more important than choosing the brand.

Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Choosing Hearing Aids



- Put Hearing Better as your FIRST PRIORITY
- My Thoughts on
 - Styles
 - Brands
 - Features
- Shop around
- Understand your rights
 - Trial Periods
 - Return policies
 - Warrantees

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Don't make the classic mistake of putting vanity and "invisibility" first. Put hearing better first and make that very clear to your provider.

Learn about styles, brands and features.

Small isn't likely to be better. Don't buy a hearing aid until you can name at least three features that you want in your aids ... hint: invisibility isn't one of them.

You don't have to buy your hearing aids from the first person who measures your hearing.

Discuss your rights up front.

Becoming a Savvy Consumer

Features Worth Knowing About



- Volume Control
- Directional Microphones
- Multiple Programs
- Windnoise and Feedback Management
- Remote Controls
- Open Fittings and Vents
- Telecoils
- FM

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No time to explain these in detail ... see glossary at www.nchearingloss.org.

Helping Others Become Savvy

Advice and Advocacy



- The world desperately needs
 - Volunteers
 - That know what they are doing
- Join Hearing Loss Association of America
 - Get involved with a local chapter
 - Start one if there isn't one nearby
- Answer questions on Listserves
- Get on Boards, Committees, Councils
- Support Hearing Issues in Health Fairs

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There's no better way to become a savvy consumer than to start helping yourself and others through Hearing Loss Association of America.

Helping Others Become Savvy

What needs to be Improved



- Accessibility
 - Make Loops more available
 - Encourage captioning
 - Ask for ALDs or captioning and praise providers
 - Speakup when what you need isn't there
- Help state agencies understand Hearing Loss
- Promote shared interests among other groups
- Write or Encourage Articles about Hearing Loss

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There's a lot that still needs improving. If you can work with HLAA or your local chapter (or start one) on things like this, you'll be helping yourself as well as others.

Serving Savvy Consumers

Expect to Encounter Them



- People have more resources now
 - Hearing Loss Association of America
 - Internet
 - News
 - State Services
- People are getting beyond
 - Denial
 - Vanity
- People are becoming savvy shoppers

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This page was really to warn the professionals that savvy consumers are coming. They won't be swayed by "it's invisible" or "so small no one will know". They'll expect you to be positive about telecoils, directional mics, FM, bluetooth. They'll expect and participate in give and take fittings.

Even if your audience doesn't have any hearing professionals in it, the bullets provide some idea for consumers to consider in what to look for in a consumer oriented provider.

Serving Savvy Consumers

Advise Them Accordingly



- Set expectations on Hearing Aids
- Sell hearing better not hiding
- Explain how ALDs overcome limitations
- Hearing Loss Association of America
 - Become a Professional Member Yourself
 - Display your membership in your waiting room
 - *Hearing Loss* Magazines in your waiting room

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More advice to the professionals

Serving Savvy Consumers

Beyond Hearing Aids



- Accessible Waiting Rooms
 - TV in waiting room looped
 - Public Address System Looped
 - Signs Advising use of Telecoils in waiting room
 - Pamphlets explaining accessibility options
- ALD Demonstration and Settings
 - Wired ALD
 - FM/IR
 - Bluetooth
 - Telecoil/Neckloop/Silhouettes/DAI
 - HAC Phones

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Why isn't all of this available in every hearing aid provider's office? It is becoming part of some offices ... these will be the successful offices of the future because they dramatically illustrate how the provider cares about the consumer.

Serving Savvy Consumers

Rehabilitation/Consumer Education



- Provide Rehabilitation Options
- Use a newsletter to educate, not just sell
- Cover Technology/Strategies/Partnerships
- Encourage appropriate patients to
 - Join Hearing Loss Association of America
 - Give your Best Patients a Free Membership
 - Get involved with a local chapter
- Offer to answer patient emails
- Add informative material to your web site

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More advice for professionals.

Savvy Consumers

The world Is Changing



- There's never been a better time to have a hearing loss.
- We're living in Revolutionary Times
- We're growing
 - Numbers
 - Percentages
 - Willingness to Do Something About It
 - Knowledge
 - Power
- Consumers: Sign Up Now
- Professionals: Get Ready, We're Coming

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Obviously, this is just a quick summary and closing statement.