

Don't You "Never Mind" Me!

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Helping Your Clients Manage Communication



The most hurtful words a person with hearing loss (PWHL) can be told when asking for something to be repeated:

“Never mind.” “Don’t worry about it.” “Oh, nothing.” “It wasn’t important.”

The person who responds this way may honestly feel what they said wasn’t worth repeating, but it’s not their call in this case. The PWHL has respectfully asked for a repeat of what was said. These negative brush-offs are not acceptable.

The words hurt us.

They make us invisible.

They take away our right to participate in a conversation.

They destroy our right to hear and be heard.

Some people use the situation as an opportunity to advocate for their needs. This is wonderful when the other person is a stranger or casual acquaintance; we can cut them slack, but if it is a close friend, colleague, or especially a family member, we must take back our control.

These are some of the many responses I've used to stand up for my communication rights over the years. Many different tones are built into these replies because it depends on the person we're talking with. Some replies are delivered more lightly, and others might show our hurt.

In casual encounters when the person is not aware of our hearing loss:

- No, I have hearing loss, please repeat.
- No, really, I'd like to hear it; I have hearing loss.
- You said it once, you can do it again! Thanks!

In closer relationships, when the hearing loss is a known fact:

- C'mon, don't do that! What did you say?
- Hey, not this again...don't say never mind!
- Let me be the judge of that, please.
- You *know* how that makes me feel! Even if it was *boring* or *stupid*, tell me again. Or if it's not worth repeating, why say it in the first place?

With close friends and family who should know better:

- Seriously!?! I can't believe you did that to me. Again!
- Don't you *never mind* me!
- You cut me out every time you do that.
- Honey, *c'mon!!!*

Part of the problem is that the comment is often *not* of any great value. It's a throwaway remark that sounds silly when it's said a second time. Or they regret saying it even as the words spill from their mouth.

Even so, we did not hear what they said, and if we cared enough, we would ask them to repeat it. And it is common courtesy for *them* to do so.

Your clients will experience this situation repeatedly. Help them understand they must stand up for

their right to hear and be heard.