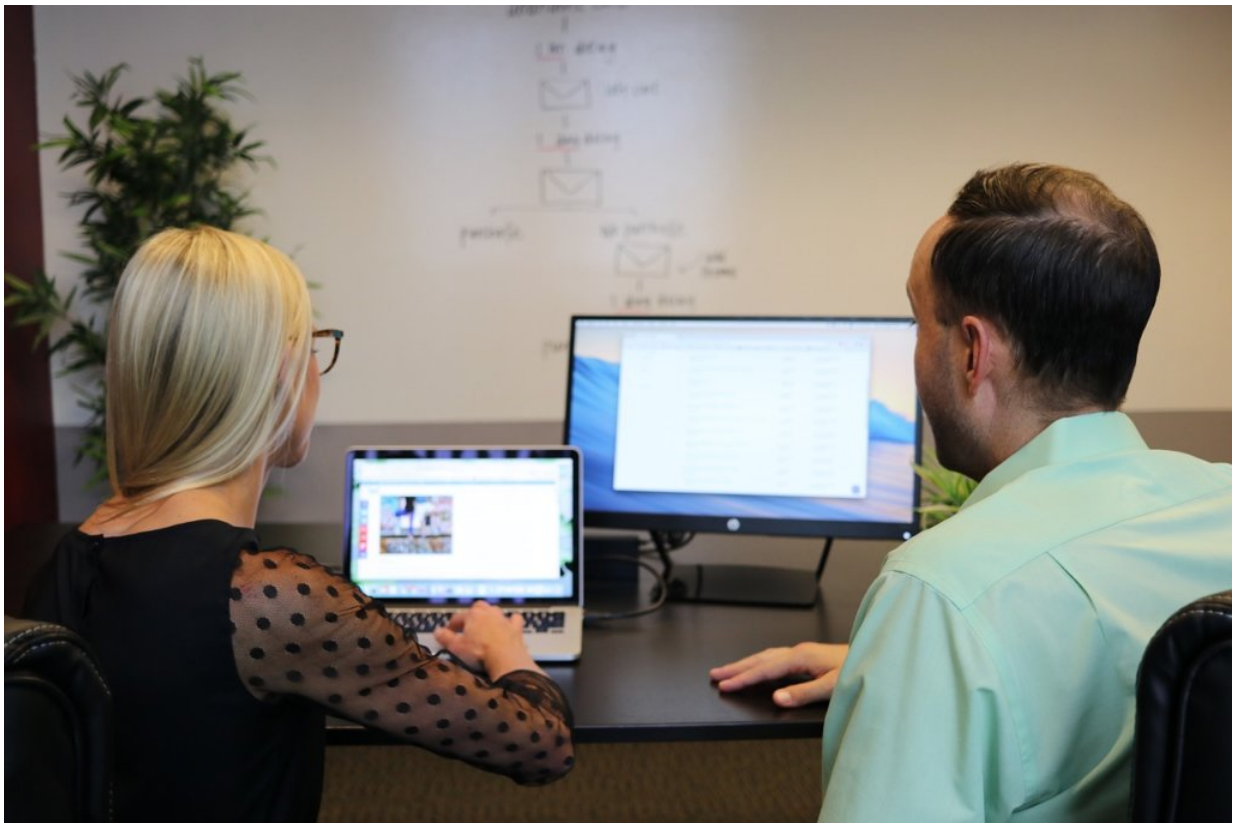
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Help Your Clients Set Better Hearing Loss Goals

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We're well into a new year now, but it's not too late to make resolutions, specifically goals for better hearing and communication. People with hearing loss have the power to reshape the flow of our daily communication lives.

I've had progressive hearing loss since birth, but I'd entered my fifth decade before I realized its pervasive impact on my life, including my mental health. In a recent, profound moment, after almost 30 years of working in the hearing loss advocacy field, I recognized the trauma that I experienced as a sensitive teenager and young adult because of my hearing loss. Even after all these years, I realized this has made a positive difference in my self-regard. It was a quiet *aha* moment. I'm starting this new year of living with hearing loss, with a better understanding of myself.

No matter where your clients are on their hearing loss journeys – regardless of how long they have had it, or its severity, or how brutally it challenges them in our daily lives – they are ways to make it an easier ride.

These are some ideas to address with or suggest to your clients, obviously couching them to suit

your relationship with them.

Take a look, or take a deep dive, into your attitudes. Are you still in the *why me* zone? Deep down, do you feel you're *lesser than* because of your hearing loss? Do you feel *victimized* when other people don't recognize your needs in the moment? If the answer is yes, or even just *a little* bit, you can shift those mindsets to something more satisfying with a bit of effort. You can say *I deserve to hear and be heard. I can help others to help me. We can communicate together*.

Address your communication soft spots. Do you have difficulty in *self identifying*? Or articulating your needs? If you recognize these as problem areas, you can focus on learning how to do them better, with a little practice, for noticeable results.

Talk to your loved ones about the impact of hearing loss on your relationships. If you experience any friction because of hearing loss, it helps to realize that it's natural. Communication can be a complicated, two-way street for everyone, even without hearing loss. The good news is that we all have responsibilities to make communication work! Hearing loss is not a *fault* and it's not your burden to carry alone. Your loved ones and friends can also become better communicators.

Try something new in technology. It's almost mind-blowing to experience what assistive devices and apps can do in helping us hear and understand, especially for those of who grew up *before* the technical boom. Try a new speech-to-text app; your smartphone has one already built in.

Reach out to another person with hearing loss. If you know someone who also uses hearing aids, start a conversation about it. It's not only a chance to commiserate but to learn some new tips and tricks.

Help your clients be open to change and take some new steps on a hearing loss journey that is less stressful, a little smoother, and more satisfying.