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Hot Tips to Help Your Clients ‘Be Best’

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Disclaimer: I have never trained or obtained a degree in the science of hearing healthcare. I do, however, have a lifetime of training as a person with hearing loss. I’ve received care from a lot of hearing care professionals. So, I reckon that at least some of my experienced-based opinions should hold some water.

Many people who have hearing loss scour the Internet for tips on how to get rid of it, how to cope with it, how not to go insane with it. I know I have.

Many people with hearing loss learn how to live with it from other people with hearing loss or through consumer hearing loss organizations. I definitely have.



I've picked up a lot of useful 'stuff' on my endless laps around life's hearing loss track. I've learned to be grateful for technology and to be open to new technical discoveries that make my life easier. I've learned how to have my needs met. I've come to understand that I have the right to hear *and* to be heard.

Unfortunately, most of this information and skill did not come from my audiologist or hearing instrument specialist, but from other people and my own passion to improve my communication. For my first four or five decades, my providers were practicing their profession without the benefit of the client-centered care concept and before the current mind-blowing explosion of assistive and smart technology. They did what they knew-and-do best – provide me with hearing aids.

The audiologist who wants to truly be a *hearing health* professional must keep abreast of emerging smart technologies and non-technical strategies that will help drive their clients' communication success. The audiologist who doesn't recommend other devices and practices to complement the almighty hearing aid are doing their clients a gross disservice.

It's not rocket science, because if it was, I wouldn't understand it. And I do understand the steps my provider and I need to take to reach our mutual goal: my successful life with hearing loss.

A Short Course to Success for Hearing Professionals

In Hearing Professional School, learn all the technical stuff about Audiology and Technology. Also, telecoils. Then, learn what your clients usually learn from someone who is not you – other communication strategies that complement technology. One of the fastest ways to learn this is by attending a consumer hearing loss conference. Then, when you're ready, start articulating all this fascinating and life-changing stuff to your clients. Don't dumb it down or Einstein it up. Keep it real.

Here are some other suggestions based on the experience of gazillions of people with hearing loss.

- Speak clearly and ensure the client understands.
- Be honest. Paint the Big Picture of the journey to better communication. Explain your vision of

what would help them and then ask if they have a different vision. Come to an agreement. Write it down, spit in your hands, and shake.

- Ask questions. Listen. Be empathetic.
- Use plain language, avoid jargon.
- Respect the wisdom within the client.
- Involve the client in all recommendations.
- Provide written information.
- Allow and encourage family participation.
- Understand Smart technology, because your clients are going to ask you about it.

Bottom line: people with hearing loss want and deserve a caring, trained hearing health professional to help them hear and communicate at the best possible level.

Adapted with permission from the Better Hearing Consumer on HearingHealthMatters.org.