

“I’ve Lost My Hearing”: Emotions Unleashed

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I recently spoke at a conference of people with hearing loss – one of my favorite things to do. The shared emotions and experiences of people who ‘get’ each other is eternally inspiring to me.

Most of us experience the toughest challenge of hearing loss, which is not adapting to technology (that’s #2) but dealing with the emotions of our condition. *Hearing Loss: The Emotional Side* is a recently formed Facebook group, and membership grew swiftly into the thousands.

While I’m grateful for technology, the support of others, and my passion for hearing loss advocacy, like most people who live with communication challenges, I have a ‘bad hearing’ day occasionally.

‘That day’ may seem just like the one before, but for whatever reason, the ability to cope gracefully is at a low level. On one such day a few years ago, I wrote the following ode to frustration.

I’ve lost my hearing,

And I want it back.

Through the years it has seeped away, silent and unseen,
A slow dripping of the sense of sound,
A weakening of words, a wearing down of connections.
I realize, in moments that are shocking and sharp,
That my hearing is changing, slowly and surely
And the shape of my audiogram is shifting downwards.
Where am I on the chronological timeline of coping with hearing loss?
They say we grieve, progressing from denial through anger and finally to acceptance.
It sounds easy, like a children's game, moving through the levels,
Conquering each one until we gain the ultimate prize.
I know the starting line, but where's the finish line
And what happens when you cross it?
Who applauds?
What's the prize?
What will be different now?
I thought I *had* crossed the line and grabbed the brass ring
Of a good life with hearing loss, and maybe I did –
But damn!
There are days when I find myself going around that racetrack, one more time.
Days when every '*pardon?*' is a knife on my tongue
Days when '*oh, never mind*' is a punch in the gut.
Days when, waiting to see the audiologist,
I inwardly chafe at the need to be here once again.
But this *is* my place, the only place where I cango and say:
Hello, I've lost my hearing and I want it back.
Do tears make a sound as they slide down a cheek?

Can you hear my embarrassment when I get things wrong?

How noisy is my frustration when I lose the words of a conversation?

Are they as challenging as these sounds are to me?

Taps dripping, stairs creaking,

And in what tree the bird is chirping

Snow crunching, fire crackling,

Husband breathing, clock ticking

Timers beeping, doorbell ringing

My child whispering, a toilet running

Fingers snapping, toes tapping

Tongue clicking, cats spitting...

Sometimes, I hear them well and I'm thrilled,

Because I 'do well' with my cochlear implant and hearing aids.

Yes, I'm *grateful* for the technology and today's just one of *those days*,

That help me appreciate all the other *good* days of sound.

Tomorrow I'll feel better, but today –

I've lost my hearing and I want it back.