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The Way I Hear It

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Helping Your Clients Rethink What They “Can’t Do”

Recently, my consumer articles for HearingHealthMatters.org (HHTM) have centred on how we, as people with hearing loss, handle the small indignities of the hearing loss life – the incidents that, while common, still manage to spark an uncomfortable emotional response every time.



These emotions, if we let them, cause a lingering negativity to our journey that is often expressed as *I can’t do this or that because of my hearing loss. It gets in the way of the life I want to live.*

Even the best hearing aids or cochlear implants do not preclude your clients from subscribing to this emotional playbook, and many don’t realize its hold on them.

So, how can you help them?

Check in with them on how things are going, not just with their hearing technology, but with their hearing loss *life.* Refer them to resources such as helpful articles, books on hearing loss and peer resources that can be life changing. (I speak from experience.)

Let them know that hearing loss poses barriers that *can* be met intentionally and purposefully. People with hearing loss must *rethink* their hearing loss and its impact and make positive changes.

Here’s an excerpt from my recent article in HHTM:

Business meetings involve being able to follow what people are saying. *I can’t do the meeting minutes.*

Phone calls with strangers are difficult because of unfamiliar speech patterns. *Can you make this phone call for me – I can’t do it.*

On a walk with friends, we hear a bird call from the trees. My friends look up to the left, while I

look up to the right. *I can't do sound localization*.

I lose the conversation thread of heated conversations with friends, or need the punchlines to be repeated, sometimes more than once. *I can't do group conversations.*

I decide against going to a movie, or a restaurant, a play or a concert because, even with accommodations, my reactive tinnitus goes in overdrive. *I can't do noise.*

Tiny tensions occur almost daily between the Hearing Husband and me because of words not expressed well – from the wrong room, from facing in the wrong direction, or repeated in an exaggerated manner or a too-loud voice. *I can't make other people understand what I need.*

I can't do this. I can't do that. My hearing loss doesn't let me.

That was my prevailing mindset for decades until one day, I realized that many of my "can't-do's" had disappeared, transformed into *I can do this* and then to *I AM doing this.*

What changed?

Certainly not my hearing loss; it was just as severe as ever.

I had changed.

My approach to hearing loss and communication had dramatically shifted, partly due to the wonder of ever-improving technology and partly to making connections in the hearing loss world that ignited a powerful need to take charge of my hearing loss journey. I explored and practiced *how* I could communicate better in all areas of my life.

It was a powerful, life-changing discovery that Shari Eberts and I wrote about in our book *Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss.*

So, what *exactly* changed?

Sound localization, group conversations, meetings, phone calls and relationships: your clients can learn to conduct all of these important activities *better by shifting* attitudes and changing their communication behaviors. But they need your help to do this, including referrals to crucial resources.

Their improved hearing journey will include gratitude to you as their trusted hearing care professional. They will be able to say, *I **can** do hearing loss.*