

Unusual Benefits of Hearing Loss (Your Clients May Not Realize)

Published January 19th, 2022

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When I posted the following article on HearingHealthMatters.org a few weeks ago, it got a very strong response from readers with hearing loss. People who had learned to cope and even thrive with their hearing challenges – or those who were on a searching path. We had all realized to some degree that if we're frustrated in living with the condition that most likely won't go away or have a cure soon, the one thing we can do is change our response to it.

The downside of having hearing loss is clear: we don't hear well, or at all, which causes barriers to easy-flowing communication.

But instead of continually crashing painfully into those obstacles, we can also recognize there might just be an *upside* to having hearing loss. If we reflect on its impact on our lives and look for the *potentially* positive, we may unpack at least a couple of unexpected benefits to our hearing loss package.

1. **We listen better.** We *have* to. If we don't focus on what's being said, we won't get it. 'Hearing' people can hear without focusing; they can multitask – which isn't necessarily a good thing either. But, when we listen better, we are more likely to get the message.
2. **It builds insight and compassion.** Understanding the reality of hearing loss and its impact on human behaviour and mental health is the door to understanding how *other* people must deal with challenges that are outside of our experience.

3. **It gives us a platform.** The above insight may spark a better appreciation for the need for diversity, equality, and inclusiveness in society. The lived experience of hearing loss gives us a platform to advocate for these fundamentals.
4. **We become better problem-solvers.** We learn how to handle difficult listening situations. But instead of our usual go-to reaction of getting mad and yelling or, worse, retreating into sulky silence, we look for ways to make it work. Manipulating the environment, using devices, and reminding others of what we need from them.
5. **We communicate better.** This isn't a given. Understanding the *need* to communicate better doesn't automatically guarantee it. People with hearing loss are often guilty of the things we accuse the 'hearing' people in our lives of doing. Mumbling, not talking face to face, tuning out. But with practice and the *will* to improve our communication style, we can achieve it.
6. **We find joy in what we *do* hear and understand.** Or at least, a better appreciation for the sounds of life. Even with sophisticated technology and superior self-advocacy skills, there is much that people with hearing loss simply can't hear. So, when we *do* hear, say, birdies twittering and the stones crunching beneath our feet, it's a beautiful moment when we acknowledge the sound and be grateful for it.

These are just a few of the good things that may arise from the hearing loss life. How can you help your clients to see them in theirs?