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Why Your Clients Need To Be More Strategic

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People with hearing loss need help – even if they don't think they do.

Many may feel helpless, weighed down by the burdens and obstacles of their condition, and they resent that feeling.

But there is a difference between feeling helpless and needing help. If we want to communicate better, we need the support of others, and the hearing care professional is arguably the most important source of support!

But, in recognizing that hearing loss affects almost every corner of your client's life, you may also acknowledge that a hearing aid is not the complete, standalone resource for every communication situation. Instead, the device is a component of your client's personal hearing loss strategy for better communication, albeit the crucial and most important one.

When Shari Eberts and I were writing *Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss* (reviewed by Rex Banks, Au.D. here), we spent a great deal of time discussing the hearing loss journey that had brought us to this point in our lives. To our amazement, we realized that over the years,

through trial and error and by meeting and learning from other people with hearing loss, we each found our way to a similar set of communication skills. And we each had an *aha* moment that translated roughly to this:

“When I shifted my goal from *hearing* better to *communicating* better, life improved. Changing the way I looked at my hearing loss didn’t change my actual hearing loss, but it made all the difference in my quality of life.”

Whether this revelation was a single light-bulb moment or a longer process, I probably didn’t see as strategic what I was going through. It’s only in looking back over my hearing loss journey that I see it for what it was. I was adding tactics and tools to my arsenal of strategies, and I was communicating better and living better.Of course, my hearing aids were the key tools in my kit, but I had to adopt dynamic, complementary strategies:

- Understanding my hearing loss better.
- Rejecting the stigma of hearing loss.
- Openness and self-identification.
- Learning to have my needs met.
- Adopting an array of assistive technology.
- Accepting the need for visual cues such as captions and speechreading.
- Making partners of my family, friends, and colleagues and helping them understand their role in better communication.
- Developing an effective relationship with my hearing care professionals.

Both Shari and I, in hindsight, realized that things became better when we introduced skillful, strategic living into our hearing loss journey. From our experience with people in the hearing loss community, your clients also need this.

You can help your clients become more strategic – and if you don’t want to use that term – swap out ‘strategic’ with ‘living better’ with hearing loss. They will get that.

Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss, by Gael Hannan and Shari Eberts, is available wherever books are sold.