



Spring 2016

Why Is It Still OK To Make Fun of Hearing Loss?

By Sheri Eberts at livingwithhearingloss.com

“Do you mind if I switch seats with you? I have a hearing loss and it would help if I had a better view of the speaker,” I asked a well-dressed man at a recent lunch meeting. “What?” he replied with a smirk, not because he didn’t hear me, but because he was making a joke. Seeing my grim smile in return, he continued, “I guess you have probably heard that one before.” That is an understatement. If I had asked him to switch seats because I had trouble seeing or because I was recovering from surgery and needed extra space for my bandaged foot, I don’t think I would have gotten a joke as the reply. In this modern world, where making fun of people based on race or religion or mental stability is no longer tolerated – and rightly so – why is it still ok to make fun of hearing loss?

I believe it has to do with the stigma surrounding hearing loss. People with hearing loss are often seen as “old” or “slow” or “rude” or “out of touch” and “not worth the time.” People sometimes complain to me how frustrating it is that their aging mother or father can’t hear them, or that they have grown weary of constantly repeating themselves, and I can understand how they must feel. Hearing loss is hard on the entire family. But I don’t like when they tell me they wish their loved one would try harder to hear. Can a blind person try harder to see?

Hearing loss is the last disability where insensitivity is still socially acceptable. Is this because hearing loss is often associated with getting older? Statistics tell us that this is not actually true. According to the Better Hearing Institute, 65% of people with hearing loss are below age 65. Also, 20% of teenagers now experience some form of hearing loss. But the association remains.

So what can we do to break the stigma of hearing loss?

- 1. Keep talking about it.** While much has been written lately about the fading stigma of hearing loss now that wearing Bluetooth type devices on the ear is commonplace, I’m not sure I am convinced. If hearing loss is still the punchline of a joke, the stigma remains.
- 2. Refute the stigma** by leading our vibrant and engaging lives with our hearing loss and hearing devices proudly on display. Encourage others to do the same.
- 3. Educate the public** about the challenges of hearing loss and advocate for public policy changes instituting accommodations for people with hearing loss in public spaces and including hearing devices in insurance coverage.
- 4. Advocate for ourselves** by demanding the accommodations we need and commending those businesses who provide them.
- 5. Vote with our patronage.** There are 50 million people in the United States with hearing loss — this is a lot of potential consumer spending. Frequent businesses and service providers that are hearing loss friendly and avoid those that are not. Be sure to tell these businesses why you do or do not use their services.

Search for Alber Hearing Services at www.healthyhearing.com and read our reviews (or write one)!

PLEASE SHARE! Pass this newsletter along to someone that you think might benefit from it.

Want to save paper? Get this newsletter in your email inbox. Just send us an email at info@alberhearing.com



Spring Battery Special:

Mention this newsletter and get
16 batteries for \$10
Limit 32, Expires 6/30/16

33 Riddell Street
Greenfield, MA 01301
413-774-0100



Prsrt Std
US Postage
PAID
Permit 183
Greenfield MA



Lisa C. Alber, Au.D.
Audiologist

I have been an audiologist for over 20 years, and hearing aids have changed by leaps and bounds since I first started seeing patients. They have become smaller and smaller but also smarter and smarter. The latest hearing aid technology has enabled my patients to fall in love with their hearing aids more than ever and enjoy the world around them. And my most successful patients are the ones that understand the critical importance of routine use. Today's hearing aids are made to be worn all day long. Over time the brain starts "re-learning" how to hear again. This "re-learning" helps the brain to avoid auditory deprivation which leads to a much more rewarding life of hearing. So if you do have hearing aids, I can't overstate how important it is to wear them – every day! If you think you might need hearing aids or could use an upgrade from your current aids and would like to hear the latest technology in action, don't hesitate to call our office at and make an appointment. Or if you just want your hearing aids cleaned or checked out, stop by anytime between 8:30am and 4pm, Tuesday through Friday, and we'd be happy to make sure everything is working at its best.