

# I Hear What I Need To!

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**H**ave these words “I hear what I need to” been said in your home recently? People who haven’t yet come to terms with their loss of hearing, or who have not fully admitted a hearing impairment, mistakenly believe that they hear all they need to hear. The truth is they are only hearing what their hearing capacity permits. The illusion is two-fold: the person with the hearing loss fails to hear important information, and the family member often believes communication has occurred when in fact it hasn’t.

Living with someone who refuses to get help is a challenge. Coming to terms with hearing loss can be a very slow journey for many. Sometimes someone with a hearing loss

expects others to compensate for them instead of assuming this responsibility themselves. This could be setting up an environment for strained family relationships. Their lack of acceptance may be seen as a selfish act. The family shouldn’t be expected to manipulate the household for their convenience especially when it’s at the expense of others they care about.

The hearing impaired person may feel annoyed that they have a hearing loss, but their family is annoyed that they do nothing about it. This person may isolate themselves from family gatherings because they can’t hear, or feel foolish, or get embarrassed; but the family can feel abandoned and dismissed that they aren’t important enough for

the person to do something about the problem. Their unwillingness to seek help can create the feeling in loved ones and friends that the person is selfish or irresponsible.

When I consult with a person experiencing hearing loss, I often turn to their family member (when a family member joins them on the appointment) and ask for his or her feelings. The common response is, “I’m so tired of repeating myself!” What the hearing impaired person might not know is that everyone feels the same but rarely states it. The family can feel resentful that they must do other’s listening work. This means louder television, repeating conversations, misinterpretations of conversations, and it can raise the level of anxiety in a

household.

Annoyance can lead to anger, intolerance, a sense of hopelessness, and can even lead to depression. Struggling to communicate under these circumstances can be exhausting.

Many people with untreated hearing loss feel they are not ready for hearing aids. Inspiring them to seek this needed help may be the most challenging task for a spouse or family member. Change can only begin with readiness, but the rewards can dramatically improve lives and transform relationships.

Acceptance of hearing loss allows people to move on. Call your audiologist to schedule a hearing test for your loved one or for yourself.