

You've probably heard a slogan something like this before on television... "I'm not only a hearing practice co-owner, but I'm also a client". Yes, it's true, I am the co-owner of a hearing practice and my level of hearing loss is sufficient to warrant hearing assistance. I've been told this for a long time by doctors, nurses and even hearing practitioners. I didn't immediately believe my hearing was a problem. Several years ago, I didn't necessarily want to admit that "my arms were too short to read" either. Shortly after that, I started wearing bifocals.

In relation to hearing loss, I grew up with several strikes against me. I have a genetic predisposition to hearing loss because hearing impairment runs on my mother's side of the family. In addition, I had many ear infections as a kid growing up, and because of a shortage of funds, I was not always able to get the medical care required or get it quick enough not to cause damage to my ear drums. Also, like

prodding before I got the idea that I finally needed hearing assistance. Once I decided to get hearing aids, my hearing immediately improved. However, like wearing any assistive device, there are some realistic expectations that need to be set:

- 1 Hearing aids that reduce background noise, have directional microphones and telephone amplifiers, and several different programs for different "lifestyle situations" **are not going to be cheap**. Like any other valuable product, you get what you pay for.
- 2 Hearing aids require maintenance like any other piece of precision equipment. Wax, perspiration and moisture are a hearing aid's most lethal enemies. Hearing aids need to be cleaned and dried regularly to assure their continued good service. They also will require a "tune up" every so often by your licensed audiologist. The more care you give

hear better. If you build up wax, you should too.

- 4 My experience is that hearing aids do not restore completely natural hearing. They improve the hearing you do have. I've found that as a rule, the better the hearing aid sounds to me, the more it will cost me. That's not 100% true all the time, but it's a fair statement overall.
- 5 Tiny hearing aids that others can't see (as in "completely in the canal" or CIC aids)

there are some very tiny ones available now which are more difficult for others to see. (But, another reason they notice I have hearing aids is because I now answer people's questions sensibly, instead of acting like I heard them and saying, "No, I hate tomatoes", when the correct answer should be "I'll have a baked potato".) I get a lot less puzzled looks these days. Hearing aids have turned out to be a great investment for me and can improve

Hearing Loss from the Patient's Perspective

By Brian P. Freeman

many other people I know in my age group, I'd spent nearly 30 years using power tools and lawn mowers without using proper hearing protection. Listening to loud music from a headset for years didn't help matters either.

It took years of subtle and "not-so-subtle"

them, the longer they'll last, and the better they'll work.

- 3 My ears have a tendency to build wax easily and quickly, so I am told. Thus, I have them cleaned by a licensed audiologist regularly, to extend the life of my investment in the hearing aids and to

may be too tiny to have enough power for a fairly moderate to severe hearing loss. I personally chose "behind the ear" (BTE) aids, because of the easy fit in my ears and the better directionality of the sounds available with them. My BTEs are more noticeable than CIC aids, but

hearing. They also require continued care after the purchase. As you may have heard on another one of those TV commercials, you can't just "set 'em and forget 'em".

See a licensed audiologist you trust and see if you have a hearing loss.

