

ORANJ Leaf



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MORE ABOUT HEARING LOSS

How the ORANJ Plenary Changed My Life *by Maggie Heineman*

At the October 17 plenary I learned that I should be wearing my hearing aids all the time, even when I'm at home alone. It's been nearly a month now and I'm a believer. Audiologist Dr. Susan Krum was the morning speaker. [Here's a link to Susan Krum's slides.](#) As she showed the slides she explained the anatomy of the ear. Nothing new here. I had learned about the outer, middle and inner ear, the cochlea, and semicircular canals in high school biology, and again in college.

It was the eighth slide about the Central Auditory Processing that changed my life. The electrical impulses from the ear travel to the brain to be translated into functional information. The point is that the brain needs to "learn how" to translate the signals from hearing aids. I've experienced how the brain needs to get used to new prescription glasses, so this made sense. And of course I looked it up on the Internet. Here's a link to an article that goes into detail on the topic.

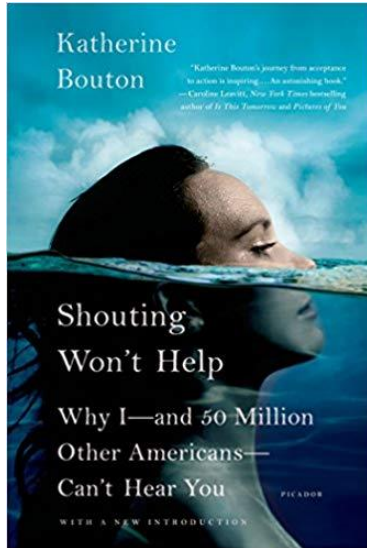
[why-you-should-use-your-hearing-aids-consistently/](#)

Do you need a Hearing Test?

*From the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD).
If your answer is yes to three or more of these questions, you may want to see an audiologist for a hearing evaluation*

- Do you sometimes feel embarrassed when you meet new people because you struggle to hear?
- Do you feel frustrated when talking to members of your family because you have difficulty hearing them?
- Do you feel restricted or limited by a hearing problem?
- Do you have difficulty hearing when visiting friends, relatives or neighbors?
- Do you have trouble hearing movies in the theater?
- Does a hearing problem cause you to argue with family members?
- Do you have trouble hearing the TV or radio at levels that are loud enough for others?
- Do you feel that any difficulty with your hearing limits your social life?
- Do you have trouble hearing family or friends when you are together in a restaurant?

Quotes from: ***Shouting Won't Help***
by Katherine Bouton



“Hearing loss is an invisible disability. There’s no white cane to signal a problem, no crutches, no twitches or jerky movements, no bandages or braces. If you have been a hearing person most of your life, you probably talk normally. Most people with hearing loss quickly learn to nod or smile or respond in a noncommittal way, taking their signals from a speaker and the people around them. How many times have I laughed at a joke I didn’t hear? How many times have I said, ‘I’m so sorry,’ when I had no idea what I was sorry about? How many times have I nodded in agreement to a point I hadn’t heard or may not even agree with?”

“Being a person with hearing loss is like being in Paris and knowing just enough French to ask an articulate question, and then being completely unable to comprehend the answer.

“Pitfalls, snafus, glitches and potholes mark the conversational path of a person with hearing loss. The trouble is that sometimes you don’t even know what you’ve stepped into. I’ve long since stopped participating in

group conversations except with my closest friends. I lose the train of the discussion and ask a question that was just answered. I think we’re talking about one thing when we’re talking about something completely different. We’ve left that subject already, or maybe we were never discussing it at all. I get bits and pieces and if the subject is familiar enough I can patch them together. But I dodge anything controversial. Or anyone intimidating. Since I’m also very good at faking it, many people don’t know I’m a person with hearing loss. Instead, they think I’m arrogant or remote, absent-minded or distracted, drunk or just plain stupid.

“Even when I do understand what is being said the effort of trying to hear eclipses my ability to think. My brain is so preoccupied with translating the sounds into words that it seems to have no processing power left over to dig into the storerooms of memory for a response. Nor does it have the processing power to tuck away new information -- like someone’s name. “My brain is working too hard on hearing the words to listen to what’s being said.” (pp. 73, 74)

“I spent much of my adult life – both personal and professional – faking it. Not even my closest friends knew the extent of my hearing loss. For those who have hearing loss I hope that, like me, they’ll eventually discover the immense relief, the freedom of coming clean. And by describing the daily obstacles that a hearing impaired faces, I hope that those who live with – or work with or love or teach or minister to – someone with a hearing impairment will better understand their experience, the hard work, the emotional upheaval, the anger and pain.” (p. 244)

Compiled by Harvey Peters