

# HOW CAN HEARING AIDS BETTER MY LIFE?

## *What hearing aid purchasers said:*



Several different scientific reviews conducted over the years have shown that the use of hearing aids leads to significant improvement in the quality of life of those with hearing loss. The results of these different studies reviewed show a consistent effect. One recent review, the "Evaluation of the Social and Economic Costs of Hearing Impairment" The report presents the results of a comprehensive study of almost all scientific research on the social impacts of hearing loss in Europe, Australia and the United States. Some key findings from the study regarding the impact on using hearing aids included improving the overall quality of life and better overall health than those with unaided hearing loss. The biggest and most beneficial effects were observed in hearing aid users' social lives, participating in group activities, and in their family relationships. The use of hearing aids can help reverse social and communication dysfunctions caused by hearing loss.

Other studies have shown that in addition to improving hearing, hearing aids contribute to improvements in the users' quality of life. Seventy percent of the respondents in another study found that their enjoyment of everyday life improved after they were fit with hearing aids.

Studies are a nice, scientific way of explaining how hearing aids will improve your life, but it is much more compelling to hear it first-hand from those who have taken the plunge and received hearing aids. Here are some of their stories.

“Living with hearing loss for a period of time caused me to forget all of the sounds that I had once taken for granted. Putting my hearing aids in changed my life instantly. Not only could I hear forgotten sounds, but I also experienced profound changes beyond the sounds. As I left the office, hearing aids firmly in my ears, I heard a strange clicking sound. After several clicks, I realized it was another woman’s heels hitting the office tile as she walked. I heard shoes hitting the ground. I heard the voices of my children from other rooms, and I did not have to see their lips move to understand what they were saying. I heard noises behind me. The TV no longer had to be uncomfortably blaring- I could hear it at the same level that my family liked to listen to it.”

Aside from hearing rediscovered sounds, this individual noted other exciting changes, including how his social life and energy improved. “I found that my dread of restaurants and gatherings disappeared. I could go into a crowded event and hear what the speaker was saying. I no longer felt awkward or embarrassed in a loud restaurant because my hearing aids were programmed to pick up on the voices closest to me. Instead of finding reasons to avoid group functions, I remembered that I actually enjoyed them. My energy levels went up after I started wearing my hearing aids. As strange as that sounds, living in a hearing world with hearing impairment can be exhausting. Trying to be ‘present’ while I was working or interacting with others often required more concentration while struggling with hearing loss. Making it through a normal day resulted in something called ‘cognitive overload,’ leaving precious little energy at the end of the day. With my hearing corrected, I spent less time on concentrating on trying to hear, and more time on the important priorities.

The author also noted greater benefits in regards to his work life and career. “Work improved. I no longer found myself straining to hear what others were saying throughout the day. Meetings were not something to dread- I found that I could both hear my co-workers and contribute, without fear of embarrassing myself. I felt more comfortable with everything in the workplace- no more missed cues, unheard phone calls, or miscommunications. Even my confidence at work improved- I was spending less time trying to simply hear what was going on around me, and more time excelling at my job.”

Marie wasn’t ready to admit she had trouble hearing. Even with her kids telling her she was struggling to hear, Marie was convinced that her husband was mumbling. Finally, frustrated that she couldn’t hear what her husband was saying, she decided to see an Ear, Nose and Throat physician. The physician sent her to an audiologist for hearing aids. Now, two years later, Marie can clearly hear her husband and other family members and is able to enjoy other social activities she avoided when she couldn’t hear well. Marie admits that she waited too long before seeking treatment in the form of hearing aids. “I waited an awful long time. Somewhere someone told me that if you have hearing aids, you’ll never hear your husband’s voice again - and I believed it. That just isn’t true.” Now, not only can she clearly hear his voice, on occasion, she has to leave the room because he turns the volume up too loud on the television. Her better hearing has also made it enjoyable for her to go to the movies and attend social gatherings again, two things her hearing loss had made very difficult. “I didn’t want to go to parties because I didn’t know what people were

saying. I used to just sit there and let people talk. She indicated that the best part of her aids is the improved family relationships. "I can understand it when my teenage grandchildren are talking about their day at school, I couldn't hear that before. I sit at the dinner table and say, 'I'm glad I have hearing aids.' My son-in-law says, 'We are, too, mom.'"

Marie now is a huge advocate of hearing aids. "I wish everyone could hear again. I talk to my friends about it and tell them they won't believe the difference. You miss so much when you don't hear well. Don't wait. Be part of the crowd now. Don't just be a spectator, you can be part of the conversation again. You don't know what you're missing."

For Wendy, one-to-one conversations were never a problem, so she couldn't possibly have hearing loss. Wendy was just 49 years old when she first visited an audiologist. She decided to have her hearing tested to rule out possible hearing loss, initially blaming poor enunciation and sound quality when watching TV as the reason she wasn't able to understand what people were saying. Wendy reported that she "first noticed that I was struggling with my hearing a few years ago when I realized I couldn't hear the TV and radio. I had to turn the volume up very loud and my husband Steve and daughter Zoe started to notice too. Telephone calls became more difficult and that's when I decided to visit my local audiologist to have my hearing checked. I didn't for one minute think that I'd actually have hearing loss."

Unfortunately Wendy's hearing deteriorated further to the point where she had to be in the same room as family members to be able to talk to them. As a go-to person at work, a project administrator, it was crucial that she hear well in some challenging environments such as board meetings, presentations, and on the phone. For Wendy, not taking part in work activities or avoiding events was never an option. "The receiver-in-canal (RICs) hearing aids that I wear now are very discreetly tucked behind my ears with an almost invisible clear wire that goes into my ear - it resembles a strand of hair. These aids are programmed with booster buttons for an increase in amplification whenever I need it and I can do it myself very discreetly. They are absolute dream in a busy board room or crowded restaurant when I might need to amplify what is being said due to background noise." Wendy now feels absolutely confident in everyday life and engages in every situation at home or work without a second thought. Wendy only wishes that she would have pursued hearing aids sooner, "I really wish I'd decided to have my hearing checked sooner as it has made such a massive difference to my quality of life. I now feel that as a professional person I'm able to compete on a level playing field with my peers and wearing my hearing aids really has changed my life for the better."

It's not always about hearing in busy work environments that improves quality of life, for some, it's about returning the love of music. For years, retired principal Kevin needed hearing aids but avoided them. When he had finally decided to get his first pair, he expressed such joy at attending a concert. "My wife and I went to an RPO concert and when they played their second piece, Aaron Copland's 'Fanfare for the Common Man' with its amazing brass, tears started streaming down my face. For 10 years, I had forgotten that music has layers and there's motion in the notes. All those years, I had been missing this. Hearing aids changed that for me." His only regret is that he waited so long to treat his hearing loss with hearing aids. "Your quality of life can be improved by getting the help that people sometimes refuse to believe they need," he says. "I was missing things I didn't even know I was missing. This has been a huge improvement for me."

## Resources

**Image:** <https://www.starkey.com/blog/2017/05/WebMD-confirms-benefits-of-hearing-aids>

**"Five Ways Hearing Aids Changed my Life."** <http://coloradoearcenter.com/five-ways-hearing-aids-changed-life/>

**"Hearing aids changed my life."** <https://www.healthyhearing.com/report/52645-Hearing-aids-changed-my-life>

**and**

<https://www.specsavers.co.uk/stores/eltham-hearing/hearing-aids-changed-my-life>

**"Hearing aids improve quality of life."** <https://www.hear-it.org/hearing-aids-improve-quality-of-life>

**"New technology changes hearing aids – and lives."** <https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/sponsor-story/clifton-springs-hearing-center/2017/02/07/clifton-springs-hearing-center/97549058/>