

Familiar stages in the process of hearing loss.

Denial - Statements like “I can hear fine my partner mumbles”, or “People don’t enunciate their words anymore.” The reason for the difficulty in hearing is transferred to someone else and is not the responsibility of the person trying to hear.

Anger - The next step is the anger that arises when misunderstandings happen because things were not perceived correctly. The anger is manifested in two ways. Firstly, when information is understood incorrectly and appointments are missed, insults are perceived, watching TV is frustrating and too loud for those around you. Secondly anger arises in others because you are not understanding what is said the first time and what was said has to be repeated. You miss the punchline in jokes so people begin to suspect that you are a dummy with no sense of humor.

Negotiating - Many people begin to react to their hearing loss by trying to bargain for better communication. Comments like, “look at me when you are talking”, or “say my name when you want my attention”, are often used. You have to start thinking ahead in order to have someone walk or be seated on your “good” side. The telephone gets left for others to answer and in some cases left so that the message can be listened to later on speaker phone. Close caption tv starts to be a must.

Depression - Many people get depressed about their hearing loss, thinking perhaps this is another slide down a slippery slope of the aging process. Some people worry about their vanity, wondering what will people think of me because hearing loss is for old people only. Some people even exhibit a certain type of frustrated look on their face from the stress of not being able to hear properly and having to read lips to piece together what is being communicated.

The fifth and last step divides into 2 results- One either avoids the situation not realizing that having a hearing loss has consequences. The process of isolation starts, the social side of your life suffers and eventually a point is reached where others are more aware of your hearing loss than you are. Meetings, parties, and crowds are out of the question and slowly the brain is isolated to the point that dementia can set in.

Or one accepts the situation and treatment either medically if possible, or by amplification. Hearing aids will slow down the process of losing your hearing, especially what is known as the word discrimination score. Since your eyes and your ears are major pathways to your brain it is important to keep them open and exercised. Simply put you either use it or lose it.

A slow careful evaluation of your situation by a professional will present you all the facts to help you make up your mind.