



# **Your Guide to Helping a Loved One with Hearing Loss**

*The more awareness you have in HOW to help someone in your family, the sooner your loved one will go through the grieving process of hearing loss.*

## AWARENESS #1:

# Walk a Mile in your Loved One's Hearing Loss

Imagine that you were the one with untreated hearing loss.

**A typical week might include any of the following stressful situations:**

- Your family continually tells you to “turn down the television”. When you do, it’s difficult to follow the program, and you become annoyed. But if you leave it turned up, your family becomes annoyed. What once was a simple and relaxing activity is now complicated and stressful.
- People become annoyed and even angry when you don’t quite hear what they say. You feel misunderstood and defensive.
- You make mistakes in conversation, misunderstanding a key word. The listeners think it’s funny. You laugh too, but deep inside you feel judged and self-conscious. This is not funny. It’s embarrassing.
- At social gatherings, you feel disconnected and wonder what is going on in the conversation. You vow not to attend the next social function.
- You take a message over the phone only to find it is incorrect. You wrote down the wrong number.
- You are accused of not paying attention when the truth is you work very hard to follow a conversation. It gets tiring after a while, and you just check out of the conversation.

These are common experiences of people with hearing loss. Years of missing parts of words and conversations takes its toll on one’s self-esteem. No one is exempt. One’s whole personality may begin to change. A hearing loss could be far less traumatic if one could deal with the initial problem – denial.

### **Denial is a double-edged sword.**

Denial is a wonderful coping strategy that we all use from time to time. But it’s the very thing that keeps people from getting the help they need. The average person with gradually worsening hearing loss waits five years before seeking help. Years of misunderstandings, struggle and embarrassment can lock a person into a prevailing state of denial.

In the beginning stages of hearing loss, a person may be unaware that his ability to hear AND understand is causing him to lose confidence in himself and a zeal for life. Coping strategies such as piecing information together and frequently reconstructing sentences become normal practice. “Watching” people in order to “hear” is another learned behavior.

## **At first, these coping strategies are unconscious.**

Eventually one dares to face the fact that one's hearing is getting worse. But most people will still try to hide it from others. The incidents of embarrassment continue to grow, as do the excuses one makes for asking people to repeat. After years of misunderstandings, disconnection, and frustration, one finally realizes what others have known all along. You have a hearing loss and need help. By the time one reaches this stage, one's self-esteem has seriously eroded. It becomes harder to make decisions and take action. Seeking help for hearing loss may not be something one can do on their own. Besides, hearing loss doesn't just affect the person with the loss, it affects everyone in the family.

## **A hearing problem is a family problem.**

When someone you love is coming to terms with a hearing loss, remember to be kind. Hearing loss can happen to anyone. And no one is to blame. Getting the support of your family can make all the difference in the world AND has a huge impact on how successful a person will be wearing hearing aids.

The good news is that when people get the help they need, self-esteem and confidence are quickly restored!

## **ACTION #1:**

# **Imagine that you could 'walk a mile' in your loved one's ears.**



During Avalon's EDUCATIONAL Hearing Test and FAMILY Consultation, we'll simulate your loved one's hearing loss so that you can hear how life sounds through their ears. This experience is mind blowing and heart opening. It has brought deep understanding and healing to families impacted by hearing loss.

When you are ready and your loved one is willing, schedule your free EDUCATIONAL Hearing Test and FAMILY Consultation. It's a great place to start the hearing care journey.

In the meantime, read on!

## AWARENESS #2:

# Understand the Complexity of Your Loved One's Denial

Denial is the number one enemy of people with hearing loss. It is the greatest barrier to seeking help. Most hearing-impaired people in denial think they don't need hearing aids or can get by without them. It's sad that they let denial get in the way of a treatment that could drastically improve the quality of their lives, socially, emotionally, mentally, and even physically.

### Denying Hearing Loss

Remember that the average person with hearing loss typically waits five years before getting help. They do not realize that "auditory deprivation" can cause them to lose their ability to process speech. Properly fitted hearing instruments act like exercise machines that stimulate what is left of your hearing. They stimulate the hair-like nerve endings deep inside the inner ear and the auditory parts of the brain. This stimulation helps to maintain your ability to process sounds and interpret speech. The sooner you seek help, the more likely you will be able to preserve your ability to understand speech. So, why is there so much denial associated with gradual hearing loss?

### How People Cope with Gradual Hearing Loss

At first, a person develops coping strategies that are unconscious. They closely 'watch' people in order to 'hear.' The eyes and brain fill in the missing pieces, trying to make sense of conversation. This takes an incredible amount of effort. The person whose "hearing is not that bad" is probably using all his available brainpower on listening. Believe it or not, this seemingly 'minor' loss is the most insidious of all hearing losses. As your hearing continues to deteriorate, so does your lifestyle and psychological well-being.

### The Confusing Thing About Hearing Loss

The slow and gradual progression of hearing loss makes it easy for people to stay in denial. Most people lose their high frequencies first, missing speech sounds such as s, f, t, k, and th. They hear, but do not understand. Many people still have outdated beliefs that hearing aids only help people with severe losses. This is no longer true. Today, hearing instruments can bring back clarity for even mild losses. In fact, one of the greatest advancements in technology has been the introduction of open fittings. People love this hearing technology because they barely feel them. The devices are so small and discreet that all you notice is that conversations sound so much clearer.

### 'Recruitment' Reinforces Denial

Most hearing losses are sensorineural in which some of the delicate hair-like nerve endings of the inner ear are damaged and destroyed. With this type of loss often comes 'recruitment'. It is as though the inner ear gets 'bruised' and cannot tolerate loud sounds. And that's confusing. People think, "how could there be anything wrong with my hearing if I can't stand loud sounds?" Because of this sensitivity to loudness, people often remain in denial even longer.

## Years of Coping, Denying, and Not Knowing How to Buy Hearing Aids

Recruitment coupled with a gradually worsening, high frequency hearing loss, has people hesitant to seek help. Furthermore, they don't know HOW to buy hearing aids. Most people believe that if you have a hearing loss, you just need to buy hearing aids. But then they hear about all the people who have done just that and are not happy with their hearing aids. It's no wonder that people put off getting hearing aids.

### The real issue is WHO do you trust with your hearing care.

The single most important factor in successfully treating hearing loss is choosing the right Hearing HealthCare Provider. The right provider will guide you in choosing the right technology for your hearing loss, your lifestyle, and your budget. **And they can even help someone move out of deep denial.**

### Moving Through and Past Denial

People in denial often say, "My hearing is really not that bad" or, "I can get by without hearing aids." Everyone with gradual hearing loss dances with denial. Everyone - not just your loved one. But eventually, and hopefully, sooner than later, the time comes to move out of denial.

### WHO you choose for your hearing care, matters.

It matters a lot. You and your loved one don't want to be sold hearing aids or even dispensed hearing aids. You both deserve to be treated with immense respect and dignity. That's why we take an educational, warm, and personal approach to hearing care at Avalon. We would be honored to help your family come to terms with hearing loss and walk with you on the path of healthy hearing care. There is hope and help available to make life easier for both of you.

## ACTION #2:

## Treat You and Your Loved One to our Free EDUCATIONAL Hearing Test & FAMILY Consultation

One of the most effective ways to help someone out of denial is to experience Avalon's approach to hearing care.

In a matter of 90-minutes, we'll gently guide your loved one out of their denial into acceptance, and a willingness to care for their hearing. It's quite a journey.

For over 33 years, we've helped thousands of families through this process with kindness and dignity.



## AWARENESS #3:

# Help Your Loved One with Hearing Loss

### *It starts with compassion...*

Hearing loss attacks one in ten Americans, one in six baby boomers, one in three people over the age of 70, and one in two people over the age of 85. Hearing loss not only affects the hard-of-hearing person, but it impacts the entire family.

### **It's frustrating when you speak with someone, and have to repeat what you've said**

Conversation gets interrupted and there's a breakdown in the spontaneity of communication. Sometimes you decide that what you just said is not worth repeating. You find yourself saying, "Never mind," causing your loved one to feel left out. Simple statements and questions begin to substitute the longer, more interesting discussions you once had. This results in a loss of intimacy and a sense of loneliness.

For the hard-of-hearing person, it is exasperating to ask people to speak louder only to have them drop their voice at the end of a sentence. Sadly, when people speak louder, it often sounds like they're annoyed or angry since the intonation of one's voice changes. This coupled with arguments over the volume of the TV, causes defensiveness and a lowering of self-esteem.

### **You'd like to help but most people with hearing loss don't like to admit it**

Many people believe that hearing loss is a sign of weakness or old age. It's easier to accuse another person of mumbling than it is to admit you may have hearing problems. Or they may have outdated views on hearing aids. Ironically, an untreated hearing loss is much more conspicuous than hearing aids.

### **End the Blame Game**

No one is to blame. Anyone suffering from gradual hearing loss must go through a grieving process before they can seek help. This process includes stages of denial, sadness, anger and finally, acceptance of one's hearing problem. You can help your loved one through this process more easily by doing the following:

- 1.** Do not criticize, condemn, or nag your loved one about their hearing.
- 2.** Never make fun of someone's hearing loss. Be careful not to laugh when inappropriate responses are made.
- 3.** Use 'I' statements rather than 'YOU' statements. The next time you are accused of mumbling or speaking too softly say, "I'm concerned about your hearing. Would you be willing to have your hearing checked? Could we do this, together?" That's all you have to say. Don't justify your request. Justifying your request sets up the possibility of a power struggle, taking the focus away from the real problem – the hearing loss.

4. Don't talk about hearing aids. Nobody wants to wear hearing aids. Talk about getting a hearing test. Even if your loved one does not think he or she needs help, Avalon's **Free EDUCATION Hearing Test and FAMILY Consultation** will tell them exactly what they're hearing and what they're missing.

### **You may become the ears for a person in denial**

Helping a loved one who isn't willing to help themselves is one of the most painful challenges a family can face. But being their ears is not an act of love. It's counterproductive because if you're repeating and interpreting, there is little need for the hard-of-hearing person to take responsibility and seek help.

### **If your loved one remains in deep denial, you may have to stop being their ears**

State that you are no longer willing to raise your voice for them to hear. Nor are you willing to repeat yourself, over, and over again. This recommendation is only suggested if your loved one remains in deep denial and has become stubborn. But please say these things with respect and kindness.

Coming to terms with hearing loss can be difficult. So be gentle with yourself and your loved one.

## **ACTION #3:**

### **Take the risk and ask your loved one to take the enclosed quiz, HOW DOES YOUR HEARING RATE?**



Start by asking them if they would be willing to do you a favor that would mean a lot. Give them the quiz and then, together, look at the score. Thank them for taking the quiz!

Does your loved one have a mild, moderate, or severe loss?

Using only "I" statements, say,

*"I'm concerned about your hearing. Would you be willing to have your hearing checked? Could we do this, together?"*

A great place to get the support you both need is to schedule a **Free EDUCATION Hearing Test and FAMILY Consultation at Avalon Hearing Aid Centers.** It doesn't matter what insurance you have. More and more people are choosing Avalon for their hearing care.

## AWARENESS #4:

# Be mindful of the consequences of untreated hearing loss

Most people don't know about AUDITORY DEPRIVATION.

Over the years of a gradually worsening hearing loss, the brain loses its ability to process sounds that it no longer perceives. The brain forgets how to make sense of these sounds. This is called AUDITORY DEPRIVATION. Even when these sounds are reintroduced through hearing amplification, the brain may not be able to effectively use this new information. People who use hearing aids, but still don't seem to understand, may either have waited too long to be fitted with hearing aids OR their current hearing aids don't match their current hearing loss. It's much like having the wrong prescription for your glasses.

### Think of hearing aids as little exercise machines

Hearing aids that are properly fitted to match a person's hearing loss not only stimulate the remaining hearing, but also stimulate the auditory parts of the brain. That's important.

Hearing instruments enhance what is left of your hearing. They preserve or maintain your ability to process sounds and make sense of conversations. If you stimulate what's left of your hearing, properly, you can expect to understand quite well, even if your hearing changes over the years.

### Don't play the waiting game

Waiting too long to get hearing help, even if you think your hearing isn't bad enough to wear hearing aids, is detrimental not only to your relationships, but also to your health and well-being.

## Consequences of Untreated Hearing Loss on Your Health

### Cognitive Decline

- Adults with untreated hearing loss experience a 30-40% faster decline in cognitive abilities

### Dementia

- People with mild hearing loss are twice as likely to develop dementia
- Those with moderate hearing loss are 3X as likely to develop dementia
- People with severe hearing loss are 5X as likely to develop dementia

### Balance

- Adults with mild hearing loss (25dB) are 3X more likely to have a history of falling. Each additional 10dB of hearing loss increases the chances of falling by 1.4 times the original risk

### Depression

- Those with untreated hearing loss experience significantly higher incidences of depression and feelings of isolation.



## Lifespan

- Studies show older adults with untreated, hearing loss have a shorter lifespan than peers with hearing problems who wear hearing aids

## Hearing loss is complex

It's only in the last several years that we have come to understand the cascading effects of untreated hearing loss. A person with hearing loss should not have to deal with it by themselves. It's not something that just gets fixed by wearing hearing aids.

## No one wants to wear hearing aids

But properly fitted hearing instruments can bring back many of the missing sounds, making it easier to be part of conversations and life. With the right combination of motivation, hearing technology, realistic expectations, a competent and caring hearing healthcare provider, and supportive family members, an easier and more connected life is possible!

## Hearing loss affects everyone in the family

Whether you are the daughter or son, mother or father, wife or husband, partner or friend, your participation in your loved one's hearing care makes a huge difference.

**Thank you for caring enough to learn how to best help your loved one who is struggling with hearing loss. So many things in life are hard to do unless you have someone to walk with you. Clearly, you are willing to walk with your loved one in their journey of hearing care.**

**And Avalon is here to guide both of you!**

## ACTION #4:

**Call and schedule your  
Free EDUCATIONAL Hearing  
Test & FAMILY Consultation today.**

**You might say that it takes a village to help someone hear the best they can.  
Let's create that village, together!**



# Would you rate your hearing?

	Yes	No
1. Do people seem to mumble more frequently?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Do you often ask people to repeat what they have said?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Do you have difficulty hearing someone with a soft voice?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Does your family complain that you play the TV too loudly?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Does a hearing problem cause you to feel frustrated when talking to members of your family?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when visiting friends, relatives, or neighbors?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Do you feel left out at family or group gatherings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Does a hearing problem cause you difficulty when in a restaurant?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Does a hearing problem cause you to attend meetings, religious services, or movies less often than you would like?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Does a hearing problem cause you embarrassment when meeting people?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Do you frequently experience ringing or buzzing in your ears?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Do you feel your hearing problem limits or hampers your social or professional life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Do you have difficulty with telephone conversations?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Do you currently have hearing aids that frustrate you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>Total YES's</b>		_____

# of Yes's	How Does Your Hearing Rate?
0 - 2	Your hearing probably falls within the Normal Range of Hearing. Congratulations! And good for you for taking the time to do this survey! Keep your interest and awareness high and if you notice a change in your ability to hear and understand, be sure to have a hearing test.
3 - 4	You may have a MILD Hearing Loss. Early detection is important. Although you probably do not need hearing aids yet, it is important that you have a thorough hearing test and begin to monitor your hearing once a year. Start with a Complimentary EDUCATIONAL Hearing Test at Avalon!
5 - 9	You may have a MODERATE Hearing Loss. You hear but have difficulty understanding, especially in background noise. You spend a lot of energy trying to follow conversation and may not even be aware of it. Learn as much as you can about hearing loss and your options, but make an appointment for your complimentary EDUCATIONAL Hearing Test at Avalon, now.
10 - 14	You may have a SEVERE Hearing Loss. Your ability to be part of a conversation is very limited unless you are facing the speaker. Talking to others is both frustrating and exhausting. If you have not tried hearing instruments, you are probably in denial and hurting yourself and others. Learn all you can about denial and the cost of untreated hearing loss. Meet with an Avalon Hearing Healthcare provider and talk about your concerns. You need to work with someone who understands your hesitation.



**Sacramento**  
1260 Fulton Ave • Suite B  
Sacramento, CA 95825

**Fair Oaks**  
8146 Greenback Lane • Suite 100  
Fair Oaks, CA 95628

**(916) 483-9064**  
[www.AvalonHearing.com](http://www.AvalonHearing.com)

## Don't let this happen to you and your loved one struggling with hearing loss

YOU, the family member, can literally make or break your loved one's hearing aid fitting and their hearing care experience.

Being part of their hearing care, right from the beginning, increases your understanding of their hearing loss and how much hearing aids will help. No two hearing losses or people are alike. Add in the type and level of hearing technology one selects PLUS the competency and care of the Hearing Care Provider, you choose. All these factors help to determine how successful a hearing aid fitting will be.

But there's another aspect of hearing loss that people rarely consider. In fact, most people aren't even aware of it. To best illustrate this aspect, a true story is warranted.

### A true story about Janice and her life with hearing loss

Janice has been a client of Avalon for over 10 years. She comes to every appointment by herself. She often shares that both her husband and her adult daughter get frustrated with Janice and her hearing loss. They both think she should hear much better since she invested in top-of-the-line hearing technology. What they don't know, is Janice's severe hearing loss makes it almost impossible for her to hear and understand in the presence of any background noise.

### I requested that Janice ask her husband to attend her next appointment

She hesitated because she didn't want to bother him. That made me feel sad. Married for 42 years, they had been through better and worse, but she hesitated to ask for his support around her hearing. Janice had asked him three times, half-heartedly. The fourth time, I requested that she tell Bob that I wanted him to come to her next appointment. He finally came!

### Bob participated in Janice's next appointment

I explained Janice's loss to him and let him hear Janice's hearing loss through our Hearing Loss Simulator. We discussed realistic expectations and he asked a lot of questions. He was deeply interested, and concerned. What happened next changed everything for both Janice and Bob.



### Janice had not realized how ALONE she felt in coping with her hearing loss

After all, her hearing loss was her problem. Or so she thought. But Bob's involvement changed that for Janice. In just a couple of appointments, he became kinder and more patient with her. Bob was willing to meet her part way AND take responsibility for making their communication easier. Bob was now part of the solution instead of adding to the problem.

### Janice no longer felt alone

Janice turned to Bob. With tears in her eyes, her voice almost breaking, she acknowledged him, "Bob, I never realized how alone I felt. I thought I had to deal with this all by myself. But you, being here with me, has lifted a heavy weight, that I didn't even know I was carrying. Thank you for doing this with me." Then, Bob got choked up.

Bob continues to come to most of Janice's appointments. Her defensiveness about her hearing loss has dropped dramatically. Janice is less stressed and ironically, that helps her to hear more easily.

Next, we are going to invite Janice's daughter to come for a **FAMILY CONSULTATION**, so we can help this mother-daughter relationship out of just coping with hearing loss into truly connecting, despite hearing loss!

**Are you ready to take on hearing loss, TOGETHER?**