

HEALTH & FITNESS

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Want to Boost Your Income? Get Hearing Aids

According to conventional wisdom, to get ahead in today's economy it's wise to work long hours, do a lot of networking and find ways to make your boss look good. But new research reveals that there is a much less obvious way to boost earnings: get your hearing checked, and get hearing aids if it's necessary.

A new survey by the Better Hearing Institute shows that working Americans who ignore their hearing problems are losing at least \$100 billion a year in earnings. Even people with mild hearing loss, who may miss a consonant or a word here and there, will lose income if they can't completely grasp the latest news at the water cooler or the subtle nuances in a phone message from the boss.

The truth is, whether your hearing problem is treated or not, you are likely to lose some income in the course of your working life. But the research revealed that, on average, the income decline is cut in half for hearing aid owners.

The average amount of income lost by working people who don't get hearing aids ranges from \$1,000 a year (for those with mild hearing loss) to \$12,000 a year (for those with profound hearing loss). But individuals can lose a lot more. I once spoke to a contractor who blew a \$1 million deal because he misheard job specifications that were conveyed in person (he admitted that he had been "too vain" to wear a hearing aid).

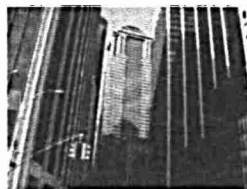
Getting hearing aids at a younger age reduces the chance of losing income. You might think of hearing loss as

something that happens mainly to older people. But most people with this problem are in the prime of life, including 1 out of 6 baby boomers (ages 41-59) and 1 out of 14 "Gen-exers" (ages 29-40). Yet, right now, only 1 out of 4 of Americans with hearing problems are getting treatment.

People are still embarrassed to admit they have hearing problems and get hearing aids. Some incorrectly believe a hearing aid will make them seem odd or out of place or less able to do the job than their co-workers. But if you seem out of touch or just plain stupid because you can't hear very well, that will be much more noticeable than a modern hearing device in your ear. And that could really hurt your career and reduce your income. In a service economy, good communications skills are critically important.

If you haven't paid much attention to the latest developments in hearing aids, you will be surprised at how inconspicuous many of them are. Some can be worn inside the ear. And this is the age of iPods and hands-free cell phones, when devices in the ear are increasingly common; so wearing hearing aids that are visible will not seem like a big deal to most people (if that's what you're worried about).

Once you try a hearing aid, you'll probably like them. More than nine out of ten users feel their lives have improved, according to survey findings.



The respondents cited a number of specific improvements to their quality of life because of hearing instruments: more effective communications (71%), better social life (56%) relationships at home (55%) and in the work place (48%), improved emotional health (40%), improved mental/cognitive ability (35%), even better physical health (24%).

This nation needs to stop treating hearing loss as a minor problem, an irritating condition that can be safely ignored. Other research shows that hearing problems, when left untreated, disrupt family life, hamper emotional and sexual intimacy and increase the likelihood of depression and other psychological problems. If that doesn't convince you to take hearing

loss seriously, I hope the prospect of making less money will.

If you or a loved one has difficulty hearing, please call the Hearing Rehab Center for a complimentary hearing evaluation. 668-8811.

Audiologist Meredith Workman has many years of experience helping people hear better. She is an expert at digital hearing aid fittings and can answer all of your questions about the latest hearing technology. The Hearing Rehab Center in Frisco is located inside Hart Chiropractic at 699 N. Summit Blvd. Unit I.

The phone number is 668-8811.

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