

A new experience of sound

My experience of hearing aids is new, recent. I received my aids in 2021. I wear them sporadically and I am still adapting to my new experience of sound. My experience of interacting with members of my immediate family using hearing aids is lifelong.

Without my hearing aids

Listening feels like an increasingly personal, interactive experience; it is a true effort for me to pay attention to and understand sound.

It forces being present, being instinctively reactive to a communicative cue.

I focus on another sensorial resource: sight, to read lips and faces.

Sound is often slightly muffled, dulled, or missing entirely in higher frequencies.

Lecture halls, conferences, busy restaurants, cafes, those who speak quietly, those speaking whilst facing away from me.

My experience of hearing could be perceived as an isolating, scary, discerning. But to me, it is peaceful, it is reality. I find serenity in being alone and undistracted from my own thoughts.

If controllable, sound volume is loud, subtitles on the television.

If I've missed sound entirely, I'll sincerely nod, smile and agree. I have accepted missing, warped, or dulled, sound. Conversations often feel like puzzles with missing pieces, innately incomplete but able to understand the broad picture.

With my hearing aids

Silence does not truly feel like silence. Silence is a low pitched, pervasive lull.

I can hear what feels like the air moving around me, I can clearly hear the cars passing on the road outside my residence.

I can hear the rustling of my hair when I move my head from side to side, as the aids sit, nestled behind and in my ear.

The typing on my keyboard was higher in pitch, and clearer in tone.

I hear my partner breathing in and out deeply from another room.

Exposure to a clearer array of sound is an overwhelming, loud, inescapable constant.

The brain apparently adapts to processing sound with frequent use of hearing aids, this sharp and unpleasant background sound will fade.

Perhaps, I have become comfortable with my isolation from sound.