

Be Invisible No More

Working Together to Make
San Luis Obispo County

a

Hearing Friendly Community





SLO County Commission on Aging 2013
Established by the Board of Supervisors, May 15, 1984

Focus on Isolation and Depression

In 2010

The Commission on Aging invited speakers
to tell us

about their battle to stay involved and not
become isolated because of Hearing Loss.

Martin

Norma

SLOCOA listens & takes action

The Hearing Advocacy Committee was formed in 2011 to get answers.

- **How do people get hearing loss?**
- **Is it just part of getting OLD?**
- **How does it lead to isolation?**
- **How can the Commission make a difference?**

#1 reason for Hearing Loss

Excessive Noise



Exposure to everyday noises:

- *being in a noisy workplace
- *listening to loud music
- *using a lawn mower or a leaf blower
- *using a vacuum or hair dryer



Gunfire & explosions:

#1 disability caused by past & current combat

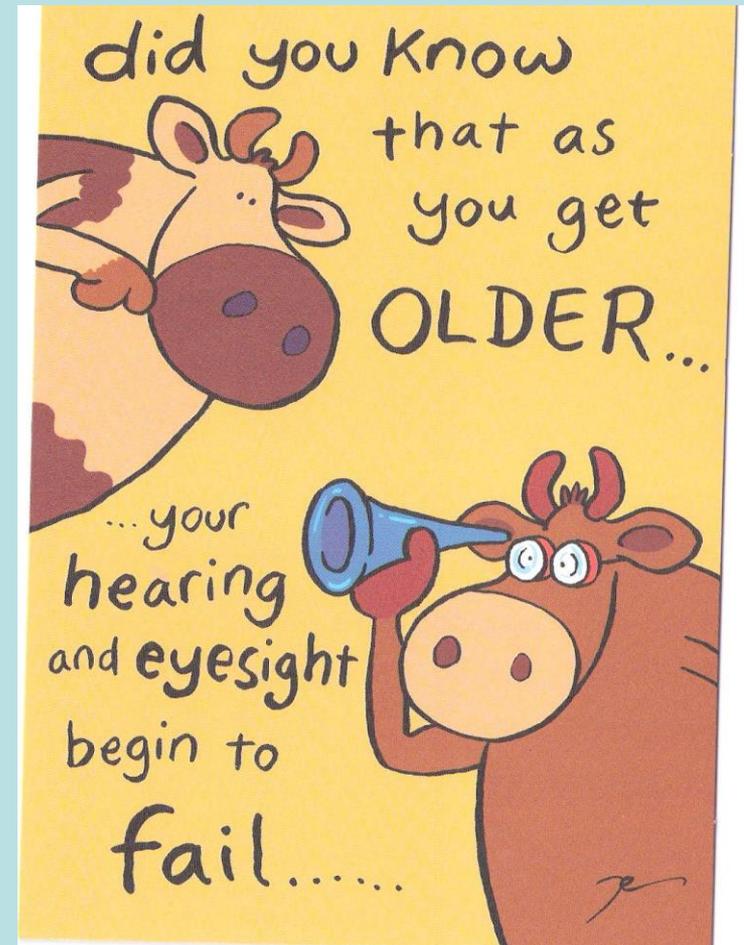
FACT

If you can't carry on a conversation in the presence of noise, it's too loud for your ears and can potentially cause hearing loss.

(Better Hearing Institute)

Number 1 myth

- “Hearing loss affects only ‘old people’ and is merely a sign of aging.”



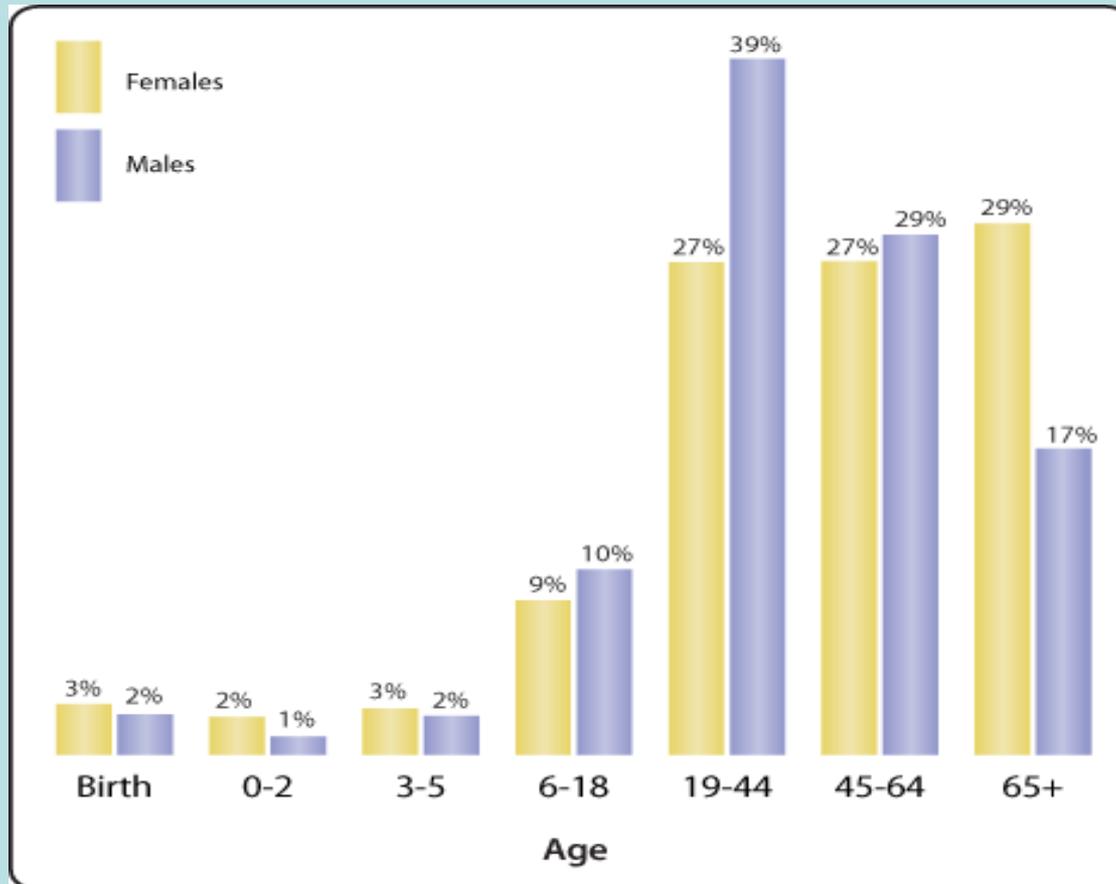
Experts say

26 million Americans ages 20 to 69 years old already have permanent damage to their high frequency hearing that may be due to noise exposure.

(Cleveland Clinic 2010)

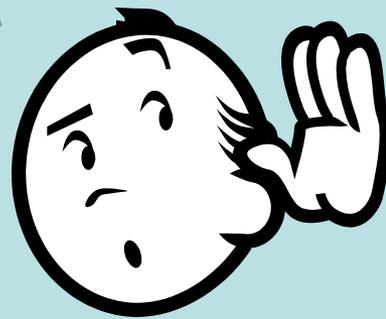


What are the facts?



Graph based on age when hearing loss begins
(data from National Institute on Deafness & Other Communication Disorders, 2002)

What do YOU do when you can't hear well?



Hearing Aid Usage ?

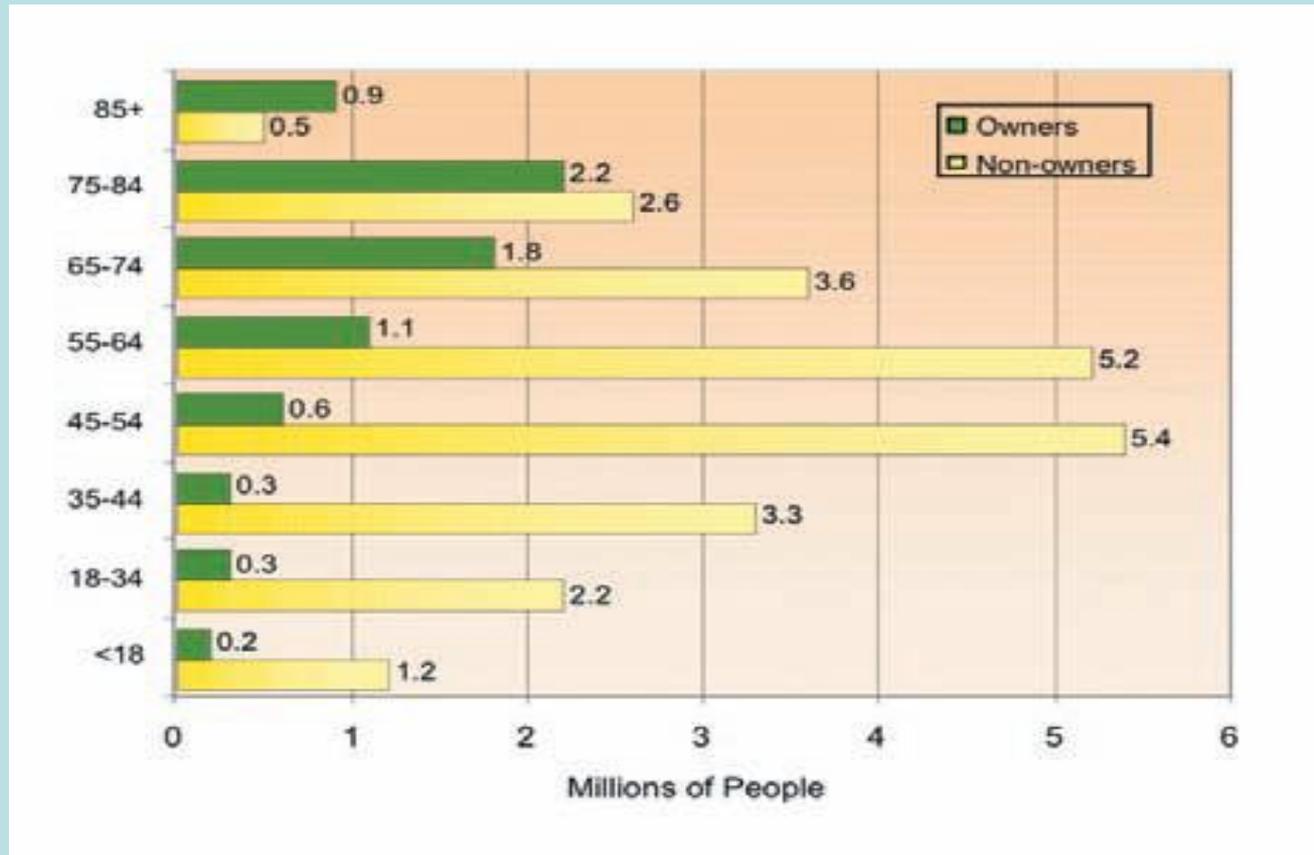


FIGURE 17. Hearing loss population in 2004 by age: hearing instrument owners (green bars) versus non-owners who have a significant hearing loss (yellow bars).

Facts from 2010 Study by National Institute on Deafness & Other Communication Disorders

- Only 1 out of 5 (of all) people who could benefit from a hearing aid actually wears one.

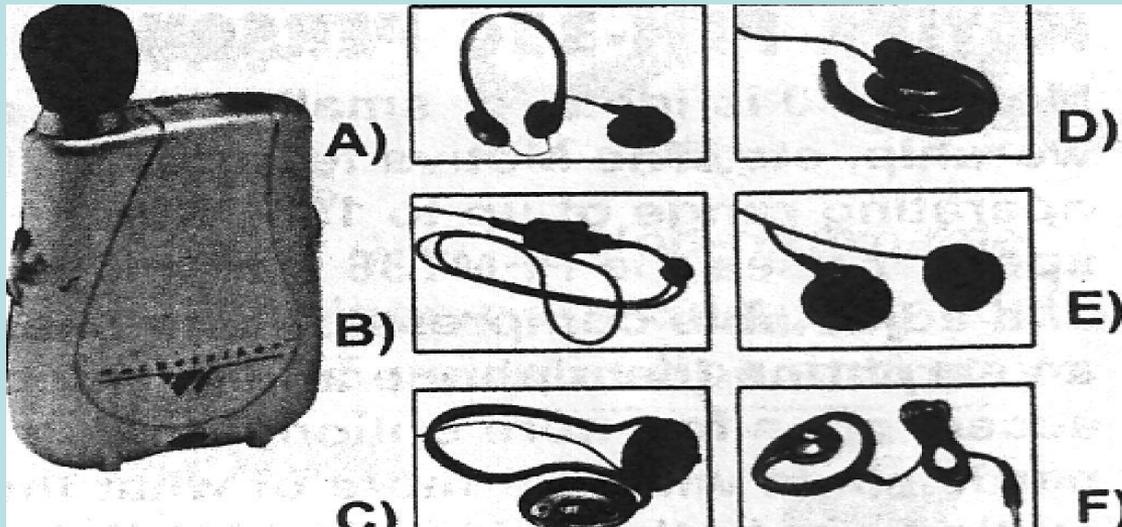
Tribune Article, June 2, 2012, written by Anita Creamer states “Aging America turns deaf ear to hearing aids”

- 6 in 7 hearing impaired **older** adults forgo clearer sound for a variety of reasons...among them

vanity, too proud, price tag.

Listening Accessory Usage?

- **Like a Pocketalker: a lightweight, portable, assistive hearing device**

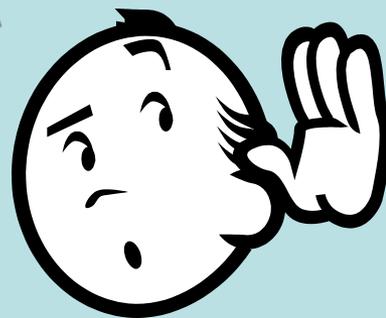


Sources of information about assistive devices: Central Coast Assistive Technology Center (SLO 805 549-7420). Independent Living Resource Center (805 462-1162)

No hearing aids?

No assistive devices?

What do YOU do when you can't hear well?





Pretending to understand...

CAN IGNORING HEARING LOSS BE DANGEROUS TO YOUR HEALTH?

How would you feel if family and friends started thinking that YOU are....?

- **aloof**
- **confused**
- **going through personality changes**

Instead of realizing that you are suffering from hearing loss and bluffing?

Studies show that some people with hearing loss will become withdrawn, isolated and depressed.

Research suggests that severe hearing loss can even lead to **dementia**

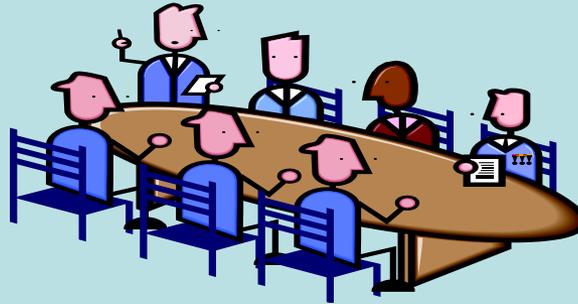
SLOCOA says

Be Invisible No More

**How can the Commission make
a difference?**

GOALS

**1) Ask for better use of Microphones
at all public meetings**



2) Outreach to public gathering places like restaurants, fitness centers, stores.....

**Is the music too loud?
Don't be afraid to ask ... "Please turn it down!"**



3) Outreach to Community Groups: Help spread the word...



**Dismiss the Myth (that hearing
aids are only for OLD people)
& the Bluffing**

4) Create Hearing Loss Rack Cards

Printing funded by Quota Club of Morro Bay

Be Invisible No More!



Tips for People with Hearing Loss

Rule: Communication is a two-way street. Hard of hearing people must make as much effort as hearing people.

Set Your Stage

- Tell others how best to talk to you: speak louder, slower, or closer to your better ear.
- Get away from background noise.
- Ask for written clues if needed.
- Tell people what you think you heard.
- Don't bluff. Admit when you don't understand.
- Let speaker know how well they are doing!

San Luis Obispo County Commission on Aging

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rev:10/18/2011



Tips for Your Staff

On communicating with people with hearing loss.

- Face the person and talk clearly.
- Separate your words.
- Always include the person with a hearing loss in conversation when another person is interpreting.
- Watch for any misunderstanding.
- Repeat yourself if necessary; and use different words.
- Keep a writing pad available. Write out key words.
- Provide written product information or give website.
- Encourage a quiet environment!

Let's make SLO a Hearing Friendly County!

San Luis Obispo County Commission on Aging

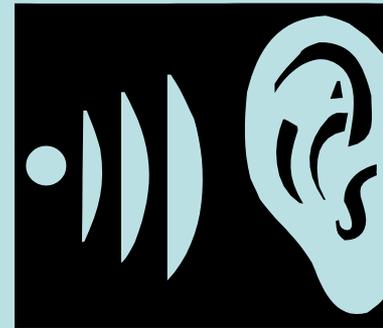
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Conversation is a two way street

On one side of the
street.....

People with
Hearing Loss



SLOCOA'S Tips for People with hearing loss

- **Tell others how best to talk to you: speak louder, slower, or closer to your better ear.**
- **Get away from background noise.**
- **Ask for written clues if needed.**
- **Tell people what you think you heard.**
- **Don't Bluff.** Admit when you don't understand.
- **Be kind.** Let speaker know how well they are doing!

On the other side of the street....

People who
serve the
public



and

Friends

&

Family

who do not have
hearing loss...



SLOCOA'S Tips for staff, friends & family

- Face the person and talk clearly.
- Separate your words.
- Speak directly to the person with hearing loss when another person is interpreting.
- Watch for any misunderstanding.
- Repeat yourself if necessary...**use different words.....and BE KIND!**
- Keep a writing pad available. Write out key words.
- Provide written product information or give website.
- Encourage a quiet environment!

**SLO City was the first in the Nation to ban
smoking in Restaurants, Bars and
Government Buildings**

**Now we have the opportunity to
become a**

**Hearing Friendly
Community**

with your help!

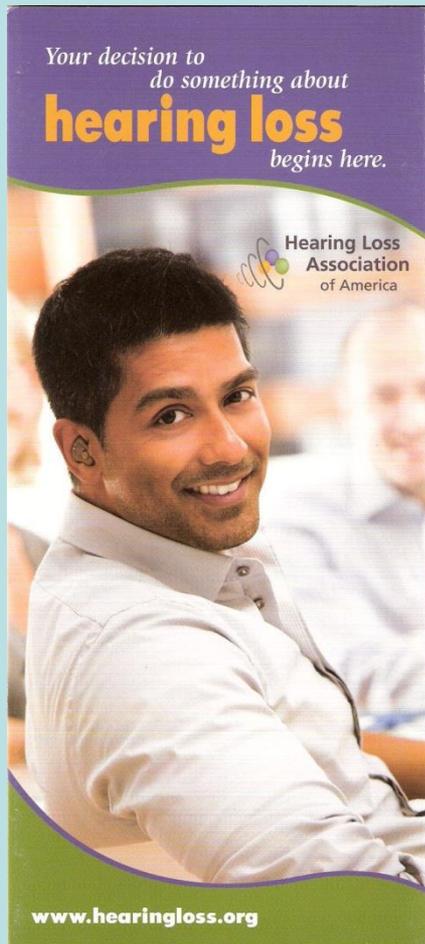
How can I help?



- **ASK** for quiet environments
- **THANK** owners for hearing friendly environs
- **Take the DON'T BLUFF** pledge!

(created by Gael Hannan)

Hearing loss is not an individual problem it's a family problem.



- Additional information about how to help your loved one can be found at
- www.hearingloss.org
- or 805 684-2788
- or contact the SLO Commission on Aging
www.slocounty.ca.gov/coa.htm