



What's it like to lose your hearing for a day?

Physiologist, nurse and health writer Helen Cowan found out when she volunteered to wear hearing loss simulators as she went about her daily life.

What colour is your hearing?

I hadn't thought about my hearing for a long time; I had assumed all is well - but has my hearing palate been in shades of grey rather than in technicolour? Could my hearing be enriched? Perhaps I am missing out on certain frequencies of sounds without realising it?

I have two canaries at home: one that sings and one that doesn't – could my apparently silent canary really be singing a beautiful melody? And should I not anyway be more in awe of this fragile yet robust organ, and take more interest in it? The ear contains the smallest bones in the body and its skin is a millimetre thick. Yet it can hear everything from the rustling of leaves to a jumbo jet engine.

The experiment

I decided to 'lend an ear' (or two) and wear hearing loss simulators for a day. I knew that I really would be 'playing by ear' as I had never (to my knowledge) been hard of hearing before – and what an experience it was! I immediately felt cut off from the busy shopping community, able to hear the general hustle and bustle but

unable to make out the words of the cashier or the speaker announcement. I even felt fearful – what if there was an emergency notice?

He's behind you!

I was suddenly aware of how much we use our ears to know what is behind us; I kept looking behind me (no texting as I walked along now). As I drove home my eyes kept darting (more than usual) to the rear view mirror. So many modern features in the car rely on hearing: the navigation system, the parking sensors, the audio system - and it's very unnerving being unable to hear the indicators or the engine...



CONTINUED... Why do children always want to share their biggest stories with you when in the back of the car? I longed to know what they were saying. I was glad to be home. I felt like staying in for the rest of the day, and social isolation often does follow hearing loss.

Normal household chores now required extra attention. Were the vegetables boiling, was the washing machine finished? Worst of all, I felt very self-conscious talking to my husband. Was I talking too loud? I gave up on the telephone call, unable to hear a single word.

Music to my ears

I relished the feeling of control and freedom that returned once I removed the hearing loss simulators. I immediately felt less isolated: able to enjoy, experience and contribute to the world around me. My hearing is precious and I will do all that I can to look after it.

Tara says...

“For those of us with normal hearing, this article provides an insight into how a severe hearing loss can affect everyday life.

It is an important reminder of how vital the sense of hearing is and how easy it is to take it for granted.”



TECHNOLOGY UPDATE: New: Widex Unique

The Widex Unique 440 is the flagship hearing aid in Widex's new "Unique" range. The Unique 440 uses Widex's new U-platform chip which processes sounds across more pitches than ever before.

Using "Sound Class Technology" the hearing aid classifies what kind of environment you are currently in out of a choice of nine possible and adjusts itself accordingly to maximise your ability to hear speech sounds clearly. The Unique 440 can attenuate more wind noise than any other hearing aid out there, no matter the direction the wind is coming from, even from directly ahead.

The Widex Unique can detect very soft sounds which other hearing aids can't. The greater sensitivity allows the instruments to detect the softest nuances of speech. This results in improved speech clarity.



If you would like a free trial of this technology call 01865 910202