

Why do I need cLEAR Auditory Brain Training?

Are hearing and listening the same thing?

Surprisingly, they are not. Hearing allows you to receive acoustic information (speech) while listening requires your brain to attend to and interpret speech. For example, once a speech signal enters your ear, your brain must rapidly process each word and hold that string of words in memory long enough to comprehend and make sense of its meaning. Not only must your brain distinguish each word from all other possible words, but it must invoke mental skills such as auditory memory, auditory attention, and auditory processing speed in order for you to engage successfully in conversation.

Does normal or aided hearing guarantee that I am an effective listener?

Having normal hearing or using a hearing aid will not automatically make you an effective listener. Some people with normal hearing are poor listeners while some people with hearing loss are excellent listeners. With a little effort and appropriate instruction, you can train yourself to become a good listener, even if you have considerable hearing loss.

Can hearing aids solve all of my listening problems?

Although hearing aids will reduce listening problems, hearing aids alone cannot develop the listening and mental skills that are necessary to comprehend conversations. Hearing aids provide access to sound by making them louder and even a little clearer, but they do not train your brain to interpret speech and they cannot correct the distortions that are caused by “nerve deafness”. Even the most technologically advanced hearing aids cannot provide perfectly clear representations of speech.

How does hearing loss change my brain?

When you begin to lose your hearing, those pathways in your brain that used to be designated to understanding speech begin to reorganize and rewire themselves. As a result, you may have lost some of the mental tools that are necessary to process and comprehend speech.

If I begin to use hearing aids, will my brain automatically regain those mental skills that I lost because of hearing loss?

Possibly, but if this does happen, regaining them will take a long time and you may never become the listener that you were before you acquired hearing loss. However, help is available. cLEAR Auditory Brain Training triggers and accelerates your brain’s rebuilding process. When someone has difficulty walking because of a bum hip and when they receive a hip replacement, they receive physical therapy. cLEAR Auditory Brain Training is like receiving physical therapy for the brain. cLEAR ear trains the brain so you can better comprehend speech.

Can cLEAR Auditory Brain Training benefit a person who has worn hearing aids for a number of years?

Many people who have worn hearing aids for years can still experience communication difficulties because hearing aids do not provide a perfect representation of sound. When patients invest some time and effort to complete cLEAR auditory brain training, they are often much better able to benefit from the amplification provided by their hearing aids. Improvement in conversational fluency is not just getting used to the new hearing aids, it is also a process of the brain developing the neurological connections for better listening skills.

What is cLEAR Auditory Brain Training?

The centerpiece of cLEAR is a set of computerized auditory brain training games that are fun to play. Your hearing healthcare professional will give you a customized lesson plan that will address your specific listening needs and communication challenges. During training, you will develop your abilities to distinguish between words that sound alike (e.g., car and tar), to recognize the most common words of the language (e.g., boy, girl, chair), and to develop those mental skills that are crucial to have, no matter what words and sentences you happen to be hearing. You will also be trained in those areas where you are having particular problems; for example, some cLEAR users desire customized training that will help allow them to have more successful conversations with a particular person, such as a spouse or adult child.

What kind of benefits can cLEAR Auditory Brain Training give me?

Most people who have received cLEAR Auditory Brain Training now experience improved conversational confidence in more listening environments. They find that it takes less effort to be actively engaged in conversations and they don't feel depleted because they have had to strain too hard to understand speech. Research performed at Washington University in St. Louis has shown that many patients better recognize words, discriminate speech better in the presence of background noise, and experience reduced listening challenges.

(Portions adapted from the published work of Robert Sweetow, Ph.D. and the Americans for Better Hearing Foundation)

