



“Practice Makes Perfect”

~Robert L. Martin~

I don't give this speech to all of my patients, just those who are complaining about not being able to understand words and have not been wearing their hearing aids. The phrase “Practice Makes Perfect” embodies much wisdom. **We rarely get good at any task without doing it over and over.** It is not obvious to all patients that they need to wear their hearing aids, so we need to encourage them and educate them.

The phrase “Wear your hearing aids or your brain will rust” is a simplistic overstatement, yet it contains more truth than fiction. When a person does not hear sounds, the mono-topical mapping of the cortex in the brain begins to change. **The longer people avoid wearing hearing aids, the more difficult it is for them to learn to hear through them.**

There are many ways to tell patients that wearing hearing aids improve cortical conditioning. I try to find out what a patient wants to hear, then I stress that wearing the instruments will “help you hear the baseball game on the radio, your grandchild's voice, friends at your women's club meeting, etc.” In truth, **wearing hearing aids improves word understanding in almost all situations, and not wearing them results in an unnecessary loss of speech information.**

The act of hearing and interpreting words is much more difficult than most of us realize. Just think about it. Most children are born with normally functioning ears and brain, yet it takes thousands of hours of practice before the child can hear and understand a sentence like “do you want some ice cream or a popsicle?”

When people have poor hearing ability, they also tend to develop poor listening habits. Paying attention to difficult conversations is frustrating for them, so they tend to shut themselves off from others and stop trying to hear, but **using hearing aids reconnects these people with family, friends, the rest of the world, and it makes all avenues of communication easier.**