



## **“Wear Your Hearing Aids or Your Brain Will Rust”**

~Robert L. Martin~

When I first heard the words “*or your brain will rust,*” I felt angry and thought some unscrupulous practitioner was misleading patients. Well, that was 25 years ago, and I’ve now seen many patients who do not want to wear their hearing aids. My feelings on how to deal with these people have changed. Some patients need strong encouragement; otherwise their hearing aids stay in the drawer and family and friends suffer.

What do you tell them? Do you use words phrased like “*your brain will rust?*” Some patients expect to hear well even if they don’t wear their hearing aids regularly. These are the ones who get my ‘WEAR YOUR HEARING AIDS’ speech, which goes something like this: **“You don’t hear with your ears, you hear with your brain.”** I then touch the patient’s finger with my hand and continue, “you don’t feel with your fingers, your fingers make electricity, which is carried to your brain through nerves. You ‘FEEL’ with your brain.”

“Your ears make electricity that is carried to your brain through your hearing nerves. You ‘hear’ with your brain, not your ears. Hearing aid use is like exercise. If you want to get your muscles in shape, you need to exercise them every day.”

“When you wear your hearing aids, lots of good things happen. You get used to the feeling of wearing the hearing aids. You get used to all the funny sounds. You start hearing better. It takes time for the brain to learn to recognize words through the hearing aids. Learning to listen to amplified sound is like trying to understand people who speak with an unfamiliar accent, like the actors in British dramas on TV. At first, words seem garbled, but slowly they become clearer and easier to recognize.”

“Wearing hearing aids in noisy listening situations also takes time. It is not easy to listen to one person when lots of other people are talking at the same time, but with practice you get better. Wearing hearing aids even helps short-term memory. If I tell you my name is Dr. ..ru...p, you’ll know you didn’t hear the name correctly so it won’t register in your brain, but if I say my name is Dr. Grump, you’ll think, “Wow, that’s a weird name!” and you probably will remember it.

I conclude, **“The more you listen with hearing aids, the better your brain gets at recognizing words.”**