

TIPS FOR IF YOU FEEL UNSURE

FACT SHEET

Still not sure whether you want to act on your hearing? Here are some information and tools to help with your decision-making.

IS LACK OF KNOWLEDGE HOLDING YOU BACK?

Knowledge is power – taking the first step towards seeking help for a hearing condition, or a suspected hearing condition, is a very good idea, even if you go no further at this point. Consider trying a hearing screening tool at the very least. These tests are quick, free, self-administered, and at least you will have more knowledge about your hearing than you did before.

If you then decide to go ahead and get a diagnostic test done by an audiologist, you will have a comprehensive picture of what your hearing is like at that point in time, and if you ever do decide to move further along the help-seeking pathway, you will be able to refer back to that baseline test. Your hearing may remain the same for many years, or it may slowly decline over time, so checking your hearing every six months or so is a good idea. Research tells us that the sooner you get help the better the long-term outcomes will be on your overall health, not just your communication abilities.

To help you reflect on the impact that your hearing may be having on you, you could consider completing the activities

in Soundfair's My Hearing Diary: soundfair.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/My-hearing-diary.pdf

ARE CONCERNS ABOUT COST HOLDING YOU BACK?

Hearing aids can be very expensive, but the good news is, they are not the only solution and there are several funding options available that might apply to you (information on these topic is available at: soundfair.org.au/hearing-information-sheets/)

IS LACK OF MOTIVATION HOLDING YOU BACK?

If you feel that you are lacking in motivation to move forward beyond this point and seek help, or that you are being held back by factors you can't quite pinpoint, it might help to try and identify what those factors are. There is a free tool available online through the Ida Institute. It can help you to understand your own feelings about whether or not you should act on your hearing condition: idainstitute.com/tools/motivation_tools/box/ The tool prompts you to think about the pros and cons of either doing nothing about your hearing or acting on it. While it is designed to be worked through in a clinical setting, it is actually a very

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“ ”

I went into a complete denial for many, many years. So much so that it was detrimental for my career; because rather than say, look, I've got a problem and I can't hear, I was just in denial and I was missing out on things and I was taking a step back at work. So, it affected me – Marija

simple exercise that you can do on your own. Just follow the instructions provided at the link above. There is a blank worksheet that you can print out, and a worked example to help you reflect on your own feelings and argue your own pros and cons. Doing so will really help you to identify what is driving your decisions. Identifying what it is that is holding you back might help you to find ways to move forward on the journey towards better hearing health.

IS STIGMA HOLDING YOU BACK?

Stigma occurs when we respond negatively towards someone. Specifically, this negative reaction happens because of a particular characteristic or trait that we think they have. We perceive this characteristic or trait to be a disadvantage. Stigma can be based on anything, including race, clothes, language, mental health, sexuality, physical abilities, and ageing. There are no limits to what can be stigmatised.

Stigma is harmful. It might mean people are denied jobs, excluded from certain activities, or treated rudely. It can spread as an unconscious and unhelpful value in society. Stigma can even be directed at the self (you) – this is called self-stigma. We might react negatively to ourselves because of a characteristic or trait that we have had all our lives, or one that we have just recently acquired. Self-stigma is uncomfortable and associated with poorer self-esteem, higher stress, greater shame, and a lack of faith in our

abilities. We are less likely to seek help for a condition that is stigmatised, such as ageing, which means we can go for years without seeking advice or assistance.

Hearing conditions are stigmatised by some people, and stigma can have significant psychological effects. This is not universal! Many people see hearing conditions as just another part of the normal human experience, like wearing prescription glasses. However, some people do hold stigmatising attitudes towards hearing conditions specifically. Or they may stigmatise ageing more generally, and aging may be associated with hearing loss. It is important to acknowledge that this can be part of your experience. You might also notice that you hold some of these attitudes yourself. One very powerful negative outcome of self-directed stigma is feeling ashamed of your hearing condition.

It is important to address this stigma – from others or directed towards ourselves. Stigma makes it harder to get the help that you need and makes it more difficult to use the assistance that you are offered. You might avoid getting your hearing checked, you might refuse to wear hearing aids, and you might be reluctant to ask people to meet your needs. Stigma can also isolate you and prevent you making strong and meaningful contributions at home, at work, and to the lives of those closest to you. See our resource called 'How can you break the stigma of hearing loss' for ideas about overcoming stigma.

This factsheet is intended to be a guide of a general nature, having regard to general circumstances. The information presented should not be relied on as a substitute for medical advice, independent judgement or assessment by a healthcare professional, with consideration of the particular needs and individual circumstances. This factsheet reflects information available at the time of its preparation, but its currency should be determined having regard to other available information. Soundfair disclaims all liability to users of the information provided.

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