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Hearing Aids and Games of Life

How do we react to success, failure, challenges and unexpected outcomes? We reveal ourselves in the games we play, be it bridge, tennis or golf. First we learn the skills, then we apply them and then only do we measure them against the success of others. In golf for example Ernie Els doesn't always play the perfect shot and it took a lot of talent and at least some amount of practice before he got it right!

The challenge of a difficult shot is far more memorable than those that came easy. Much the same can be said of listening to speech in a noisy environment. Most people with hearing losses will never have perfect speech understanding in noisy environments and the more noise there is, the worse their performance becomes. Some of us will never have much talent on the golf course, but we don't stop trying. A rotten performance on the golf course can result in reactions from "Oops (or words to that effect!), lets try that again" to "I don't know why I bother". Hearing aid users have similar reactions, from "I am doing well, not perfect, but better", to "It's big and ugly and I won't wear it!"

As time goes on, strategies and techniques are learnt on and off the golf course. Gary Player once said "The more I practise, the luckier I get". Successful golfers learn to deal with the ball in the water, the duffed shot as well as the hole-in-one, but generally they just enjoy the day out on the course. The realization that hearing aids cannot replace the hearing that has been lost but can only assist with the hearing that remains will lead to a better understanding of the problems to be faced. We need to have more realistic expectations. The committed golfer and hearing aid user need to accept whatever talent or abilities they have and be realistic about what they can expect to achieve with the equipment available to them.

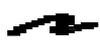
In summary, what do golf, hearing aids and life have in common? Use what you have available, get professional advice, find a partnership that allows for the best possible game with the best possible tools and then practise, practise, practise!

Please remember that for optimum benefit hearing aids should be used daily and maintained through servicing. Diarise a regular reminder and have your hearing aids serviced before the guarantee expires. Keep in mind that there is no charge for servicing, or just checking hearing aids whilst under guarantee, but courier/insurance will be charged for.



Does size really matter?

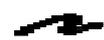
Yes, but not as much as you might think. The truth is that size has little to do with price, less with performance and nothing with quality. The question of which size is best, is answered by the type and degree of hearing loss, options needed, manual dexterity, eyesight and personal preference. Unfortunately, it is not possible to cram enough processing power for the more severe losses into the smallest of aids; so consequently size is often pre-determined by the loss. The space in the ear itself doesn't always allow for canal sized hearing aids to be fitted and often the movement of the jaw-bone causes the canal sized hearing aids to work their way out of the ear causing many other problems like feedback. Remember that size is not everything and that quality and performance should be the main consideration. It's the quality of what goes into the hearing aid, as well as how the hearing aid manages the sound, which will determine the quality of what comes out.



What's New?

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There's been a lot of action at The Hearing Clinic since this time last year. Francis got married, Janet has a grandson, and we have also been joined fulltime by audiologist Philippa Round whom many of you will have met already. We've also had a change of name from The Hearing Clinic to Francis Slabber, Janet Steer & Associates and if you flip to page 714 in the Yellow Pages you will see our new notice.

Great strides have been made in digital hearing aid technology and though manufacturers will still have a few of their analogue products available, research and development is now focused on the digital market. This means that there are now more digital options available than ever before and for far less money.

A few years ago, the options on digital hearing aids were limited but now they are available with a choice of features. This implies that you can choose which features you feel would be beneficial to you; a bit like deciding on power steering rather than air conditioning for your car. However, as with any aid, technicalities like small ear canals, lots of wax, loss of dexterity and poor eyesight still need to be addressed.

Technical features now available include compression, multiple channels, noise reduction, feedback management, speech enhancement, output control and adaptive directionality. Over and above which there would be the option to include a volume control, multiple programmes and modern colours. That means that there are now digital aids for almost every pocket, but it also implies that you get what you pay for.

We encourage people to do a 'needs analysis' when considering a new hearing aid to determine exactly what is required of the instrument. Do you feel that you would benefit from multiple programmes? Would you like a volume control or should it be automatic? Are you likely to be exposed to group noise or do you live a reasonably quiet life? When choosing an appropriate hearing aid we need to consider these different lifestyle needs. What is your social life like, your business exposure or even the games you play?

Remember that the more complicated the listening environment, the more difficult it is for the hearing aid to cope and the more help it needs to enable it to do its job.

And as all things in life, the more it can do, the more it will cost, but if it doesn't need to do much, it doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg.

Francis Slabber
Audiologist

& Janet Steer
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Audiologist