

If You Can Relate, Take One Small Step



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Message from the Executive Director

If these situations feel even a little familiar to you, do something today.

I had the honor of being a guest on Military Radio Network on July 12. The topic was “Hearing Loss and Tinnitus, the #1 Veteran Injury.” Also on the broadcast was Ross Meglathery, a United States Marine Corps veteran, reservist, and vice president and director of VetsFirst. He shared the story of his friend, a Marine commanding officer, a highly-trained and educated battalion commander who wears hearing aids. Although the commander admitted his hearing aids worked well, he would not wear them while standing before his Marines. Where physical fitness and appearance is important to bearing a leadership presence, he felt he would be seen as less capable and less strong in front of his Marines.

My family and I were touring an historical cathedral in St. Louis last summer after the HLAA Convention. The cathedral had high ceilings, reverberating noise, and the docent conducting the tour—who wore hearing aids and should have known better—kept turning his head away, spoke while walking with his back to us and did not speak clearly. Many of us were having trouble hearing him. As the tour went on, a woman who did not have hearing loss said to me, “I really can’t hear him, do you think it would be okay to ask him to face us and speak up?” I’m not sure why she thought I had an edge on being assertive, but I told her that yes, absolutely, I was going to ask him to speak up for the sake of the whole group.

Here are two examples of people not willing to either disclose hearing loss or ask for help. One is a Marine who should have no reason to feel fear of being viewed as less capable, and another who had nothing to lose and everything to gain, just by making a simple request.

How Do We Fix This?

First, realize that you are not alone in those moments when you feel demoralized because you have a hearing loss. Newsflash: we all have insecure moments, hearing or no hearing. Some of our insecurities run deep and some are fleeting, but we all have times when we feel we are not on our game. Add hearing loss to that and it complicates the situation.

Second, do something. The Walk4Hearing takes place in 22 cities this year. We are asking participants in the Walks to take up a Call to Action for Communication Access. This Call to Action reminds us that we can all do something at the personal level. For example, tell your co-workers about your hearing loss and offer some communication tips while showing lots of appreciation; ask for captioned access glasses at the movies; ask your doctor to face you when he or she is giving you instructions on your medication instead of typing things into a computer; get a captioned phone at home so you can make your own calls to keep in touch with family who like to use the regular voice telephone.

Do something to make others aware of hearing loss and at the same time you will have taken a step to be more in control of your own situation.

If you enjoy social media then post what you are doing on the Walk4Hearing Facebook page at Facebook.com/Walk4Hearing, on Twitter @Walk4Hearing using #CommAccess, or email it to us at CalltoActionWalks@hearingloss.org. Your personal step might inspire someone to do something on their own.

What is HLAA Doing as an Organization?

With the help of HLAA Chapters and the Walk4Hearing we are reaching out to folks in their communities and making a dent in the misconceptions about hearing loss. Since 1979, we have fought at the national level for laws and policies to put people with hearing loss on an even playing field in the workplace and when it comes to enjoying entertainment. We've instituted the Call to Action, which will be a permanent aspect of the Walk4Hearing, to encourage everyone to advocate for themselves on a personal level.

HLAA sponsored the research and activity of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NAS) Committee that resulted in the groundbreaking report, *Hearing Health Care for Adults: Priorities for Improving Access and Affordability*. HLAA will move to ensure that the NAS recommendations most important to our members and supporters come to fruition. The report stresses that hearing loss is a major health priority. That alone can help wipe away the stigma when everyone is screened and treated for hearing loss just like anything else—blood pressure, high cholesterol, arthritis and other health issues.

Do Something Today

1. Go to hearingloss.org and click on the slide at the top that says “change.org” and learn more about the NAS recommendations for affordable and accessible health care for adults.
2. Answer the personal Call to Action for Communication Access and ask for something you need to help you with your hearing loss. If you tweet, post it on Twitter @Walk4Hearing using #CommAccess.
3. Participate in the Walk4Hearing if there is one near you, or support a walker.
4. Tell someone about HLAA.

As a little girl I watched Neil Armstrong walk on the moon for the first time with all my classmates on the black and white TV brought in specifically for the historic event. When Armstrong said, “That’s one small step for [a] man, one giant leap for mankind,” I thought that was a really neat thing to say. Even then, I felt the profound meaning that the small efforts we make all add up to affect the greater good.

Please take a small step today and know you have the leading consumer organization for people with hearing loss backing you up. **HLM**

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HLAA—Today and in the Future

In the 37 years since it was founded, HLAA has established itself as the go-to organization for people with hearing loss. During that time we have never wavered from, or lost sight of, our mission—to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy. We put the emphasis on *people*. We never forget that our ultimate goal is to make a difference in the lives of *people* with hearing loss.

However, all that we do, all that we have accomplished, and all that remains to be done comes at a cost. HLAA is a self-supporting nonprofit organization. It is funded by those who share our goals, values and mission—individuals, foundations, corporations and company-sponsored events such as the HLAA Convention and the HLAA Walk4Hearing. In other words, we depend on *you* for support.

But have you ever wondered how your donations are used? In a new report, *HLAA—Today and in the Future*, we let you know how your donations are put to work. The report gives you a glimpse of some of our accomplishments, but more importantly, it provides an overview of the tremendous amount of work that still needs to be done. Your continued support is critical to helping us achieve those goals. We encourage you to read *HLAA—Today and in the Future*. You can find it at bit.ly/hlaareport.

HLAA extends our deep appreciation to our incredible donors for supporting our mission!