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## THE VALUE OF SELF-HELP GROUPS

The Hearing Loss Association of America was founded in 1979 by Rocky Stone as Self Help for Hard of Hearing People. “Self-help” was gaining popularity and credibility in the 1970s and 1980s as a way to cope with life’s challenges. Rocky founded the organization because as a newly retired person from the Central Intelligence Agency, and having a hearing loss himself, he found no resources for people who lost some or all of it later in life; thus the term “hard of hearing people.”

Rocky realized that if he could codify information and disseminate it through a national organization and put it into practice through HLAA Chapters, people could get credible information they needed to help themselves. This self-help concept moved away from the notion of *what can you do for me?* to *what can I do to help myself?* He then quickly realized that work needed to be done at the nation level to change and write public policy so people in the United States would have laws for communication access and to prevent discrimination.

HLAA believes in providing all the information we can about hearing loss, technology, communication techniques, coping skills, laws, and letting people choose what works for them. That is the basis for self-help – learning what is available and making individual choices.

Although our name has changed to represent the national scope of the work and the reputation HLAA has built over the years, the self-help philosophy has not changed. We are people who need to educate ourselves about anything we can do to help us live well with hearing loss. Then, in turn, we reach out to help others. This concept and peer support is best played out through HLAA Chapters and is why state organizations and chapters are a critical component of the whole organization we call the Hearing Loss Association of America.

### **Twelve Reasons Self-Help Groups are Good for You**

Self-help groups:

1. Provide a community of people with hearing loss who understand and are empathic to your unique problems.
2. Help you deal with the issues of hearing loss stigma.
3. Will help you understand your legal rights as a person with a hearing loss.
4. Will teach you coping and communication strategies.
5. Will help you to adjust and communicate your needs in the workplace.
6. Will share technologies beyond your hearing aids that will enhance your ability to function in the world.
7. Will educate you on technologies and strategies for ensuring your safety.

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Self-help groups: *(continued)*

8. Will show you how to stay tuned into family conversations.
9. Will suggest strategies for communicating in noisy situations.
10. Will show you how to accommodate your hearing loss while traveling.
11. Will empower you through exchange of knowledge, encouragement and the sharing of experiences.
12. Will alleviate the despair and isolation of hearing loss through their support.

From [\*Regaining Control of Your Life through Self-Help Groups\*](#) by Brenda Battat, January 26, 2011.

To read more about Founder Rocky Stone and the early days of the organization and why it was founded, read [\*An Invisible Condition, the Human Side of Hearing Loss\*](#) by Howard E. “Rocky” Stone. (To see the link, copy this address into your browser: <http://tinyurl.com/khg7sl7>)