



Hearing loss can be isolating and a lonely existence. That's why having the community of support that HLAA offers—in online forums, chapters, educational events and convention—is so important to living with hearing loss.

The Healing Power of Community

BY BARBARA KELLEY

When we went to our son's first-year college orientation, the dean of students gave all the parents his cellphone number. That's about 6,200 students times however many parents each student has. I believe that Dr. Bill McDonald was sincere, but he probably also knew no one would ever call him. I never did.

Asking for help is difficult, especially if you have a hearing loss and think you're the only one. Unfortunately, there is still stigma attached to hearing loss, although I believe it's getting better with awareness about hearing health as a major health concern. It takes courage to admit you need some help, whether it's getting that first hearing aid or asking for accommodations.

The first step to solving any problem is getting timely, clear information and making choices that suit your situation. Once you do that, you can turn around and help others in the same boat. Does this sound familiar? People who associate themselves with HLAA know the value of peer support. Having a shared experience builds a community.

Although technology innovation—from over-the-counter hearing aids to the exciting advances in prescription hearing aids to cochlear implants—is bringing awareness about hearing health and solutions for people, we are reminded that we can't totally connect through technology. As John Nesbitt wrote in his 1982 book, *Megatrends*, “for every high tech, there has to be a corresponding high touch.”

Most recently, the U.S. Surgeon General said that increased isolation and loneliness affects our health and well-being. Hearing loss can be isolating and a lonely existence. That's why having the community of support that HLAA offers—in online forums, chapters, educational events and convention—is so important to living with hearing loss.

Going it alone can only take you so far. Tell a family or friend about HLAA. Write to me and let me know what the HLAA community has meant to you. You can reach me by email at bkelley@hearing.org. Put “Community” in the subject line so I know it's you! **HL**

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