

Hear & Beyond: Live Skillfully with Hearing Loss

Shari Eberts

Gael Hannan

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An inspirational and supportive guide for people with hearing loss, Hear & Beyond knowledgeably encourages self-advocacy.

Shari Eberts and Gael Hannan's self-help book *Hear & Beyond* models methods of self-determination for others who navigate the world with hearing loss.

Acknowledging the diverse experiences of hearing loss, including its degrees, and the varying stages of life during which one encounters it, Eberts and Hannan draw on their personal experiences to deliver advice to others. Hannan was born with hearing loss, and she utilizes both a hearing aid and a cochlear implant; Eberts didn't discover her hearing difficulties until her late twenties, and she wears two hearing aids. Eberts recalls that she had difficulty adjusting to life with hearing loss, having internalized the stigma that her family placed on her father's hearing difficulties. Knowing that such strains exist, the book advocates for personal agency, telling those with hearing difficulties to be upfront about their needs with their loved ones and health professionals. It also suggests multiple workarounds for outside activities. Conversations between Eberts and Hannan, coupled with brief mantras that are designed to dismantle internalized stigmas, are its additional helpful, humanizing tools.

Because of the book's focus on personal empowerment, much of its onus for life-improvement is placed on the person with hearing loss, whom it notes must navigate unfair systems and attitudes instituted by others. But its holistic view of emotions including denial, shame, and acceptance strikes a supportive tone. Some days and situations are deemed unworth the effort of seeking accommodations, as are employers, events, and people who are simply not a supportive fit.

Because hearing loss exists on a wide spectrum, the book highlights a multitude of experiences, too, including those of people whose ears adjust depending on levels of ambient noise and volume. Sign language and complete deafness are less discussed topics here. Still, the entire audience is encouraged to become familiar with where they have the most trouble communicating; this informs, the book says, how people show up as parents, friends, and coworkers. And though feelings of frustration and fatigue are acknowledged and validated within activities as ordinary as holding a conversation in a noisy restaurant, the text maintains an upbeat tone. It ably advocates for people with a variety of hearing issues, and proves knowledgeable when it comes to hearing accommodations.

Of additional use is the book's look far beyond traditional technologies like hearing aids and cochlear implants. It covers accessories and features like Bluetooth, telecoils, applications, and headphones that have particular benefits for those with trouble hearing. Pertinent examples, as of Eberts's hearing aids breaking while she was traveling, are included: in that case, she used her phone's microphone and noise-cancelling headphones as a temporary replacement. Patience to figure out which hearing aids work best is required, the book says, as is being honest and open with one's hearing-care professionals in order to achieve the best fit. Other smart solutions, like closed-captioning glasses at movie theaters and asking for speaking event notes via email afterward, are named as

additional ways for those with hearing difficulties to be accommodated.

An inspirational and supportive guide for people with hearing loss, *Hear & Beyond* encourages self-advocacy and provides a wealth of knowledge about hearing aid technologies.

ALI ORTIZ (June 10, 2022)

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