

# EMOTIONAL HASHTAGS FOR NEW HEARING DEVICES (#KEEPOUTOFMYWAY)



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Getting a new hearing aid is exciting for many reasons – more technical sophistication, more comfort, more stylish, and the big one, more-better communication.

But there's always a little pain with every gain, right? Every seasoned person with hearing loss grieves for a dying hearing aid and looks forward to a new, replacement device with a mixture of excitement and dread.

A year ago, I experienced a binaural whammy. I had ordered a new hearing aid – the one I use for everyday sound and conversations – because I wanted to break it in before the other one broke down. At the same time, I qualified for an upgraded processor for my cochlear implant. Upon receiving the processor, however, I found that it was not streaming-compatible with the model of hearing aid I used for streaming. I needed to upgrade that as well, and it turned out that I had to use just one hearing aid and not two different models for different uses. (Whew!) I was going forward with one hearing aid and one cochlear implant. What followed was a few weeks of sometimes tense technical and emotional adjustment.

I've lost count of how many sets I've had since my first beige behind-the-ear model in 1975, but I'm guessing at least 10 iterations of hearing technology made by a Who's Who of the hearing industry: Phillips, Unitron, Beltone, Starkey, Widex, ReSound, Oticon and Cochlear.

Each new hearing aid sounded different, another way of saying they didn't sound good until my brain adjusted. Before today's streamlined and smartphone controlled models, hearing aids had little knobs and switches, which were in different places in new devices, so I was constantly pawing at the side of my head looking for the program change or the volume control or the battery door.

But each new iteration was exciting! It boosted my communication and connection to people, places and things that I never dreamed of. But it's not as easy as getting a new car, where you step on the gas and off you go. No, it's more like taking dance lessons with a new partner; you and your hearing aid(s) must get in sync. It takes a few tries before you're going in the same direction, before the painful foot crunches become a smooth tango. When you first insert these new ear-babies, the brain almost loses its mind with the shock of the new information pouring in. Your hearing healthcare professional must usually perform a series of tweaks on the fit, the venting, the volume, the programs, the highs, the lows and so forth.

So while professionals and the brain tinker at their jobs, we suffer a bit. Everything sounds ridiculously loud and different. We can't imagine it will ever get better or be as comfortable as the

old aids. Once again, our family and friends make allowances for a loved one who's undergoing a brain transformation.

In an attempt to help anyone who may be going through this (again), I'm offering a few guidelines. And to emphasize the emotions behind them, I've added hashtags.

For example, when I tell my family we're about to once again climb on the 'hearing aid merry-go-round,' the hashtag might be: #carouselfromhell.

Don't breathe loudly. Especially through your mouth and that includes loud yawns. And if you're breathing through your nose, clear the passage: #whistlingnosesarenoisy.

At dinner, the crashing sound of cutlery jars my nerves: #eatwithyourfingers

Before speaking, get my attention first. Then try saying two words to me, and if it's not too loud, you may continue: #don'tbeahumanfoghorn #ignoreatyourownperil

Have patience with me – because I will have none to spend on you: #i'mnotkiddingOK

But don't blame everything about my current bad mood on my hearing aids. I may snap at you for many reasons: #justbecauseyouexist

Don't ask me if perhaps my old hearing aids were better? I'm not putting us through this torture for the sheer pleasure of it: #didyoureallysaythat #theydon'tlastforever

If you see me not wearing my aids, remind me to put them in; otherwise I won't get used to them: #thengetoutofmyway

Keep me away from sharp knives and instruments: #becauseIwillstabtheaids #andthenyou

I don't care that you can't hear the TV. I say it's too loud!: #readthecaptions

Just remember, I'm getting new hearing aids so that I can hear understand you: #becauseIloveyou

I think that about sums it up.

#crossyourfingers.

#itwillbefine

#iwanttohear

#hearingdevicessavedmylife