Hearing loss: Deafness, the invisible disability.

NID Training Disability Diary

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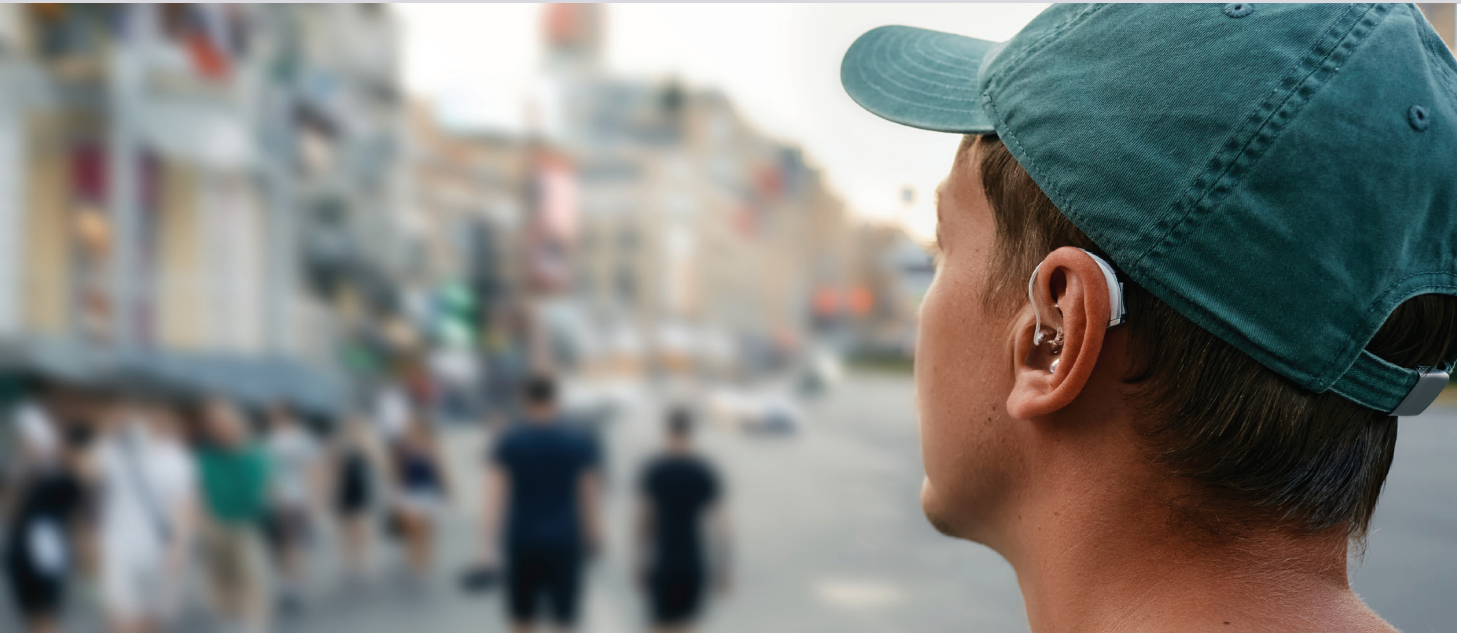
NID Training NPC



Introduction

In a previous Diary Entry the broad impact of hearing loss The term 'Invisible Disabilities' describes those disabilities that are not instantly obvious to others and are usually neurological in nature. Hearing loss is an invisible disability that can easily be misunderstood.

Discussion

Unlike persons using wheelchairs, white canes, or even guide dogs, persons with different degrees of hearing loss have a disability that often goes unnoticed. Thus, parents might not detect hearing loss until a child is about three years old. By that time valuable time in which intellectual development takes place is lost, and the child's social, school, and working life will probably be compromised (Camarata et al., 2018).

One of the ironies of being deaf is that while deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) persons rely on visual cues to navigate through life, their disability is largely invisible. DHH persons do not 'look' deaf, and are easily ignored (Camarata et al., 2018). One reason that deafness is not noticeable is that DHH people often lipread and gain much from body language.

It is concerning that DHH persons often do not disclose their disability or its extent when they apply for education, work, or other opportunities (Bell, Carl & Swart, 2016). This might be because they are embarrassed, have experienced prejudice and discrimination, or because they identify with the hearing community more than with Deaf culture (Katsuya & Sano, 2021). Thus, they are willing go without accommodations that could possibly make their lives easy. The result could be that they do not read well or are seen as unintelligent because they need more time to do certain tasks. They might even be marked as being less productive than other colleagues for the same reason.

Conclusion

It is necessary to consider how attitudes and stereotyping affect the emotional and cognitive lives of DHH people in both social and cultural contexts of their life journeys. Early detection, awareness, understanding, as well as education and access to information are important.

For a list of Invisible Disabilities and General Information go to Disabled World at https://www.disabled-world.com/disability

For further information about this article contact lientjievanrensburg@nidtraining.org.za

References

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