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SoundNews

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Mindfully Tackle That Tinnitus

A growing body of research shows mindfulness-based strategies can reduce the stress that often accompanies tinnitus, and they may even increase your emotional well-being.

The Stress of Tinnitus

Many who experience tinnitus — a ringing, buzzing, or whistling with no apparent sound source — find it insignificant. But for others, it's downright debilitating and brings on headaches, anxiety, or even depression.

Someone with a stressful tinnitus response doesn't simply hear a sound — they also experience tension, worry, and fear. One theory for this: The amygdala, a fear-determining region in your brain, misinterprets the tinnitus as a potential threat, keeping the body and mind in a state of constant vigilance.

The Benefits of Mindfulness

Mindfulness techniques can reduce your tinnitus stress response. Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, developer of a mindfulness-based stress-reduction program used in hospitals across the U.S., describes mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.” Mindfulness is a skill you can develop over time.

Mindfulness-based strategies work on two levels. Consciously, mindfulness loosens the grip of anxiety and fear caused by your tinnitus, so you no longer spend emotional energy trying to avoid it. On an unconscious level, mindfulness retrains your amygdala to see tinnitus as simply a sound, not a threat, so the fear and anxiety don't get kick-started in the first place.

Options Aboard

Popular ways to learn mindfulness techniques are:

- University programs
- Mindfulness-based stress-reduction programs
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Websites or smartphone apps

Power in Numbers

There is no cure for tinnitus, but there are ways to minimize its effects, such as:

- **Sound therapy.** A tone or pleasant sound masks your tinnitus.
- **Habituation.** Sounds matching your tinnitus are played back to you — often at levels you can't hear — to inhibit your tinnitus.
- **Hearing aids.** Often, tinnitus is connected to hearing loss, so hearing aids can provide relief. Plus, many hearing aids now offer masking or habituation as well.

Combining mindfulness techniques with these other methods increases your ability to tackle tinnitus. Come see us for an evaluation to determine which options would work best for you!

Call us today to schedule an appointment!

707.832.4744



4 MONTHS 4 STEPS

to a Healthier You • • • • •

The spring season is about renewal and growth — and healthy hearing. We challenge you to set healthy goals for yourself based on each month’s theme. Read on for information and inspiration!



February | **Heart Month**

February has given way to March, but heart health is always timely! Ward off heart disease by getting your hearing checked. A heart that isn’t at peak health isn’t nourishing the inner-ear structures that require healthy blood flow. The ears are so sensitive to blood flow that some call the ears “a window to the heart” and recommend referring those with hearing loss to a heart specialist, and vice versa. The more we know about your heart health, the better we can customize your hearing care.

CHALLENGE Add exercise to your daily routine. Start off your month by walking 15 minutes three times each week. By midmonth, increase your time to 30 minutes three times each week.





March | Nutrition Month

Nutrition Month is an annual educational and informational campaign focusing on the importance of making educated food choices and healthy lifestyle changes. This year's theme emphasizes nutrition's role in setting you up for success.

Nutrition is key to healthy hearing, so here are easy-to-digest ways to satisfy your hunger and your hearing health.

Omega-3 fats: These “good” fats, which the body can't produce on its own, have been linked to a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and may help maintain cochlear blood flow. It's been shown that a lack of blood supply to the cochlea can cause reduced auditory sensitivity and hearing loss.¹

Antioxidants: Noise exposure damages sensory cells by creating free radicals, which are damaging molecules known to cause cell death. This damage to the sensory cells can be prevented by consuming antioxidants, because they work to prevent free-radical damage.²

Zinc: The soft tissues of the cochlea and vestibule reveal a zinc level higher than that of any other part of the body. With zinc supplementation in patients who are marginally zinc deficient, there has been improvement in tinnitus and sensorineural hearing loss in about one-third of elderly adults.³

CHALLENGE Discover what foods are in season right now and incorporate them into your diet.



April | Earth Day

Spring is in full swing when we celebrate Earth Day around the world, a celebration for which innumerable events are held uniting us in an effort to support and promote environmental protection. To feel connected to those across the world and your community, we urge you to get in touch with your roots. Regularly engaging in outdoor activities is wonderful for our social, mental, and physical well-being, including our hearing.

CHALLENGE Join a community garden. This style of gardening is great if you don't have much space in your own place. Each one is different, but many offer mentoring, specials on supplies, and other community-oriented events. If you don't have a garden in your area, there are resources online to help get you started!



May | Better Hearing and Speech Month

Arguably our favorite time of the year, Better Hearing and Speech Month is a reminder to take care of your hearing health and celebrate better hearing! May honors all things hearing, from hearing loss and protection to prevention and technology.

The monthlong campaign creates an opportunity to publicly highlight the challenges those with hearing loss face on a daily basis, as well as the variety of support solutions available to prevent hearing loss and protect hearing.

Support is key to attaining — and maintaining — better hearing. Family, friends, and trusted hearing care providers create a stable team of support for those with hearing and communication difficulties. The path to better hearing is often a collaborative effort, and those combined efforts can help create years and years of better hearing.

CHALLENGE Encourage a friend who you suspect has a hearing loss to see us for a hearing check.

Each month we're reminded of what we can do to lead healthier, happier lives. Possibly one of the easiest ways is to visit us for a hearing evaluation. Call to schedule yours today!

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Visit us online!

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Learn more about better hearing
solutions at AGXhearing.com

OFFICE NEWS



We are big fans of HSU's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). This semester, Dr. Ostermeier will be teaching an extended learning course exploring the latest research looking into the interplay between our overall well-being and our hearing.

The advantage of good hearing goes far beyond simply improving communication; we now have scientific evidence to support that good hearing also gives our cognitive and emotional well-being a boost.

See the spring 2018 OLLI course catalog for all the details.
Hope to see you there!