

Finding Relief at the Tinnitus and Hyperacusis Center Center for Hearing and Communication (CHC)

I'd already been through the medical mill. Spending days in one room (as far away from windows as I could get) hiding from noise; incessant whistling in my head didn't seem to shock anyone but me. My noise tolerance level? To put it simply, I didn't have any noise tolerance. The diagnosis was tinnitus (hyperacusis was never mentioned) the "ringing in the ears" disease (which may or may not exist and may or may not go away – ever). Everyone, excluding me, agreed I would learn to live with this; no one agreed on an explanation of what "this" was. The treatment was nerve-deadening capsules, sleeping pills, vitamins, antibiotics, chiropractor, TMJ specialist, CAT SCAN, blood tests, steroids and the topper – referral to a psychiatrist or psychologist, whichever I preferred.

There was no driving, cooking, cleaning, or grocery shopping; phone, TV or radio – out of the question. I would turn the self-defrosting refrigerator off just to get some momentary peace. Heat registers crackled and banged while light bulbs sizzled. Over all of this there was a high-pitched whine, location unknown to this day. I showered with head gear originally bought for lawn mowing; reminding me that, eventually, the windows would have to be open and the world would come flooding in.

My husband had to talk in a low voice; if he wasn't careful, the closing of any door brought me to tears. Living wasn't exactly what I was doing. I was a total recluse, taking medication that would put most individuals in a stupor. Sleeping was impossible. Eating was interesting. The sound of chewing is horrific, and civilized humans actually do occasionally need real plates and stainless. I needed help which didn't exist. I only went out for medical appointments. Traffic noise is very unpredictable; add in police and fire sirens, big rigs, high speed and thinking is virtually impossible; so my husband became my taxi.

After months of searching the internet (after all, I couldn't sleep) I found CHC's Tinnitus and Hyperacusis Center and called. I arrived at the Center for Hearing and Communication not expecting much. The brochure had described my symptoms perfectly; and now, here I was – head pounding from the car, eardrums hurting from the train, wearing ear plugs and noise silencing head phones, entering an institution dedicated to helping people hear. **THIS WAS MADNESS.** I could hear conversation through wall and across streets. I waited in the halls at all appointments and still knew everyone's personal business.

Susan Adams of CHC's Tinnitus and Hyperacusis Center called me in, and the facts that I was wearing ear-protection and obviously had not slept for months, didn't seem to faze her. She really listened (a concept that escapes many medical professionals). Everything that had happened since I started this odyssey came out. It was such a relief not to see the "Why are you here taking up my precious time" look on her face. When she said she thought she could help me, I had to try because it had been so long since anyone had given me any hope,

Susan gave me what I needed most, encouragement, information and techniques to cope; with noise generators and counseling, my life has changed. Here I am sitting next to a window. The TV is on. Children are playing in the street. My husband and I will go out to dinner tonight. I don't measure my days in what I can't do but what I can and will do. I will go to church, see a movie and fly. Meanwhile, my grandchildren traveled to visit me; I'm able to have short phone conversations with my girls, and I drive my truck everywhere. My husband went on a fishing trip and I was alone for the first time in two years. *Miracles do happen.*

Thank you CHC and Susan Adams for recognizing a need and working to help in any way you can.

A client of the Tinnitus and Hyperacusis Center

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