

## Add Zest To Your Hearing Life With A Hobby

By Linda Bilodeau

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In March, after our country shut down, I struggled with what to do. Like many, I went on a room-by-room cleaning spree, scrubbing floors, polishing furniture, and organizing closets. After declaring my home spic and span, I emailed or called friends to see what they were up to and found that some were taking online home decorating courses. Others were in midst of college courses, improving their knowledge of literature, philosophy, or history. A cousin was teaching herself to crochet. My sister was ramping up her gardening skills. She grows beautiful tomatoes because she took the time to research composting, which she swears by. My niece, who recently returned to teaching, used the lockdown to come up with innovative ways to spark the interest of her fifth graders. We talked about baking and exchanged banana bread recipes. Nothing like a slice of banana bread to chase away coronavirus blues.

After these conversations, I began realizing that hobbies might help mitigate the loneliness and isolation of sheltering. Having a hobby keeps us busy and helps us pass away the hours. Learning new things boosts the ego and improves the ability to focus, a skill that we with hearing loss need to develop.

If you decide to engage in a hobby, consider the impact on your hearing. Hobbies that have to do with construction, woodworking, or tinkering with engines might require noisy tools. When working with such tools, consider noise-reducing headsets to protect the hearing you have left. If you listen to webinars or attend zoom sessions, you may want to use Made-for-iPhone hearing aids or other peripheral devices that bridge your aids and implants with phones, computers, and pads. Moisture is a problem for aids and implants. If your hobbies are physical, check with your cochlear implant or hearing aid manufacturer to see if sweat guards or dryers are available for your devices.

These days, I am reading biographies and novels that have to do with World War

2. I enrolled in an online class to improve my French. I set a goal of making the perfect fudge brownie. (Sad to say that two batches later, I'm not yet there.)

Since I write about hearing loss, I listen to webinars and attend zoom meetings put on by the Florida Hearing Loss Association of America and The Hearing Loss Association of America. The Kentucky State Chapter of HLAA provides informative online meetings. Check out the websites and newsletters of these organizations for meeting dates and times. The Zoom sessions I've attended are captioned, making it easy for those with hearing loss to attend.

My Made-for-iPhone hearing aids come in handy when I participate in sessions online. Earlier this year, I purchased hearing aids equipped with artificial intelligence. All hearing aid manufacturers have this technology built into their newer aids. Even though I have a profound hearing loss, A.I. has helped me to hear without the need for captioning.

Attending online sessions and keeping up with what is new and different with hearing loss gives me a better understanding of my problem. Listening to how other people handle hearing loss is inspiring. I am especially intrigued when learning about new technology, innovative ways to use peripheral devices, and the ongoing research that will hopefully lead to better treatment options or a cure for hearing loss.

We each have likes and dislikes. Everyone has their own ideas about how to stay active and engaged during the pandemic. My favorite hobby is writing this column. I love working with words and ideas. I hope that what you read in this column will help you cope with and understand your hearing loss.