



AGING IS INEVITABLE; DECLINE IS OPTIONAL!

*Dr. Thomas A. McCarty
Board Certified Audiologist*



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Introductory Letter from Dr. McCarty

Dr. Thomas A. McCarty, Doctor of Audiology, founded Audiology Associates in 1991.

Dr. McCarty and his team of specialists have created a dynamic award-winning Audiology/Hearing Aid Practice, located in Anchorage, that utilizes the latest in high tech devices and stresses personalized patient services. He has been voted "Best Audiologist." The team became an Audigy Certified practice in 2009. As the only Audigy Certified Practice in Alaska, they are committed to providing the highest level of patient care.



Dr. McCarty received his Doctor of Audiology degree from the University of Florida in 2000. He was one of the first Doctor of Audiology recipients in Alaska. Dr. McCarty attended the University of Maryland, having received a Boy Scout Scholarship, while an Eagle Scout. He earned both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the University of Maryland.

His first patient was his mother, who he fit with hearing aids after she had been advised that "nothing would help."

He worked as a Public Health Audiologist in Alaska from 1977-1991, providing Audiology and Hearing Aid Services to remote villages outside Bethel, Dillingham, McGrath, Kodiak, St. Paul, and the Aleutians. Dr. McCarty feels that it is important to raise Audiology awareness in the community. He and his team have volunteered on an annual Hearing Mission Trip that has fit thousands of hearing aids to an underserved population in the Dominican Republic. He has run in the Boston Marathon with the Dana-Farber Team, raising funds for cancer research at Harvard.

Dr. McCarty has lectured on hearing, taught classes at the University of Maryland, and given presentations locally in Anchorage, and has received the Academy Scholar Award for continuing education from the American Academy of Audiology.

Dr. Thomas McCarty

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HEARING YOUR WAY TO A LONG, HEALTHY AND MORE FULFILLING LIFE

Here is a fascinating statistic. Centenarians, people who live to be 100 years young or more, embody a fairly small percentage of the total U.S. population. In fact, only approximately 1 out of every 10,000 Americans are 100 years or older.

This small slice of the population who are surviving to extreme old age lures the attention of not only researchers but also the general public, as we attempt to recognize and learn from the experiences of those who beat the odds of environmental and biological hindrances to which most of us tend to fall prey. Why do some live such long, fulfilling lives while others don't? Good question, and one that needs to be addressed!

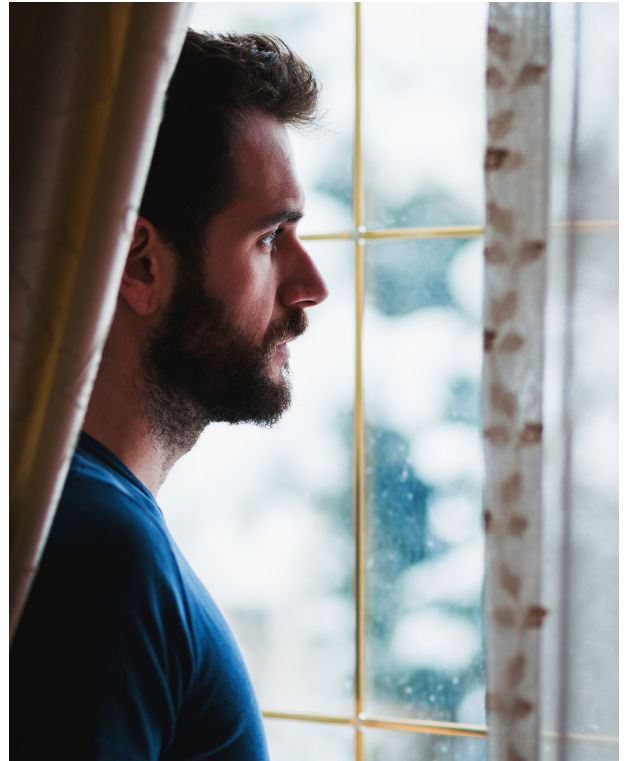
Your first thought may be 'perhaps these individuals are in some way genetically unique'. But no, the truth is, genetics only play a 25% part in their endurance. Guess what the other 75% is? **Lifestyle!**

So, what do we need to do to live to 100, or beyond? What are we doing right? What are we doing wrong?

Urban priorities transformed as we moved towards the industrial revolution due to the fact that infectious disease became such a great risk at that time. How about today though? Well, today, social isolation is the health risk of our time. Nowadays, 1/3 of the population claims to have 2 or less individuals who they can actually go to for comfort or help.

In researching centenarians, I swiftly discovered that as people age, and, quite frankly all through their lifespans, they are constantly surrounded by extended family, friends, neighbors, spiritual advisors, even the mail carrier. The fact is that people are always either with them or dropping by. They are not left to live lonely lives. Living a solitary life seems to be the norm in the developed world as we age. But, it doesn't have to be and shouldn't be! Happiness is having a large, loving, caring family and circle of friends.

The numerous stories that I've read about centenarians, together with the science that reinforces those stories, inspired me to ask some questions of my own. How am I best able to put off the day that I die? The answers that I discovered may not be what you expect. A researcher at Brigham Young University, Julianne Holt-Lunstad, addressed this very question in



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a succession of studies of literally tens of thousands of middle aged people. Holt-Lunstad observed each and every facet of their life including: marital status, exercise, diet, how frequently they went to the doctor, and whether or not they drank or smoked. She kept track of every record and then sat back and waited for 7 years to see who would still be around and doing well. Of the individuals left standing, her next feat was to find out what reduced their chances of dying the most.

Predicting How Long You Will Live

Let's take a look at the data, going from the least commanding predictor to the **strongest**.

- **The Air You Breathe** Clean air is great, but it does not predict how long you will live.
- **Your Blood Pressure:** Treating your Hypertension is good, but still not a strong predictor.
- **Your Weight:** Whether you are slender or heavy, you can stop feeling guilty, because it's only in 3rd place.
- **Exercise:** How much exercise you get is still only a moderate predictor.
- **Your Heart:** Whether you have had a cardiac incident, getting higher.
- **The Flu!** Whether you've had a flu vaccine.
- **Recreational Drugs:** Whether you were/are a drinker or smoker, getting closer.
- **Your Ears:** Hearing loss is at the top of the list! *Why?*

How Treating Your Hearing Loss Can Help You Live A Longer Life

Ready for this? The top two predictors of your longevity (i.e. how long you will live) both pertain to features of your social life.

The first one is **Close Relationships**. Your close relationships consist of the folks that you can call on for the following and more:

- an emergency loan when needed
- someone who will call the doctor for you when you aren't feeling well or will take you to the hospital
- someone who will sit with you if you are in the middle of an existential crisis or just simply in despair

These people, if you have them, are a strong predictor of how long you'll live.



Second, **Social Integration**. Social Integration is the amount of time you interact with people as you move through your day.

- How many people do you talk to? Both weak and strong bonds, not just the folks you are really close to, but, for instance, the barista who makes your coffee every day.
- Do you talk to the mailman/woman?
- Do you talk to the man who walks by your house every day with his dog?
- Do you play bridge/poker?
- Do you attend a book club?

These types of interactions are one of the strongest indicators of how long you will live.



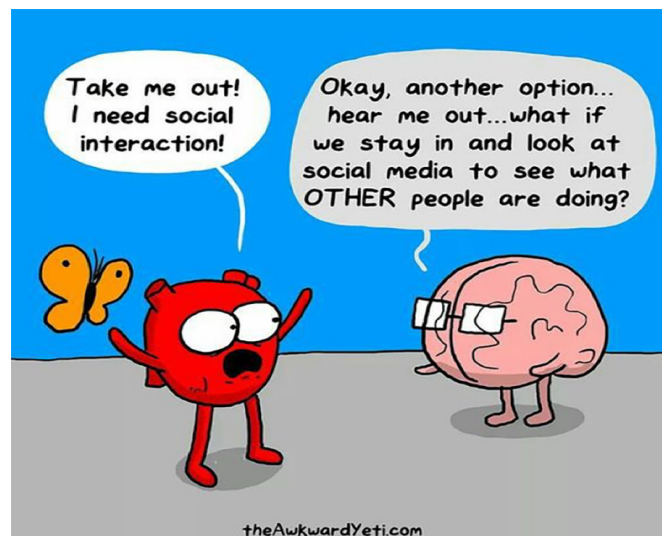
Over my many years of experience in my field, and reported in countless research reports, I have come to find that the biggest factor for missing out on social interaction is **Hearing Loss**.

How can you socialize when you can't understand the conversation?

Most people with hearing loss tend to retract into social isolation to avoid uncomfortable situations where they can't understand what is going on around them because of significant, or even slight, hearing loss. **Social isolation is a significant factor for depression, and plays a significant role in the development of cognitive decline and Dementia.**

Real Vs. Virtual Friends: The Neuroscience of Real Friendship

This leads me to question the distinction between interacting in person and interacting through social media (i.e. on the computer), something that is so extremely prominent nowadays. Is it just as good to



keep in touch with your children/family/friends through text, for instance? The short answer to this question is a resounding **NO**, it is not just as good.

Why?

Physical contact and face-to-face interaction have a profound effect on our body. When surrounded by loved ones, our body releases an entire torrent of neurotransmitters which protects you now and well into the future. Basically, simply making eye contact with others, shaking hands, and giving a high-five is sufficient to release oxytocin. Oxytocin – a hormone produced by our body and found in our brains – is essential to increasing your level of trust and it lowers your cortisol levels (**stress**). In addition, dopamine is produced, which gives us a bit of a high and dulls pain. Dopamine is our bodies naturally produced morphine. Who wouldn't want that?

All of these things pass under our conscious radar, hence why we think of online activity as close to the real thing. However, there is concrete evidence that there is a huge difference.

Hearing And Aging:

Why do females live longer than males? By the way, they do. A key reason is that females are much more likely to prioritize their face-to-face relationships over their lifetime. Recent research has shown that in-person relationships generate a natural force field against disease and decline, especially when it comes to hearing and Dementia. It's been proven, in fact, that animals who have a core of contacts to hang out with show lower levels of stress, and they live longer.



Blindness separates us from things, but deafness separates us from people.

– Helen Keller

The magic number seems to be 3 stable relationships. And, it is my hope that you all have at least three.

The lowest rates of Dementia amongst individuals who are socially involved is due to the power of face-to-face contact. Hence, ***why proper hearing health care as we age is so vital to our longevity.*** It's extremely difficult to cultivate relationships when you can't understand what is being said. Face-to-face interaction delivers spectacular benefits, yet nearly ¼ of the population state that they have no one to talk to.

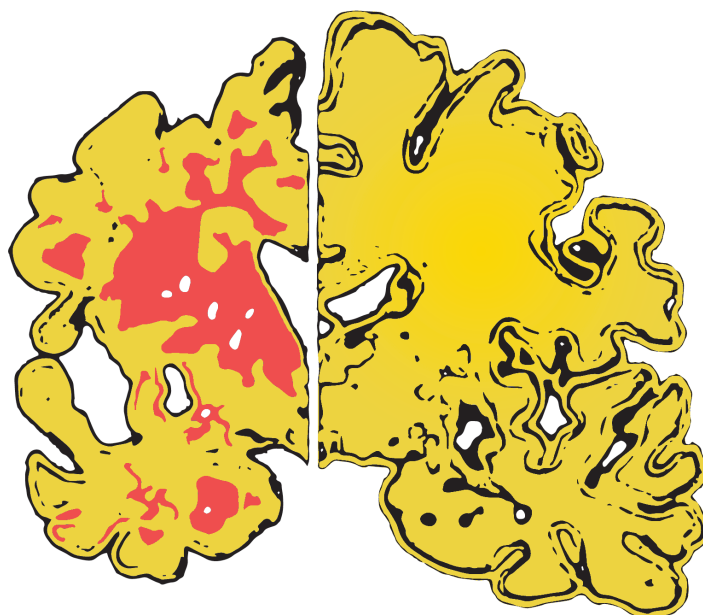
We CAN do something about this. It is a biological must to know that we belong. Seeing your local audiologist ***NOW*** and properly treating your hearing loss will set you on a path to building and maintaining in-person interaction with friends, family and even strangers. Doing so will not only boost your immune system, but it will also send all those 'feel-good' hormones rushing through your bloodstream and brain and afford you the opportunity to live a longer life.

Helen Keller is credited with saying, ***'blindness separates us from things, but deafness separates us from people'***. So, how are we to live longer lives if we leave our hearing loss untreated?

Again, a sense of belonging is important to not only our mental health, but also our ability to live a long, fulfilling life. Hearing loss creates a feeling of psychological solitary confinement. Still, many folks with hearing loss deny the influence it exerts on their quality of life. Hearing loss causes communication difficulties and will ultimately affect our thinking and concentrating abilities. What happens next - inattentiveness, distraction, boredom and withdrawal.

Most will think "I cannot contribute, so I'll just give in to a life of loneliness. What good am I?" Hearing loss creates the same fears for all involved – anxiety about loss of relationships or a job or even being seen as 'useless'.

The bottom line: Do you foresee yourself living a long, healthy and fulfilling life? Facts show that the top predictors to doing so are ***close relationships and social interaction.*** That begins with proper hearing health care. Today is the day to get back on track. See your local hearing health care specialist, treat your hearing loss, avoid developing Dementia, increase your cognitive power, and build your relationships to achieve that dream!



Brain With Hearing Loss

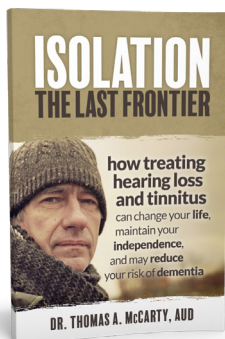
Brain With Normal Hearing

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