Something to Consider About "Noise"

By Garth Brears

As you have previously read, many hearing impaired people comment that they cannot hear in noise when, in fact, they mean that they cannot understand a conversation in noise. But, they may not realize how often they are actually able to understand a conversation despite background noise. Further, there is an unspoken belief that most people with hearing aids have the same problem. The assumption is that everybody does equally poorly in all places. But is this true? Let's look at an example.

Let's pretend that there are three rooms, with each room containing more noise than the one before it. We then add ten people wearing hearing aids. We begin with all ten people walking in to the first room that only contains a minor amount of distraction (noise). Now they all have a conversation, and eight understand perfectly well but two do not. Those two go home saying they could not hear in the noise. The other eight go into the second room, which contains even more distraction. This group again, has conversations, but three of the remaining eight cannot hear in the noise. We now have five people left to go into the really distracting room, which they do. Four of them cannot manage in that environment and they leave disgusted, blaming their hearing aids for their inability to hear in noise. That leaves one guy wearing his hearing aids in that noisy environment, understanding everything and not complaining about noise at all.

Sooner or later, nine out of ten of those hearing aid wearers start to compare horror stories about hearing aids and how they do not work in noise. All would agree noise is the problem and all would say that hearing aids do not work in that environment. What they do not see is that no one is comparing apples to apples. They are only are talking about when they left the room in disgust, not which room they left!
No one is talking about how much the hearing aids benefited them up until the point where they could no longer understand! Also, none of them are aware of the tenth person who managed in all environments and is not even aware that his aids picked up noise.

So here's the real question: Why do some people do better in noise than others, assuming everything else is equal?

Please see article on "**Improving Outcome of Wearing Aids In Noise**"