

TEN TOOLS FROM “REWRITE YOUR STIGMA NARRATIVE: THE ROAD TO SELF-EFFICACY”

Tool #1. Own your hearing loss. In this foundational tool, address denial of your hearing loss. Understand the difference between external stigma (messages we receive from others) and internal stigma (messages we give ourselves).

Tool #2. Inventory your challenging hearing situations and triggers. Go through a typical week day - hour by hour - and identify when you experience difficulty hearing.

Tool #3. Plan how and when to inform others about your communications needs. Communication partners need your guidance on how best to communicate with you. Be specific and direct. State in a positive manner. Time your requests appropriately.

Tool #4. Ask for accommodations. Summon courage and use the “I’m just practicing” strategy to begin. Be sensitive to outlook and constraints of others. Optimize your hearing technology and leverage assistive technologies (e.g. captions on Skype).

Tool #5. Cultivate well-being. Incorporate the “Big Three” into your life: eat healthy foods, exercise and get enough sleep. Select one or two of these practices: journaling, affirmations, mindful meditation and/or power posing.

Tool #6. Find and observe examples of success to inspire you. Look for role models to strengthen your belief in your ability to cope with hearing loss. Break their example down into specific qualities or behaviors. Select from peers, teachers, therapists, or celebrities.

Tool #7. Find sources of encouragement. When people express belief in your capabilities, you are more likely to succeed. Ask for feedback from people who are credible and knowledgeable. Their guidance should be realistic, actionable and succinct.

Tool #8. Set realistic goals. Remember that change happens slowly. Set a timeline, broken up into discrete steps. If you become overwhelmed, take a break or simplify your goal. Consider working with a counselor to support your efforts; create a vision board.

Tool #9. Practice, practice, practice. Enact and reenact the behaviors that will get you closer to your goals. Try to practice in the real world. To prepare, visualize yourself successfully performing the same tasks or role play with others.

Tool #10. Rewrite your stigma narrative. Ask yourself, “What else could be just as true as what I’m telling myself in the story?” Write an updated version of your stigma narrative and include any new, plausible possibilities that are liberating or empowering.

