Bilateral or Bust!

My journey as a bilateral cochlear implantee

Learning to hear again
and working toward clarity of sound

Michelle Frisbie, USA

Two implants, 15 years apart

2001

My first implant

Life changing and
highly successful.

2016

My second implant

Less successful,
but still beneficial.

Debated 2nd implant.

I did well with one. Hearing of others' success with two and sound localization for safety convinced me to get a second.

Grateful to have had it done.
Two ears are better than one!

Fortunate that insurance covered 2nd CI – eventually..

What I wish I had known

I wish someone had talked with me about keeping my second ear stimulated during those 15 years.

Others felt continued stimulation helped. Could it have made a difference for me?

Perhaps. I'll never know. That's ok.

Aural rehabilitation

Auditory training

Structured listening exercises to train the brain to recognize speech, pick out words, and interpret sounds.

Objectives:

Re-learning to hear via a new method/device.

Improving speech understanding even in challenging listening situations.

Ways to practice listening

In person	Guided listening exercises
Apps	Auditory training activities
Podcasts	Listen to spoken content
Audiobooks	Listen while reading along
Phone recordings	Practice with recorded speech
Captioned calls	Listen with text support

My rehabilitation experience

NONE

After my first implant

No formal aural rehabilitation training.

MINIMAL

After my second implant

Used CI app and listening exercises on my own, with minimal guidance.

Counseling and Emotional Support

Hearing loss is a loss.

Patient-centered care should include:

Counseling for the emotional, social, and psychological impacts of hearing loss.

Especially with acquired hearing loss or when hearing loss begins in adulthood.

My experience

NONE

No counseling or emotional support in my care.

Takeaways

My implants brought real, life changing benefit.
I wish I would’ve received more rehab and support.

For those considering CI or going bilateral, be sure to ask:

- How can I get the most benefit from a cochlear implant?
- What listening practice and follow-up can I get?
- Where can I find counseling and support?