Concerned about my lisp [1]

Alice,

I’ve had a "lisp" my entire life and was never too worried about it. But recently I'm worried that it may be affecting my social life and career. In turn this has been very traumatic to my self-esteem. I'd like to get help and was wondering what the best ways to solve this problem are, and if I have to get surgery to fix this "problem" how much would it cost me?

Thank you for any response.

Answer

Dear Reader,

In social and work settings, it can be stressful for people to "stand out" with a different way of expressing themselves. Still, people differ in their speech. Everyone speaks with various regional and international accents and dialects, intonations, and cadence. Your unique way of speaking happens to include a lisp.

It seems that you're really concerned that your lisp is affecting your social life and career. As a first step in addressing your lisp, you may want to seek an evaluation by health care provider. S/he may recommend surgery if structural irregularities in your mouth cause your lisp. The cost of a procedure(s) depends on many factors, including the type of procedure, insurance coverage, and regional differences in fees.

Your provider may also recommend that you see a speech-language pathologist. You can try finding a speech-language pathologist in your area by visiting the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's web site [2] and clicking on "Find a Professional." Speech-language pathologists work with people to evaluate and treat different speech impairments. In fact, people often find that their social and work lives improve greatly after working with a speech-language pathologist.

Another very important thing to consider is how your lisp relates to your self-esteem. You said you've made it through your life without stressing about your lisp, until now. What brought your attention to it? Did someone make hurtful comments about the way you speak? How has your lisp affected your success in your career? Are you teased about your lisp in social relationships? If so, do others know this teasing bothers you? Self-esteem is important to your social and work life. At this point, it'd be helpful to restore your self-esteem to its rightful place so you can feel confident as you go about your career and relationships. To address this, you might think about talking with a mental health professional. Students at Columbia University
can call Counseling and Psychological Services [3] at x4-2878 to set up an appointment.

Keep in mind that no one is perfect. Even your friends and co-workers have special quirks! In your case, you feel uncomfortable with the way you speak, but there are solutions. Hopefully, you've gotten a better idea about what to do next.

With Support,

Alice!
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