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,

Each person has their own way of speaking that varies based on regional and international accents and dialects, intonations, and cadence. A lisp is a sound made during speech that’s caused by the tongue being misplaced, which impacts the way certain words or letters are pronounced. While some think of lisps as a speech disorder to be corrected, others find that it's part of who they are and it doesn't affect their day to day functioning. If you’re sure you want to say goodbye to your lisp, there are options, both surgical and non-surgical, for you to explore. You might also reflect on when your lisp started to affect your self-esteem; understanding the root cause of why you feel this way may indicate that a next step isn't to change you how speak, but how you think about yourself or others’ response to the way you talk.

There are different kinds of lisps based on where the tongue is placed. It seems that you're really concerned that your lisp is affecting your social life and career. A first step may be to talk with your health care provider and ask them to evaluate your lisp. Depending on their assessment, they may suggest the most appropriate way to adjust the lisp — the good news is that surgery isn’t the only option. A licensed speech-language pathologist can work with people to teach them how to change their pronunciation of the words that cause the lip. You can try finding a speech-language pathologist in your area by searching for a professional [2] through the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association [3]. They can also help treat different speech disorders, not just lisps. In fact, some people find that their social and work lives improve greatly after working with a speech-language pathologist. If speech therapy isn't able to modify your lisp, your provider may recommend surgery if structural irregularities in your mouth (such as the position of
your teeth or jaw) cause your lisp. The cost of a procedure depends on many factors, including the type of procedure, insurance coverage, and regional differences in fees.

As you explore these options, Reader, it’s also good to consider 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? If so, do others know these comments bother you? How do you feel your lisp affected your success in your career? It’s common for people to struggle with self-esteem from time to time, but maybe you can try different strategies for building it back up. A place to start may be to make a list of some of your strengths or what you’re grateful for in your life. That way when you’re feeling down you can remind yourself of the good parts of your life. What about making time for some of your hobbies or passions? Whether it’s once a day or once a month, making time for you can help boost your self-esteem. If these strategies don’t do the trick, you may consider talking with a mental health professional. They may be able to help you work through some of the emotional components related to your lisp.

Reader, it’s also worth noting that no one is perfect. Not everyone is comfortable with their speech patterns, and many find themselves thinking about how the way they speak affects their interactions with others and their professional growth. You may find it helpful to remember that even your friends and co-workers have special quirks — here’s to taking steps to own yours!

Alice!

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