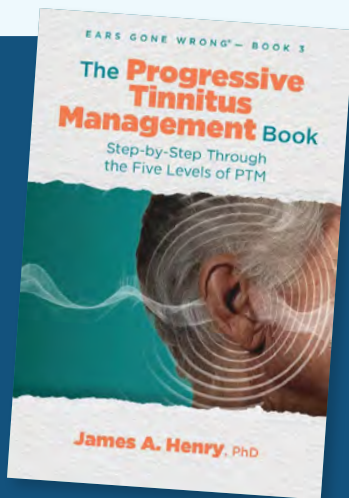


# Progressive Tinnitus Management

## Take It One Step at a Time



**Title:** *The Progressive Tinnitus Management Book: Step-by-Step Through the Five Levels of PTM*  
**Author:** James A. Henry, PhD  
**Publisher:** Ears Gone Wrong, LLC  
**Number of pages:** 298  
**Paperback ISBN:** 978-1962629072

By Cheri R. Ribbe, AuD

**For the millions of people with** tinnitus, from slightly bothersome to highly distressing and anywhere in between, it can feel scary and overwhelming when searching for reliable information. Most often, people turn to the internet and find themselves down a rabbit hole of unending misinformation that can lead to unnecessary expense for devices or supplements that claim to “cure” tinnitus. Or they talk to their primary healthcare provider, who may not know what to say or how to help, which leads to discouragement and additional anguish.

But if you are like me, when something feels overwhelming and I need practical answers, I look to the experts, and to my bookshelves. One expert in the area of tinnitus research and patient care is James Henry, PhD, a research career scientist and a pioneer in the management of tinnitus.

When I heard Dr. Henry was retiring from his distinguished career with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at the National Center for Rehabilitative Auditory Research in Portland, Ore., where he’d amassed hundreds of publications, research studies, and

awards for his work on understanding tinnitus, its effects, and its treatment, I was concerned that his crucial voice in the field would be lost.

Therefore, I was quite happy to see that his quest to keep educating as many people as possible has continued with his latest publication, *The Progressive Tinnitus Management Book*. This is the third book in Dr. Henry’s series published by Ears Gone Wrong®, LLC.

Dr. Henry’s book explains in simple terms what Progressive Tinnitus Management (PTM) is and is chock full of user-friendly figures, test-your-knowledge quizzes, tables, questionnaires, website links, and references for the clinician and the lay person.

He dives into the PTM protocol that is based on decades of research, much of it led by Dr. Henry himself. Randomized controlled trials have provided the outcomes necessary to build the foundation for treatment plans that help people improve the quality of their life while living with tinnitus. Dr. Henry provides the reader with clinical tools, materials, and guidance in an effective and efficient manner, saving you time, money, and confusion.

As in his previous two books, Dr. Henry introduces the case studies of relatable people, which in this book are Alessia and Dimitri, and how they are guided through individualized PTM plans for self-care and management of their tinnitus. These are two people with varying tinnitus needs. Dr. Henry takes the reader on the step-by-step journey to managing their tinnitus.

The five levels of PTM—Referral, Audiology Evaluation, Skills Education, Interdisciplinary Evaluation, and Individualized Support—are described in an easily understood format. A patient only progresses to the level of PTM that is needed to feel that self-management has been achieved.

Level 1, Referral, is when a healthcare provider, who may be the first person a tinnitus patient encounters, refers the patient to specialized help. Healthcare providers are instructed on how to effectively assess and refer patients with tinnitus. No longer should healthcare providers tell patients, “You need to learn to live with it” and stop there. In the book, Table 5-1 provides an easy guide for providers on what to do and how to refer appropriately.

Level 2, Audiology Evaluation, encompasses the audiological

assessment. Ninety percent of those with tinnitus also have some degree of hearing loss or auditory dysfunction. In addition to a comprehensive hearing test, an educated provider can administer tinnitus questionnaires, answer frequently asked questions, and counsel on basic tinnitus education and strategies to allay the patient’s fears.

As a clinician myself, I highly recommend the Tinnitus and Hearing Survey (THS), shown in Figure 6-1 of the book. The survey quickly shows how much of the patient’s problem is due to tinnitus versus hearing loss versus sound hypersensitivity. The THS then guides the conversation and the counseling toward whether the person may need or want Level 3 Skills Education services specific for tinnitus management. This can be done concurrently with recommendations of hearing aids and assistive devices if needed.

Unfortunately, many healthcare providers think of tinnitus as only an audiology concern or an ear condition. Yet, I commonly hear from patients, “When I’m stressed, anxious, or tired, my tinnitus feels worse and sounds louder, and when my tinnitus is worse,

I feel more stressed and anxious.” And so the vicious cycle begins.

Dr. Henry and his colleagues realized that to address this cycle, PTM needed to include audiologist-led services in the form of sound therapy *and* cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) services led by a behavioral health provider. CBT is one of the most researched methods for tinnitus management, and for efficiency’s sake, PTM focuses on three areas of CBT: stress reduction, distraction techniques, and cognitive restructuring.

I recommend reading this book from the start to understand the foundation of PTM at Levels 1 and 2, particularly for clinicians. However, if you are a reader who would like to thumb to the heart of the Level 3, Skills Education, Part 3 provides details on decision-making for the step to Level 3, Skills Education, and guides readers through developing a personalized Sound Plan and tracking progress on the Changing Thoughts and Feelings worksheet. The Sound Plan is developed by teaching the uses of sound in three ways: soothing sounds to induce relaxation and therefore reduce reactions to tinnitus; interesting sounds to distract and shift focus away from tinnitus; and background sounds for the goal of habituation to the tinnitus, or helping the brain better ignore the tinnitus.

Table 9-1 provides a nicely formatted graph of the sound therapy goals. The Changing Thoughts and Feelings worksheet develops a plan for using relaxation techniques and planning pleasant activities while tracking your changing thoughts associated with tinnitus.

***“...if you are a person with tinnitus, this book is a guide for you to achieve self-management to the level you require for relief, taking it one step at a time.”***

The next step, Level 4, if needed, is Interdisciplinary Evaluation. The audiologist and the therapist, along with the patient, can consider the following questions:

1. Does the person need to focus more on the audiology skills of sound therapy?
2. Do they need to focus on CBT skills and perhaps add third-wave CBT in the form of mindfulness or Acceptance and Commitment Therapy?
3. Do they need both?

The answers to these questions lead to the next and final step in PTM, Level 5, Individualized Support, which is a unique plan to meet an individual's needs.

Dr. Henry's books provide the clinician and the person affected by tinnitus an opportunity for a successful outcome. Dr. Henry states that he cannot claim PTM is more effective than other methods, but I can

personally and professionally attest to the countless people I have been able to guide through the five levels of PTM and the overwhelming positive impact it has had on them.

This book never feels too wordy, never goes too far off in the weeds with research and terminology. It is simple and straightforward and is filled with information based on research and clinical implementation. Clinicians and readers with tinnitus will learn that tinnitus needs to be managed differently for each person. What works for one does not necessarily work for another.

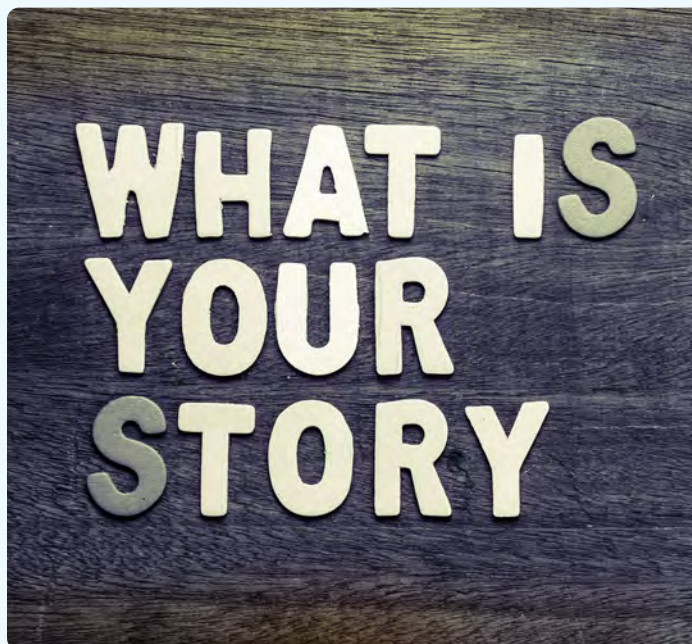
If you are a clinician, the beauty of PTM is that it provides a manageable framework and valuable clinical tools that you can apply in any setting to begin helping your patients today. And if you are a person with tinnitus, this book is a guide for you to achieve self-management to the level you require for relief, taking it one step at a time. 🌈



*Cheri R. Ribbe, AuD, has been a clinical audiologist for 29 years, including 23 with the Veterans Health Administration, where she is currently the assistant chief of Audiology*

*& Speech Pathology Service at VA Central Western Massachusetts (CWM). She ran the Progressive Tinnitus Management (PTM) program at VA Boston from 2009 to 2016 and continues the program at VA CWM. She served as a member and author for the 2015 Adult Tinnitus Management Clinical Practice Recommendations for VA providers.*

*She has been a guest presenter at national conferences as part of a panel of PTM subject matter experts, and in 2017 she coauthored the study "Progressive Tinnitus Management Level 3 Skills Education: A 5-Year Clinical Retrospective." Serving our nation's veterans in their healthcare journey continues to be her greatest honor.*



## Share Your Story With ATA Readers

Every day, people struggling with tinnitus turn to personal stories to understand what the future might hold. The stories are honest and don't sugarcoat the challenges and time it often takes to learn how to manage and live with tinnitus.

If you have tinnitus and/or other sound tolerance disorders, we'd like to hear from you. Please send your story to [editor@ata.org](mailto:editor@ata.org) by January 30. Suggested word length is between 600 and 1,000 words.