The New Zen Experience for Widex Allure

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Key Takeaways

Key Takeaway	Clinical Implication
Zen supports habituation, not masking	The Zen sound should blend into the background rather than draw attention to itself or overpower normal listening.
Fractal tones are non-repeating	Fractal math applied to music is familiar and recognizable but nonrepeating and nonthreatening, which encourages habituation.
Low-delay processing supports natural sound	Universal is approximately 2.6 ms and PureSound approximately 0.5 ms, reducing comb filter distortion and own-voice complaints.
Zen is added within an individually fitted program	Zen can be based on Universal or PureSound, and gain, compression, and program settings remain adjustable.
Zen is available across the Allure platform	Zen is available at every tech level and compatible with all Allure devices, so it can be added later in any style.
Choose, listen, personalize	Demonstrate the selected style through the hearing aids and use the wearer's response to guide the next step.
Two levels of volume control	The HCP can adjust across plus or minus 24 dB, and the wearer's volume control can range up to plus or minus 16 dB.
Counseling remains essential	Instructional counseling and Cognitive Behavioral Intervention support progress, which depends on the client's active participation.
Support tools keep wearer and provider connected	The Allure app, the Zen data log, and the online tinnitus counseling tool support the wearer and give the HCP visibility.

Course Content

Learner Outcomes

1. After this course, participants will be able to describe the purpose and benefits of Zen technology.
2. After this course, participants will be able to explain how fractal tones differ from traditional masking sounds.
3. After this course, participants will be able to identify ideal candidates for Zen within the Allure platform.

Widex Zen Returns

In 2008, Widex introduced Zen, a new approach to habituation for tinnitus using fractal tones. This technology has yet to be replicated in the marketplace. With the Allure platform, the fundamental philosophy behind that support is unchanged. The tinnitus solutions are easier to discover, easier to use, and easier for HCPs to integrate into the care they already provide.

Year	Milestone
2008	Widex Zen: a new approach to habituation for tinnitus using fractal tones.
2012	Widex Zen Therapy (WZT): the whole package, including components for counseling to support the journey from start to finish beyond the technology.
2022	Widex SoundRelax: nature sounds included along with fractals to make sounds more pleasing, reduce stress, and improve concentration and mood.
2026	Widex Zen Returns.

Widex Zen therapy is the complete package, whether the provider is certified as a specialist in tinnitus or just getting started. It addresses amplification, sound stimulation, and counseling, the crucial components of tinnitus treatment.

Q1	**Quiz Hint:** Widex introduced Zen in 2008 as a new approach to habituation for tinnitus using fractal tones. The Combination styles are described as providing a calm and immersive listening experience.

Amplification

Widex offers amplification that helps reduce the contrast between the environment and the tinnitus. It has a large input dynamic range, with soft sound pickup starting around 5 dB SPL. Widex also offers PureSound, a zero-delay program that processes sound with a throughput delay of about 0.5 ms, helping tinnitus sufferers with and without hearing loss.

Allure AI RIC R D

- Dual-chip architecture, with a new AI chip that provides an on-demand clarity boost for extra noisy situations.
- 4x the processing power and 4x the memory of its predecessor platform.
- Battery life of up to 36 hours without streaming, or up to 31 hours with 6 hours of streaming/AI use.
- Same size as the Allure RIC.
- mFi, ASHA, and LE Audio, with hands-free communication and call control on compatible devices.
- Telecoil, LED light indicator, and programmable push button.
- 440 and 330 performance levels.

Amplification Advantages

Many patients receive relief from their tinnitus with hearing aids alone. Patients with tinnitus are best served with devices having:

- Low compression thresholds
- Broad frequency responses
- Precise gain at affected frequencies
- Flexible acoustic options

A high sampling rate supports a broad frequency response, and a wide input dynamic range supports a low compression threshold.

Tinnitus With Little to No Hearing Loss

Clinicians are often unsure what to do with patients who complain about tinnitus but have no measurable hearing loss on the audiogram. Widex fractal technology and PureSound, a half-millisecond throughput program, help these patients. PureSound reduces the delay-based distortion that makes wearing hearing aids without hearing loss nearly unbearable.

Processing Delay and the Comb Filter Effect

Sound enters the ear canal two ways simultaneously: through the processing of the hearing aid and out the receiver, and naturally through the venting in the dome or acoustic coupling. When these sounds do not match up in time, constructive and destructive interference produces comb filter distortion. This is audible to hearing aid wearers and becomes a larger problem the more open the fitting is.

Patients often describe hearing aids as boomy, echoey, hollow, or microphone-y even when fit open with no low-frequency gain. These complaints may sound like occlusion but are the result of audible delay.

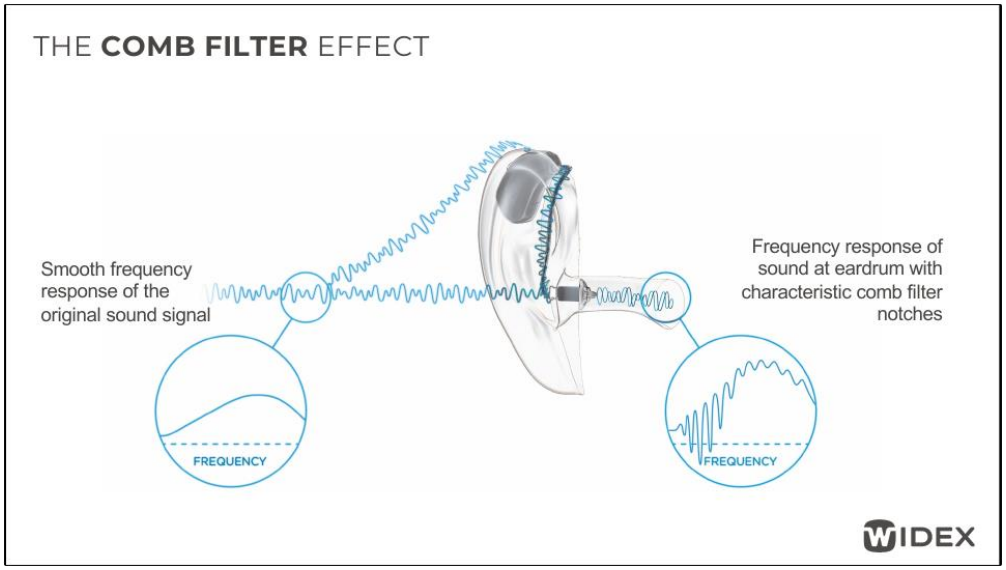


Figure 1. The comb filter effect, showing a smooth original signal and the notched frequency response at the eardrum.

Decades of independent research into the impact of processing delay on sound quality have established the following:

- Delay above the tolerable range is unacceptable to all wearers.
- Delay of 6 to 10 msec is defined as tolerable for closed fittings.
- Delay of 5 to 6 msec has been characterized as the threshold for acceptable sound in open fittings.

Widex sets a new standard for delay, with an industry-leading delay of 2.6 msec in the classic Universal signal processing and 0.5 msec in PureSound.

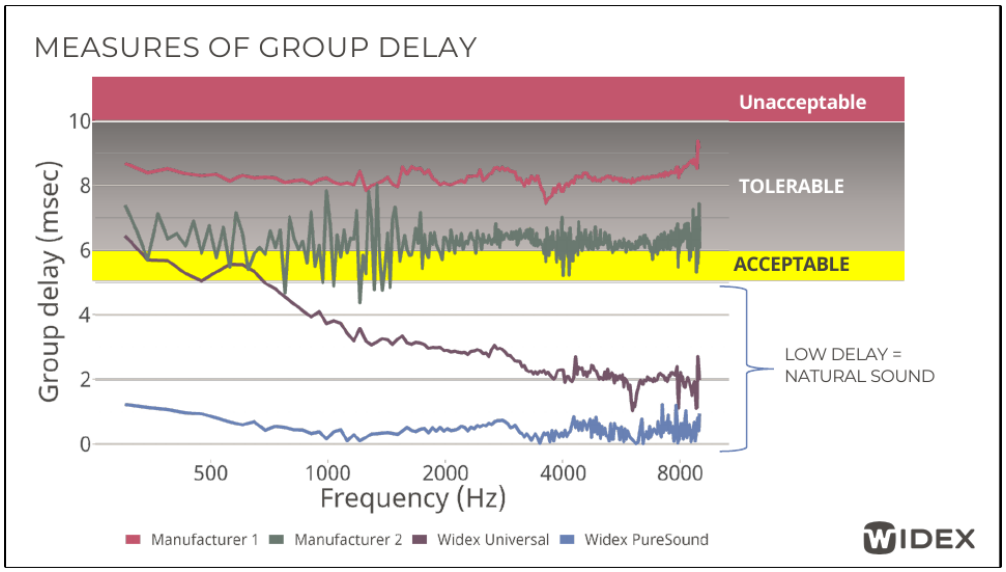


Figure 2. Measures of group delay (msec) across frequency for two manufacturers, Widex Universal, and Widex PureSound.

PureSound allows the natural signal and the processed signal to meet more in phase in the ear canal, delivering a higher quality, less mechanical sound to the wearer. A delay of 0.5 ms is below the threshold of delay detectability for a normal hearing listener. This eliminates own-voice complaints and complaints of microphoney, hollow, boomy, or echoey sound.

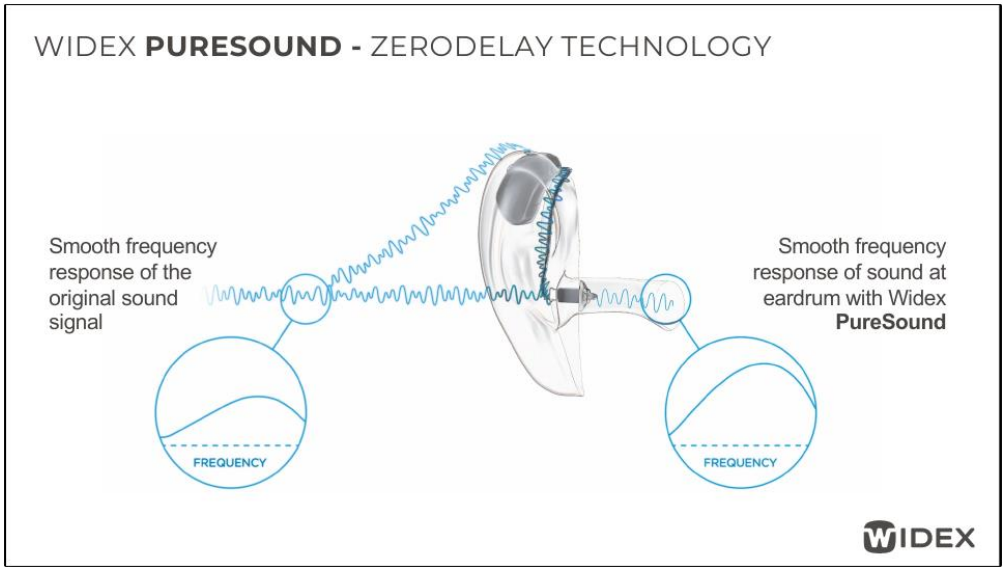


Figure 3. Widex PureSound zero-delay technology, showing a smooth frequency response at the eardrum.

Zen PureSound and Allure Devices

PureSound can be used as the base program for Zen therapy to ensure the most natural-sounding option. Allure Universal has a latency of approximately 2.6 ms. The Allure AI RIC is the same when the AI DNN is not activated and maintains acceptable processing latency when the chip is activated. Allure PureSound remains at approximately 0.5 ms, offering a natural listening experience to those without hearing loss out to a moderate loss.

Allure Device	Tech Levels
Allure AI RIC R D	440 and 330
Allure RIC R D, Allure BTE R D, Allure ITE R D	440, 330, 220, and 110

The entire Allure platform supports onboard Zen therapy. Zen is available at every tech level and is compatible with all devices on the Allure platform. A provider who starts with amplification alone can add Zen later, in any style and at any tech level, if the wearer needs that support.

Sound Stimulation

Building on low-delay processing, Widex offers Zen sound stimulation, which encourages habituation. Habituation is a natural function of the brain in which we learn to essentially ignore certain stimuli that are nonthreatening. Fractal tones contribute to that goal.

Fractal Tones

A fractal naturally exists in a recognizable pattern but never actually repeats. It is a natural algorithm with a set of rules that constantly reinvents itself, much like a snowflake. Snowflakes have six sides and are made of ice, but each takes a different path to the ground, defining its unique shape. No two are alike, yet every one is recognizable. In 2008, Widex introduced this concept to music with the aim of treating tinnitus.

Q2	**Quiz Hint:** Fractal math applied to music creates sound that is familiar and recognizable but nonrepeating and nonthreatening. The Noise category, by contrast, is broadband noise with shaped frequency filters.

Music and the Brain

Music is processed in both hemispheres of the brain, in both the primary and secondary auditory cortices. The limbic system is involved with emotions and highly involved with music processing. It is also responsible for the stress response caused by tinnitus. Music can soothe the stress in this brain location.

Playing music a person loves does not serve the same purpose, because that listening is active. Active listening cannot promote habituation, the ultimate tinnitus treatment outcome goal of Widex Zen therapy. Fractal math applied to music creates a type of fractal music that is familiar and recognizable but nonrepeating and nonthreatening, encouraging habituation.

Q3	**Quiz Hint:** The limbic system is responsible for the stress response caused by tinnitus, and music can soothe the stress in this brain location. Zen supports habituation, which substantially reduces that limbic response.

Habituation

Habituation means the brain stops reacting to the tinnitus as a threatening stimulus, which substantially reduces the limbic system response. It is the reduction or elimination of central nervous system activity in response to repetitive stimuli. It is a natural process experienced thousands of times each day, and it is often thought of as ignoring a stimulus without conscious effort.

To explain habituation to a patient, ask how much time each day they spend thinking about the feeling of the jewelry or clothes they are wearing. The aim is for the brain to get used to the tinnitus, much like we get used to a watch on the wrist, eyeglasses on the face, or hearing aids on the ears. Other examples include living near an airport or train station and ignoring the refrigerator running.

Novel stimuli, or those that pose a threat to well-being, tend to attract and often maintain attention, such as a new ache or pain or an uncomfortable shoe. Tinnitus is no exception. If the brain perceives the new sensation as a threat, it continues to focus on it and forms negative thoughts and feelings in reaction. This is where the limbic system is involved.

The Zen Style Library

Having choices is important for those suffering with tinnitus, which is why Widex created an extensive palette of fractal and non-fractal options. Within a Zen program, the provider can choose from 14 Zen styles in four sound categories. Rather than memorizing the list, think of it as a range of sound experiences to explore with the wearer. Information icons within the fitting provide short tool tips that explain the sound types.

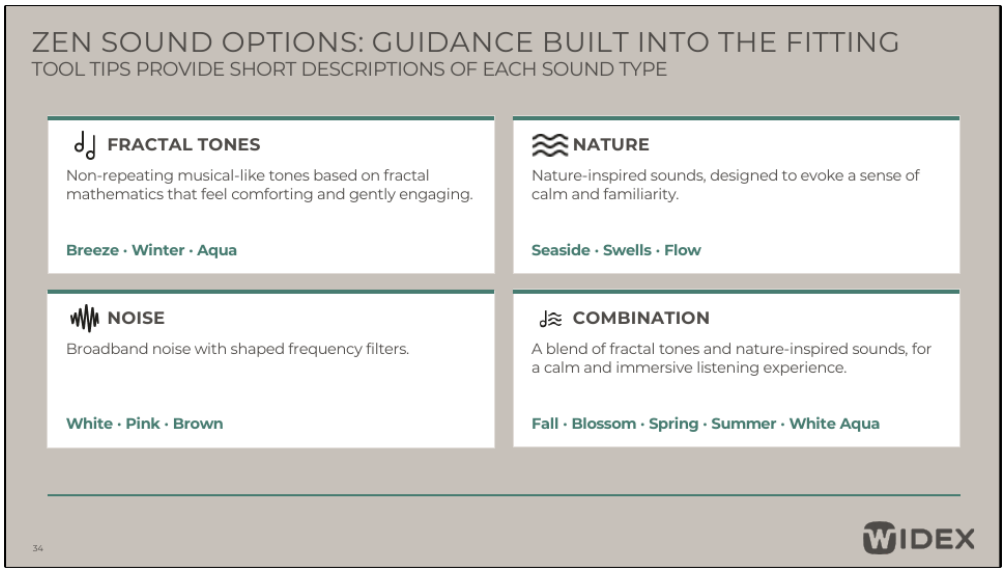


Figure 7. The four Zen sound categories and their styles.

Category	Description	Styles
Fractal tones	Non-repeating musical-like tones based on fractal mathematics that feel comforting and gently engaging.	Breeze, Winter, Aqua
Nature	Nature-inspired sounds designed to evoke a sense of calm and familiarity.	Seaside, Swells, Flow
Noise	Broadband noise with shaped frequency filters.	White, Pink, Brown
Combination	A blend of fractal tones and nature-inspired sounds, for a calm and immersive listening experience.	Fall, Blossom, Spring, Summer, White Aqua

A maximum of four tinnitus programs can be fitted, and each must have a different style selected as its default. When multiple Zen programs are added, the default style follows a different category for each, whether the base is Universal or PureSound.

Zen Program (Universal or PureSound base)	Default Style	Category
Zen program 1	Breeze	Fractal

Zen Program (Universal or PureSound base)	Default Style	Category
Zen program 2	Autumn/Fall	Combination
Zen program 3	Swells	Nature
Zen program 4	Winter	Fractal

Counseling

Counseling is critical but can be intimidating and overwhelming for all parties involved. Widex created materials that are freely available to providers to guide counseling and treatment plan design and execution. Widex has always emphasized proper and continued counseling throughout the tinnitus therapy process.

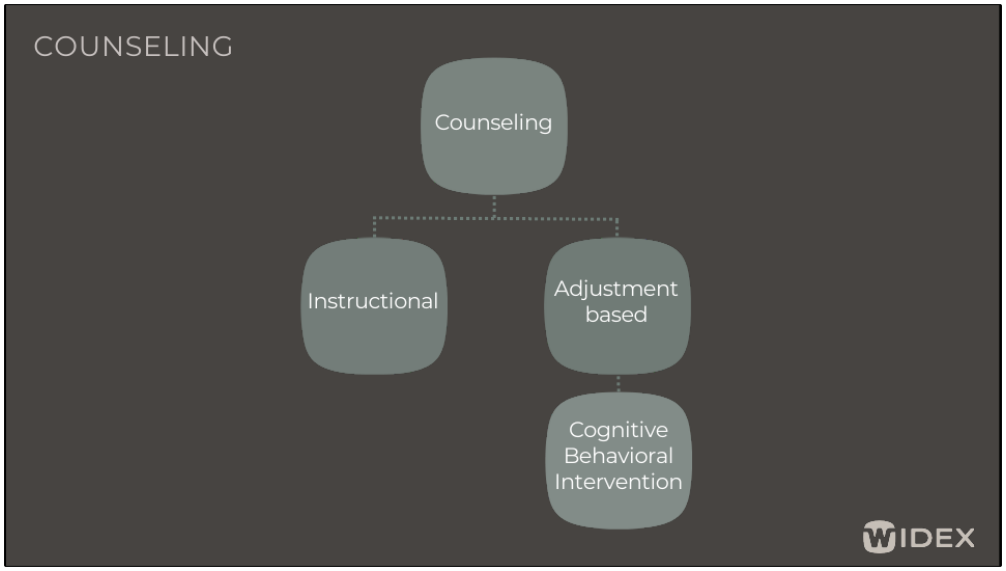


Figure 4. Counseling divided into Instructional and Adjustment-based counseling, with Cognitive Behavioral Intervention under Adjustment-based.

Inform the client that progress will not be based only on the tools and techniques provided, but also on their active participation and willingness to engage in cognitive and behavioral adjustments.

Instructional counseling: information about the patient's hearing loss, tinnitus, and the relationship between the two is discussed. It provides information directly related to the hearing loss and tinnitus, discusses the relationship between hearing loss and tinnitus, and discusses the emotional connection.

Adjustment-based counseling: this is about understanding the patient's perspective. The type of adjustment-based counseling covered in this course is Cognitive Behavioral Intervention (CBI).

Cognitive Behavioral Intervention (CBI)

CBI is designed to identify unwanted thoughts and behaviors that hinder natural habituation, challenge their validity, and replace them with alternative and logical thoughts and behaviors. The suggested CBI activities are not intended to replace the services of a mental health professional.

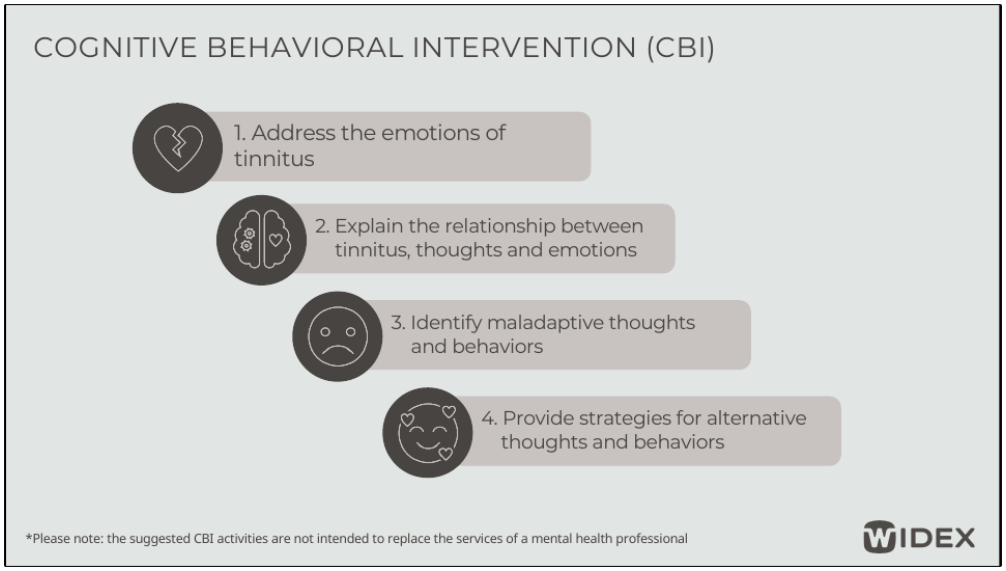


Figure 5. The four steps of Cognitive Behavioral Intervention (CBI).

Widex developed a tinnitus counseling flip chart, with a patient side and a provider side, to round out Widex Zen therapy. This style of counseling may already be part of a clinic's practice.

Q4	**Quiz Hint:** Counseling should convey that progress depends not only on the tools and techniques provided but also on the client's active participation and willingness to make cognitive and behavioral adjustments. The goal of Zen therapy is habituation.

Widex Zen Powered by Allure

Widex Allure is powered by Widex Compass Cloud, the industry's first cloud-based programming software. Legacy innovations and features have been updated, guided by three new pillars.

Pillar	Focus
01 Intuitive Design	Now accessible to more HCPs and wearers. Add a Zen program and customize it for the patient.
02 Increased User Support	Shared ownership in the solution, potentially reducing follow-up, with provider visibility throughout.
03 Online Counseling Tool	Digital and dynamic to match any counseling style.

Pillar 1: Intuitive Design

Within Compass Cloud, the provider chooses the Zen tone that will be the basis for the patient's manual program. The simple approach is choose, listen, and personalize.

Choose: Creating a Zen program begins in the program menu. A Zen program can be based on either Universal or PureSound. Zen does not replace the underlying hearing aid fitting. The provider begins with the hearing program appropriate for the individual's listening needs and adds the Zen sound experience within that program.

Listen: The selected Zen style can be demonstrated directly through the connected hearing aids, so the wearer experiences the sound rather than choosing from a name or description. Use the wearer's response to decide whether to continue with that style or try another. The first style chosen does not have to be perfect, just a good starting place. There is no need to go through every style.

Personalize: The provider can turn the microphones on or off within the Zen program, adjust the volume, and unlink the Zen controls when independent adjustment is appropriate. Zen is meant to be just barely audible in quiet and completely nondistracting during conversation.

Initial Activation

Although the adjustment range is broad, the goal is not to find the highest comfortable level. This is not a masking approach to tinnitus treatment. The Widex fitting rationale calculates the starting loudness of the Zen style based on the individual's hearing loss.

- Set the volume so that the annoyance level of tinnitus begins to decrease.
- Ask the client to converse in a quiet room while listening to the tones. If speech clarity is reduced, lower the Zen style volume.
- In a quiet environment, Zen should be audible as a soft sound. When normal-level speech or loud sounds are present, Zen becomes softer. This is normal.

A useful rule is that the Zen sound should blend into the background rather than draw attention to itself or overpower normal listening. Continue adjusting based on the wearer's response until an appropriate balance is reached.

Q5	**Quiz Hint:** The goal is not simply to find the highest comfortable level, and this is not a masking approach. Start with the Zen sound at a low level, check speech clarity in a quiet room, and adjust based on the wearer's response.

Volume Control Ranges

Once a Zen style is selected, the HCP can adjust its level independently within the fitting, across a range of plus or minus 24 dB, with hard limits at those endpoints. The wearer can also be given volume control over the Zen style, with a range of up to plus or minus 16 dB. The HCP establishes the fitted level and the boundaries, and the wearer has an appropriate degree of control within the program.



Figure 6. Zen style volume adjustment ranges for the HCP and the wearer.

Full Fitting Capabilities

Creating a Zen program does not take away fitting flexibility. The underlying hearing program remains fully adjustable:

- Gain: fine-tune amplification across frequencies.
- Compression: adjust compression and input-level behavior.
- Program settings: access the familiar fitting controls available in other listening programs.

The Zen experience is personalized within an individually fitted hearing program, so the HCP can address the wearer's amplification needs while also individualizing the Zen experience.

Pillar 2: Increased User Support

Once a manual Zen program is added, the wearer has access to the entire Zen tone library through the Allure app. This gives the wearer more control than ever.

The provider stays informed through the comprehensive Zen data log at follow-up, which shows which Zen styles were used and any volume changes the wearer made.

Pillar 3: Online Tinnitus Counseling Tool

Tinnitus support is surfaced within the normal fitting workflow, with a visible starting point on the Overview page in Compass Cloud. From there, the HCP can access introductory information and resources:

- Clear information about Zen listening programs.
- A link to the online tinnitus counseling tool.
- Zen program support in the Allure app.

The tool brings the traditional counseling flip chart into a digital format, with talking points to guide the discussion and clear visuals that help the client understand what is being explained.

Entry Point	How to Access
Through the online fitting software	Open the Compass Cloud Overview page and access the tool from within the fitting workflow.
Directly through the website	Navigate directly to one.wsa.com and open the tool online.

Both routes lead to the same counseling experience. The tool is designed to support both sides of the interaction, and it is meant to be used with the client to support explanation, invite questions, and create a shared reference. It is not meant to be read word for word or shown as slides.

Aspect	For the HCP	For the Wearer
Support provided	Key talking points, supporting information, and a suggested structure	Clear illustrations, simplified concepts, and a shared visual reference

The content is organized under three main headings, which give the HCP a logical way to find material. They are not a rigid script, and the HCP can select the topics most useful for the individual conversation.

Heading	Content
Basic Counseling	Foundational information that helps clients understand tinnitus and the auditory system.
Tinnitus and Stress	Common difficulties associated with tinnitus and the relationship between tinnitus, emotional responses, and stress.
Habituation	Concepts related to becoming less attentive or reactive to tinnitus, along with approaches that support that process.

Conclusion

- Zen is a habituation-focused approach built on non-repeating fractal tones, not a masking approach.
- Zen is added within an individually fitted Universal or PureSound program, so the full fitting flexibility remains available.
- Choose, listen, and personalize, and let the wearer's response guide the next step.
- The Allure app, the Zen data log, and the online counseling tool support the wearer and keep the provider informed.

Notes

Quiz Summary

The following quiz hints appeared throughout the course content. Use this section as a quick study reference.

Q1	**Quiz Hint:** Widex introduced Zen in 2008 as a new approach to habituation for tinnitus using fractal tones. The Combination styles are described as providing a calm and immersive listening experience.
Q2	**Quiz Hint:** Fractal math applied to music creates sound that is familiar and recognizable but nonrepeating and nonthreatening. The Noise category, by contrast, is broadband noise with shaped frequency filters.
Q3	**Quiz Hint:** The limbic system is responsible for the stress response caused by tinnitus, and music can soothe the stress in this brain location. Zen supports habituation, which substantially reduces that limbic response.
Q4	**Quiz Hint:** Counseling should convey that progress depends not only on the tools and techniques provided but also on the client's active participation and willingness to make cognitive and behavioral adjustments. The goal of Zen therapy is habituation.
Q5	**Quiz Hint:** The goal is not simply to find the highest comfortable level, and this is not a masking approach. Start with the Zen sound at a low level, check speech clarity in a quiet room, and adjust based on the wearer's response.

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Additional Information

Presenter Bio

Anna Javins earned her Doctorate of Audiology from the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and her Bachelor of Arts with Research Distinction in Speech and Hearing Science from Ohio State University. She completed her fourth-year externship at the Johns Hopkins Hospital Department of Otolaryngology and Head and Neck Surgery in conjunction with a graduate student trainee role within the Cochlear Center for Hearing and Public Health. Following her studies, she practiced as a private practice clinical audiologist. Dr. Javins is a fellow of the American Academy of Audiology (AAA). She is an advocate for high-quality and equitable communication access and dignified aging. She is originally from Cleveland, Ohio and currently resides in beautiful Long Beach, CA. In her free time, Dr. Javins enjoys reading a great book at the beach, cooking and baking, and spending time with her family, including her lab mix rescue, Ava.

Presenter Disclosure

Financial: Anna Javins is employed by Widex.

Non-financial: Anna Javins has no relevant non-financial relationships to disclose.

Additional Information (continued)

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