Diving hood and equalisation

When I am not wearing a hood, I have no problems equalising my ears. On the other hand, when I wear it, I always have great difficulty. Why is there a difference?

Answer from DAN experts:

When we pressurise the middle ear space using the Valsalva manoeuvre or another equalisation technique, the tympanic membrane (ear drum) bulges outward slightly. If the ear canal is uncovered and can transmit that pressure, the water in the ear canal moves easily in response. A hood that fits snugly against the outer ear can greatly restrict the movement of this water, hampering the diver's ability to equalise. An easy remedy to this is to insert a finger under the hood near the ear, which will allow the water to move more easily. Another solution some divers choose to implement is to cut a hole from the inside of the hood, near the ear canal, through the inner lining and the neoprene but leaving the outer fabric or covering intact. This hole allows the water to move with little restriction.