Hadley

I Rebuilt My Skills

Presented by Douglas Walker

**Douglas:** Hello, and welcome to the Insights and Sound Bites podcast, where people facing vision loss share insights about what has helped them cope and adjust.

**Voice 1:** You cannot do this alone. You need people who are experiencing the same thing.

**Voice 2:** Probably the hardest part was just navigating through the emotions of it.

**Douglas:** My name is Douglas Walker. Change can sometimes be overwhelming, especially when the change is sudden. Today we’ll hear from, Axel. Axel will share with us the journey he took to train his sense of touch and connect again with his love of playing music.

**Axel:** Hello everybody. This is Axel Meier located in Oakland, California. So I was struck by a gunshot that went through my head, and that wiped out my vision from a hundred percent down to zero. So, I survived that and I started rebuilding myself after that. So how to start?

Now what I had to do is I had to first train my tactile senses so that I can imagine what is there in front of me, how to shape things up. And that's why I started to work with clay, because that can be reshaped at any time, as much as I want. And so that's where I started out making little things like bowls and pipes and what have you. So that's how I started.

And then a friend of mine who happened to be working with sculptures, he suggested to me to train myself a little further working with marble. And so, I started that with small pieces because it was hard, not too hard, but hard enough to change shape slowly so that I can grasp this easier, what was really going on. It's all about tactical training. And so therefore I rebuild slowly my handcrafted skills from stone carving, then wood carving.

And furthermore, I made music before, so I was able to play an instrument. I learned guitar like age 12 then I lost my eyesight. I started playing music again. And this also was important for me to form a mental balance, kind of concentrated meditation, if you will. It puts the mind on a total different framework. This also helps me to connect to other people, to other musicians. So that makes socializing much easier. That's helped me a lot.

**Douglas**: Was there something that someone said to you or something that happened along the way that made all the difference in the world in helping you adjust to living with vision loss?

We‘d love to hear from you if you’d like to share with us, just leave us a message on our Insights & Sound Bites Podcast voicemail by calling, 847-512-4867. Or, you can use your smartphone or computer and email us a recording to podcast@Hadley.edu. Again, my name is Douglas Walker. Take care and I’ll see you next time.