Hadley

I Didn’t Have a Choice

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. Today we’ll hear from Tim. And how listening to a friend’s advice helped to changed his entire outlook.

**Tim Shelton:** Hello, y'all. My name is Tim Shelton. I was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa about seven years ago, and the aftercare of the retina specialist that I went to was pitiful. When they called me and told me my diagnosis, they said, You have retinitis pigmentosa. I said, “what does that mean? I'm a carpenter and a granite fabricator. Please put it in those terms.”

And they said “you should Google it.” Then went on a two year journey of self-pity and looking for answers in the bottom of a vodka bottle and getting all death wishy and everything.

But then all of a sudden, I recalled a situation where when I went, I could still build houses. I would stop at this gas station every morning. It was a great place to get a cup of coffee and watch the sunrise. And there was a young man working behind the counter. Turned out to be a good friend of mine years later who had been badly burned as a child. He had one thumb on one hand and a couple of nubs on the other hand, and I once remarked, I could not do what you do.

And he got rather indignant about it. And said, “Yes, you could.” And I said, “No, I couldn't.” And he got angrier. He said, “Yes, you could.” And I said, “No, I couldn't.” And then he said, “Yes, you could. And you want to know why?” And of course, I asked why. He said, “Because you don't have a choice.”

So, although those first couple of years going from being the go-to guy in my family and being the go to guy in every company I ever worked for were taken away from me.

I learned how to cope. I learned how to adjust. I learned how to ask for help. And that's been huge. And it was all a result of what that friend of mine said to me that day in the Ozark Hills in north central Arkansas. “You have to.”

And so here I am seven years later. And life is good, ya’ll. Life is good.

Hang in there, yall. You'll get there. All right. I love each and every one of you. And there ain’t a dang thing you can do about it.

**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 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.