Hadley

I wasn’t living my truth

**Sam:** I didn't want people to know that I was visually impaired. I really fought it tooth and nail. And did my best to hide it.

**Marc:** This is Hadley’s Insights and Sound Bites, where people facing vision loss share what has helped them cope and adjust.

**Sam Seavey:** Hello. My name is Sam Seavey. I live in central Kentucky, where I'm an assistive technology program manager. Most people probably know me from my YouTube channel, The Blind Life, where I share my life living with vision loss and do assistive technology reviews. If you've seen my channel, then you may already be familiar with my story, my vision story, as they say.

But if not a brief history, I was diagnosed at age 11 with Stargardt disease, which is a juvenile form of macular degeneration. So, I grew up, essentially grew up low vision, going through school, getting my first jobs out of high school, dating marriage, everything has been with low vision. And you would think that because of that, I would be very well adjusted to having low vision.

And for the most part I am but something that a lot of people might be surprised about is as adjusted as I am with my vision loss. I still have my bad days. I still have a lot of bad days. I think we all do. And I tell people that that's totally fine. That's perfectly normal to still have bad days.

But what's most important is that you have more good days than bad days, obviously. But that wasn't always the case for me. Even though I was diagnosed at a very early age, I still wasn't fully accepting of my vision or my lack of vision ,until probably in my thirties, my early thirties. Up until that point, I really fought it tooth and nail. And did my best to hide it.

I didn't want people to know that I was visually impaired and especially going through school and high school and dating. I did everything I could to work around the vision impairment to hide it. And I really fully give credit to my wife for kind of breaking me out of that cycle and giving me the very tough love that I needed at the time. Basically, telling me to knock it off and that I was being ridiculous trying to do this, trying to pretend to be something that I'm not because it's exhausting trying to keep up a charade, trying to keep up this facade of I'm perfectly normal, I'm just like everybody else.

There's nothing wrong with me. What vision impaired? No, not me. It was exhausting. And I wasn't living my truth, as they say. And like I said, I give credit to my wife for being like, Knock it off. You're being ridiculous. She really helped me to realize that there wasn't anything wrong with me. There was no reason to be hiding something because hiding it means that I was ashamed of it and I'm not ashamed of it because I was comparing myself to everybody else and wrapping up my entire self-worth into a couple of faulty retinas.

Two tiny little pieces of tissue in my body that don't work the same as someone else next to me, standing next to me. In my head, that meant that I was less than them in in just about every way. And that is insane. And she helped me realized how ludicrous that was. Once I realized that and once I changed that mindset, I could finally embrace who I am.

And I was then open to letting good, positive things happen in my life. And I can honestly say in the 15 years since that acceptance, my vision impairment, my blindness has brought way more positive things to my life than negative.

**Marc**: You never know who might need to hear your story. 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@HadleyHelps.org.