Hadley

I didn’t have a choice

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

**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.

**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](mailto:podcast@HadleyHelps.org).