Hadley

I love to cook and I’m not stopping

**Linda:** When I lost the vision where I couldn't read anymore, that was even more devastating. There's so many things I love to do, and now I can't see to do it.

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

**Linda:** Hi. I'm Linda LeCuyer, and I'm from Raleigh, North Carolina.

I am 63, almost 64 years old, and I was diagnosed with RP when I was in my early 30s, but it stayed stable for years, and then in my 50s, it started to progress.

So, in my fifties, I was also going through breast cancer. I started to lose some of my vision. It started with my night vision, and then started losing my peripheral vision. And as I was going through the process of breast cancer, and treatments, and everything, started to lose the central vision in my right eye. And then when I finished with all my surgeries, that spring started losing my vision in my right eye. So that was pretty devastating.

When I had to stop driving, that was pretty devastating. I was driving one day, and I was at a gas station. And I backed up, and I hit something. And I panicked, and my son was like, "Mom, Mom, it's okay. It's just a guardrail." And I said, "Oh my God." I started crying. I was like, "That could have been a child. That could have been anything." And I came home, and I said to my husband, "I'm done. I'm not driving anymore. I'm hanging up the keys." And I told him what happened. He goes, "Well, I don't blame you." So, I stopped driving, and then when I lost the vision where I couldn't read anymore, that was even more devastating, because I'm like, "Oh my gosh. How am I going to do this?" Because I love to cook. There's so many things I love to do, and now I can't see to do it. That was why I reached out to the Department of Health and Human Services.

They lined me up with an independent living counselor. And he was amazing. He was very compassionate, and he said they had a 10-week class, which was one day a week, and it helped you to cope with vision loss. And I was like, "I'm in. I need this." And I think every class I cried, and he said, "You're my most emotional person." But I learned so much in there, and I learned that I can still do everything. I just have to adapt the way I do it. I can do everything everybody else does. I just have to do it a different way.

And Hadley helped with that, because I was like, "Well, if I can't read, I need to learn braille." So, I learned uncontracted reading and writing braille, and then my kids helped me by, I got a braille label maker. And they labeled all my spices for me because I love to cook, and I thought, "I'm not stopping."

As far as activities, I have a walking buddy that I walk with. I used to love to bike ride. So, my husband got a tandem bike, and now we ride together all the time, kayaking. We do double kayaks. So, I still do all the things I love to do. I like I said, just do it differently.

Don't be afraid to reach out for help because fear sometimes leads to failure, and we don't have to fear. We can do 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.