Hadley

Makes me feel less isolated

**Jessica:** Just hearing the experiences of other people, it makes me feel less isolated and that these experiences are not just mine, but they are pretty universal to the low vision community.

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

**Jessica:** Hey, my name is Jessica Simmel and I am from New York, New York. I was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa in December of 2016. The same week I found out that I had breast cancer. And now, eight years later, sitting at my window birding and listening to some of these podcasts and realized that maybe I did have something to share.

Because listening to these stories, these sound bites are so validating. I have about eight degrees of vision left, probably a little less by now. And, it's hard. As you all know, and something that has brought me comfort this year, that has allowed me to really keep going is adaptive sports.

I'm 51 years old. I had stopped doing anything athletic due to arthritis in my wrists, my knees, my hip. And then I learned about an adaptive climbing group that was about 45 minutes away from where I live. And when I was sighted, I absolutely loved climbing, but I hadn't done it, probably since 16 years ago.

And it's been six months that I have been doing adaptive rock climbing, and I can say that it's truly changed my life. It just made me feel strong in my own body. And I hadn't felt that in a really, really long time.

The other thing that has helped me is listening to stories from other people. Just hearing the experiences of other people, it makes me feel less isolated and that these experiences are not just mine, but they are pretty universal to the low vision community.

So I hope this help and thank you all for helping me with your stories. Thank you.

**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.