Hadley

I had a lot of anger…and learned to let that go

**Peter:** The driving was a huge dent in my self-image. It was a rough road and I had a lot of anger about losing my vision but you got to let that go.

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

**Peter:** I'm Peter Sherrill from Kohlberg, Wisconsin.

Early on in this journey, I had several eye conditions that conspired to cost me my eyesight. I had a little glaucoma and then I had a corneal disorder, and that ended up with about 30 eye surgeries. But the medicines to treat the corneal disorder make glaucoma worse. And so, everything snowballed out of control.

And my vision loss came on kind of insidiously over a period of three to five years. And for the first couple of years, one eye started failing before the other did. So, I just compensated for it and said, this isn't so bad. I can still deal with this.

But it slowly steadily worsened, and I think my big aha moment came as I was driving home from work one winter night when it was quite dark out, I was going to turn left onto a four lane road, and I knew there was a stop sign at the intersection before I turned, and I kept looking and saying, well, where's the stop sign? I'm not finding it. And I inch forward a little further and a little further. Well, I had missed it, and I was actually in the oncoming lane of the highway. Fortunately, there was only one car, and he simply pulled into the other lane and went right around me. But I thought, okay, that is all I need to know. I could easily have been in a terrible accident.

And at that point I gave up driving. I had to swallow really hard to accept that, but that made a big difference because I'm a physician and that was my watershed moment when I said, this is not going to go on. I got to stop.

But the driving was a huge dent in my self-image. And I was a guy who's used to being able to get things done, make things, fix things, get projects handled, and that isn't the case anymore. It was a rough road, and I had a lot of denial to work around, and I had a lot of anger about losing my vision and bargaining of various sorts, wondering what I could have done to keep this from happening and a lot of depression. But you got to let that go. You got to acknowledge the feeling; let it do what it needs to do and let it pass so you can move on. And that's how I managed to get where I am.

And if anything is a consolation, it crept up on me slowly enough that I could adapt. And I've lived in the same house for long enough that I can pretty much find my way around, but I still bang my head on doorframes occasionally, and I have to say a naughty word and then find the door the right way.

You're going to have bargaining, you're going to have anger, you're going to have depression. This is normal. Don't let it scare you. This is a part of how your body accepts a major change like this. That was a major help for me. I could say, oh, okay, I'm going through anger right now. Fine. I'll let it pass and see what comes next.

**Marc**: Insights & Sound Bites has made possible by Hadley’s donors. Who understand that hearing someone else’s story can truly make a difference.

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