Hadley

I Came Full Circle

Presented by Douglas Walker

**Voice 1:** You cannot do this alone. You need people who are experiencing the same thing.

**Voice 2:** Probably the hardest part was just navigating through the emotions of it.

**Voice 3:** Think if this had happened to a dear friend of yours, how much you feel for him or her.

**Douglas:** Hello, and welcome to the Insights and Sound Bites Podcast. My name is Douglas Walker. A sudden loss of vision can sometimes be too much to handle on your own. Today we’ll hear from Annie. Annie will share with us the steps she took to work through her depression by seeking help from a mental health professional.

**Annie:** Hi. My name is Annie and I'm from New Rochelle, New York. I lost my vision in 1993 from retinitis pigmentosa. Prior to that, I was a fully sighted person and lived my life with vision.

I think the hardest thing for me was to step out of the world of vision and step into the world of visual impairment and the shock of it really sent me into a depression. The one thing and one person that helped me the most to recognize that I was still a whole person was a mental health therapist who counseled me for about two years. The reason why I opted into counseling because I was newly married, I had a young son, and I was trying to do this blindness thing pretty much on my own.

Before I became blind, I really didn't know any other blind people. I didn't know much about disability or about resilience. And because I had somebody to help me navigate through the emotional and psychological trauma of sudden blindness, I was able to pull myself out and get myself back into living again. That meant going back to school and getting my high school diploma, then moving on to getting a master's degree in counseling. Incidentally, I ended up counseling people with severe trauma as well in my career, being a counselor for veterans for 10 years so I came full circle and I feel like my life is a blessing and everything that I've learned since I started losing my vision has helped me develop into becoming a strong and resilient person.

**Douglas:** The shock of losing vision threw Annie into depression but she came full circle by giving herself the gift of getting professional help. Was there something that someone said to you or something someone did for you early on that made all the difference in the world in helping you adjust to living with vision loss?

We’d love to hear from you. If you’d like to share us, just leave us a message on our Insights and Soundbites podcast voicemail by calling 847-512-4867. Or you can use your smartphone or computer and email us a recording to podcasts@hadley.edu. Again, my name is Douglas Walker, take care and see you next time.