Hadley

A Whole New Perspective

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:** At some point you get through the why me stage. And then back to your core beliefs. The survive, adapt, overcome.

**Douglas:** Hello, and welcome to Insights and Sound Bites. My name is Douglas Walker. When you’re slowly losing vision, it’s easy to feel stuck and deny what’s happening. Today we’ll hear from Sarah. Sarah will share with us how a video a friend shared led her down an insightful path.

**Sarah:** Hi, my name is Sarah Fulmer. I’m from Columbus, Ohio. One thing that really, I think for me, the catalyst was anger. So first I felt it, I've been losing my vision for about 13 years. Well, over the course of about 13 years, and so I'd say for the past about two years is when it just really dropped off. I don't have anything. There's nothing left. I have a little bit of light perception. And that entire time, it just kept feeling like a band-aid was getting ripped off one hair at a time.

And then one day I was sitting in my apartment and I was just listening to the radio or whatever, and in the background I just casually heard someone use the phrase, it's like the blind leading the blind, and I was filled with just like rage, because that statement, when we say that, what we mean is, it's like one stupid person leading another stupid person, and all they can do is get to stupid town. There can't be any other conclusion in that statement. When we say blind, we mean somebody who doesn't know, and so it's got this pejorative, this unkind way that we couch that phrase.

And what really irritated me about it is not only is it an unkind thing to say, it just stuck in my head and I kept thinking about it and I was like, the problem is this whole time and this whole journey for me, what I want is someone who is blind to lead me, so that I know that it's possible. And what I want, what I need is to see people who have succeeded, who have made it past the point where I'm at. I want desperately to be led by the blind. I want to know that that's possible, that it's positive, that it doesn't mean it's the end of your creative life.

Early on, a friend of mine sent me a thing that she saw, I don’t even know what show, about an architect who was blind. Well, he went blind after establishing his career. Now, it's pretty difficult to imagine that an architect could continue without sight, and he said, "Absolutely. Not only could I continue, but I incorporated that into my designs. I started to think about how sound works in a building, what you can do with the floor so that the person who is using a cane can get tactile feedback to find out where they're at, to pay attention to how does sound bounce around in this space because if you have no vision and you're relying on audio cues and you're in this big cavernous space where sound bounces all over the place and you can hear, how would that affect you?"

Instead of stopping what he was doing and giving up, he just found ways to incorporate that. And that extended my understanding of what was possible in a way that I don't really know how to explain.

Somebody had sent me this video and I'd ignored it and ignored it, because I was afraid to look into what is it like to be blind, because I didn't want to admit that that was going to happen to me. And then I watched this video and just started crying because I just realized, oh, my life is not over. So, for every single thing that there is that I have to learn, and there are many, many things that I have to learn, there's a whole different perspective. There's somebody else who's gone ahead of me and figured this out.

**Douglas**: My life is not over, there’s a whole new perspective. Sarah was angry and felt marginalized. But a video her friend shared helped her discover that to follow others who’ve dealt with the same losses was exactly what she needed to finally find her way.

Was there something that someone said to you or something that happened along the way 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 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@Hadley.edu.

Again, my name is Douglas Walker. Take care and I’ll see you next time.