Hadley

Ask for Help

Presented by Douglas Walker

**Douglas:** Hello, and welcome to the Insights and Sound Bites podcast, where people facing vision loss share insights about what has helped them cope and adjust.

**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.

**Douglas:** My name is Douglas Walker. Sometimes it’s easiest to just ignore that your vision is slowly changing. Today we’ll hear from Carol. Carol will share with us how staying mindful that her vision was changing allowed her to keep moving forward.

**Carol:** Hi, I'm Carol Mackie. I'm calling from Maine. I live in Southern Maine, not too far outside of Portland. I am 80 years old as of May this year, which just blows my mind.

I was born with cataracts in both eyes. My mom had German measles when she was pregnant with me. I had surgery from a very young age, and my vision was corrected.

I drove for my job. I loved my job. I did outside sales, advertising sales, and drove to see clients. I realized about six months or so before I stopped driving, I realized that I was going to see clients, but I was going roundabout ways.

It dawned on me slowly that I wanted to avoid that traffic light, which was very busy, and I'd have to cross across traffic. And I realized that I was not going on that busy road, which was really the direct route, because it was a busy road and there was a lot of turning traffic and that kind of thing.

At the same time, I was also, when I was working, realized, in checking the correctness of ads, of advertising of content, I would blow up the ad, I could read it better on the copier.

And it was a slow process. It didn't all of a sudden, one day, I was doing it that way and one day, I wasn't. But it dawned on me and it began to show up in other ways.

I guess what I would want to share with others is that awareness. It's to accept when we see that happening and accept the fact that, "You know what? My vision's getting worse."

It's an ongoing process because that same awareness I have to bring to daily. My sight is slowly getting worse, and I have to be very aware of that. And having had that happen before, it makes me more tuned into it, into what is probably happening every day.

Of course, I had been in touch with and talked to my eye doctor... And unfortunately, oftentimes eye doctors, ophthalmologists, optometrists, are out of the loop as far as what's available.

And I only have the gift of hindsight now, but after I stopped driving, within a very short time, I had been in touch with the state for the division for the blind. And got some rehab, was in touch with what's here, it's called the Iris Network, and went for rehabilitation through the blind network.

And that really was an eye-opener. I got some mobility training with a cane. I never thought that I was going to be able to do anything. I'm an avid reader. I thought, "Oh, I'm not going to be able to read anymore!" Well, there's audiobooks, there's talking books.

But I really thought that my world was ending and that was it. That was the end of it. But it isn't. I'm not the first person that had to give up my driving.

The biggest thing I would say, you don't have to do it alone. You do not have to do it alone. Reach out, make a phone call, talk to someone. And that's hard to do, to acknowledge that, "I need help. I need help. I need a ride. I need someone to pick up something." It's hard to do, but that's the only way it's going to get done. That's the only way you can live.

**Douglas**: Carol’s vision was slowly changing. And it really helped her, to keep herself aware and remind herself that it’s okay to ask for the help that she needed.

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.