Hadley

I found something to do

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.

**Celia:** And it just got me out of my funk because I had something to focus on besides just sitting here going “Okay, well my whole life has changed. Now what?”

**Douglas:** My name is Douglas Walker. Even a small change in your vision can make a big difference in how you have to approach some of the most familiar tasks. Today, we’ll hear from Celia. Celia shares with us how what started out as a joke with her grandkids, got her back into the community doing something she loves to do.

**Celia:** My name is Celia Petersen, I'm from Spring Branch, Texas, and I was a farmer before I lost my vision.

I have severe glaucoma, and I didn't have medical insurance for many years and so it was slowly developing, but then in the last year, year and a half, it sped up. They don't know why. And so now it's severe glaucoma. One eye doesn't have any vision at all, and the other eye is not doing great. So, I had an accident and I fell, and because of the light changes, which is real common. I understand now with glaucoma and I tore my meniscus in my left knee and broke my right wrist. And that's when I went back to the eye doctor and said, "What the heck?"

I'm 66 now. And I guess because I always lived in the same place and did the same things, I didn't realize how bad it was until I moved to Texas two years ago. I had drove here two years ago, but I couldn't drive at night, I already knew that that was an issue. But within a year of living here, it just really got bad. I don't drive at all anymore. And so, one of the explanations I was given is that your brain fills things in for you, and then when I was in an unfamiliar place where I didn't know where anything was, I just started really noticing because I was running into things and getting injured all the time.

After I got the diagnosis that my glaucoma was in the severe end stage and I didn't know what to do, I didn't know where to go.

What changed my mind was I was talking to my grandkids and they were teasing me, because they were trying to lift my spirit, and say, "How are you going to continue making the fleece into clothes and stuff when you can't see?" And I joked with them and they said, "Well, you should make hats for blind people because they won't notice your mistakes."

And I've done all this wool work for over 30 years with my sheep, so maybe I'll just do it by memory or learn how to do it a different way. And that just got me out of my funk because I had something to do, something to focus on beside just sitting here going, "Okay, well, my whole life has changed, now what?" So that's how I started.

And the first few things I made looked pretty funky because I had a great grandbaby and I sent her a toy and they were like, "What is it?" I had to rethink how to do things and get bigger needles and ask people for help. That's the biggest thing, was learning to ask for help, because I was a very independent person, and I had been my whole life. I ran the farm after my husband died, by myself. And now all of a sudden, you can't drive, you have to ask for rides everywhere, and you can't do your way of life anymore. It was a big change.

So, I found a farmer's market that was close enough and a friend that I had met here in Texas that could drive, and she does lace work, and I said, "Let's do something together." And so, she drove us to the market and we set up together and I handed out Hadley pamphlets with each thing that they bought, anybody bought, and I put a tag on there about Hadley.

I was so surprised by how many people wanted to support that. They're seeing me there with my cane, spinning wool, and that brings them over, the spinning wheel, and then I could talk to them, and so many of them had a story in their own family. Maybe they had glaucoma or something like me, and then I will talk to them and reassure them, "Your life's not over now. You just got to learn new ways to do things. And you'll be a little slower, so what?"

**Douglas**: I’d love to hear your story. If you’d like to share, you can leave me a voicemail by calling, 847-512-4867. Or, you can email me a recording to podcast@HadleyHelps.org. Again, my name is Douglas Walker. Take care and I’ll see you next time.