

HEARING DIFFERENTLY

Episode 1: “I’m Deaf. So what?”

Opening sounds: “Abracadabra”- Silent Partner (loud at first and then fades out)

Background music: “Deliberate Thought” – Kevin MacLeod

Hi everyone, and welcome to the very first episode of “Hearing Differently”. Before I explain the name of this podcast, let me introduce myself. I’m your host, Karina Cotran. Now, the name “Hearing Differently” is a bit of an unusual name, which you will understand once I explain it. In order for me to do that, let me tell you some things about myself. I’m a University student, I have a passion for writing, I’m obsessed with Harry Potter...I’ll probably be dropping some Potter references so make sure to keep an ear out for those! And...I’m deaf.

In this podcast, I will be talking about my deafness and the many aspects that come with it, and also the life lessons I’ve learned from it.

SEGWAY: “Columns of Water” – Alexandre Navarro

Topic 1

I was born into a hearing world, with a hearing family, put into a hearing school and so on and so forth. For a very long time up until recently, I’ve always felt painfully self-conscious by the fact that I am deaf. When I was younger, it meant that I was different than every body else and I hated it. When I grew older and more independent, it meant me realizing that I can’t do everything that a hearing person could, like talk on the phone easily, or hear in louder environments, or walk into a bar without fear that the music might be so loud that I won’t hear anyone. I used to hate this so much, to the point where I would repress my anger at it, paste a smile on my face and pretend that I was fine, that I could hear what everyone else could hear...even though I couldn’t.

Before, when I would meet new people, I hated revealing the fact that I was deaf and that sometimes I need to be accommodated for it. It got to the point, where some people who had known me through my four years at University had no idea that I was deaf...because I never admitted it. Why? Because I dreaded the idea that they might treat me differently. I recently realized this when a friend of mine who I’ve had classes with since my first year of university saw my Cochlear Implant and was shocked. It was in this moment that I realized I had never told him that I am deaf. I then realized I had a problem with something that is a part of who I am. And hence, my podcast on my deafness, through it I hope to accept who I am, and educate others and myself on living with a hearing impairment.

As a whole, “Hearing Differently” will be about the various aspects of being deaf, how our hearing (or lack of it) differs from perfect hearing and also addresses the limitations

of being deaf. Most importantly, this episode will show others that while there are limitations, we can get past them. This ideology is for anyone who is going through any type of struggle or who has a disability.

This episode will be about some of the limitations I face because of my deafness and also the fears that I, and other deaf people may have about our disability.

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Topic 2

To all my hearing peeps out there, I want you to imagine if one day you woke up and you found out that you couldn't hear anything. At all. Imagine the feeling of being locked up in a soundproof room, and you can't even hear your own voice. Actor John Barrowman, you might know him as Captain Jack from the television series Doctor Who, did something like this by 'going deaf for a day'. Read his article in this episode description! He describes being deaf as being in a soundproof room as well.

Now back to the scenario, besides probably freaking out, there are some key things you might be missing out on as a deaf person. So you wake up not hearing anything...what's the one thing that might usually wake you up in the morning? I'll give you a hint, it's loud, it's annoying and it has the deceitful snooze button. Yep...you got it...it's your alarm.

So how does someone who is deaf know when to wake up? We can't hear any alarm. Now what? Some people might say...well you sleep with your hearing aid or cochlear on. That could be a solution, but it's definitely not comfortable, imagine sleeping with a pair of headphones on or something on your ear. It can be annoying. Also, if you move around a lot like me, you might wake up and notice that you lost your Cochlear in bed. Also, the hearing aids/Cochlear run on a battery life...it's best not to waste it or you would be running through batteries every day.

When I was younger, my parents waking me up at the same time every morning dealt with this problem. Now I'm 21...that's not cute anymore. So, there is this thing called a bed shaker. It's an alarm clock, but with a wire that has a disk attached to it. I put the disk under my sheets, usually below the pillow. Then I set my alarm. The next morning, the disk will vibrate repeatedly, shaking the whole bed until I hit the off button...effectively waking me up.

Another limitation for me is the telephone. Because I am profoundly deaf, which means I have the most severe level of hearing loss, I can't converse on the phone that easily, even with my Cochlear. The reason for this is because just hearing a person's voice doesn't always cut it for me; I need to see their lips to lip read as well.

Even so, I still use the phone on some days, especially when talking to my parents or close friends. The reason for that is because I've known my parents and my friends long

enough to be familiarized with their voice, I know how they sound out certain words, the way they speak, etc. If it's a person that I don't know that well, or haven't heard that often, speaking on the phone will be difficult because I'm not as 'familiar' with the way they speak. This is why at work, if the phone rings, I can't answer it, or I'll refer them to someone else who can, because 9 times out of 10...I won't understand the person on the other end.

I find the fact that I can't use the phone with ease so frustrating. It may seem like such a small thing...but think about how often you might use the phone. You can call up a friend, you can chat with a person you haven't met with yet, you can schedule appointments, and you can pick up the phone at work and conduct conference calls and so on. It always bugs me that I couldn't do that. Talking on the phone requires all of my concentration and even then...it doesn't mean I'm guaranteed to understand you on the other end. I hate the fact that I have to depend on someone to pick up certain calls or make appointments for me when I can't do it online. It makes me fear that the fact I can't pick up the phone might be a factor in me not getting a desired job in the future. I definitely won't be the greatest secretary...this leads me to certain fears people might have about being deaf.

SEGWAY: "Columns of Water" – Alexandre Navarro

Topic 3

Like I mentioned before, what if you woke up deaf. Put yourself back into this scenario and think about what you would fear the most about it?

I have several fears myself, and a lot of them line up with this article I found online at Buzzfeed. It's called "14 surprising confessions from people who are deaf". Check out this link in the description.

I won't be covering all 14, but I'll expand on a couple of them.

The first one is:

1. "I am deaf and the worst part is people making fun of the way I speak"

For those who don't understand what it means when they say, "the way I speak," they are referring to the 'deaf accent'. Most, if not all people who are deaf from an early age cannot hear their voices or use an aid to hear. The aid doesn't translate perfectly to what perfect hearing sounds like. Because of this, we hear differently, therefore we speak a little differently. We might speak the same language but have trouble with certain pronunciations or consonants. As you can hear, my voice doesn't sound 'right', that's because I have this deaf accent.

As a child, I went through speech therapy to improve the way I speak, so that when I pronounce certain words, they don't end up all jumbled. This helped a lot, even though I sometimes stumble on certain words when I speak too fast, especially when I'm excited about something. In addition to the speech therapy, I wanted so badly to make sure that

when I speak, I sounded 'normal', so I would often spend time in my room, practicing my speech by taking a book and reading it out loud to myself.

I took pride in being able to speak well, but when I got to high school that changed. I was in a group project for a class and I said something. This boy, right after I spoke, mimicked the way I spoke, and everyone laughed. I was humiliated, but instead of fighting back, I laughed along with them. This same boy and several others made fun of the way I spoke all throughout high school. Slowly, I started speaking less and less in social environments because I thought it was the only thing people would notice about me.

Even today, I don't like speaking out in front of crowds. Not because I'm shy, but more so if I'm the only one speaking, then people will notice that my voice "sounds weird" and I would become self-conscious about it. Now, I know that it's a stupid thing to worry about, it's just like having any other accent, it may sound strange to other people but I've learned that I shouldn't worry about something I have no control over. One of my friends told me, "you shouldn't worry about it, I don't notice it, to me that's just who you are, you're not defined by that, so chill out". And you know what, she's right. Just think about that next time you feel self conscious about something. It doesn't define you, as long as you don't let it. Another fear is this:

2. "My deafness makes me so self conscious, I am afraid of ending up alone because of it"

To put it bluntly, this one scares me just a little bit. Honestly, these days we strive for perfection in ourselves. There is this image put out there that if we look and act put together all the time, we are seen as attractive. Think about Instagram for example; the most attractive picture gets the most likes. Or tinder, the matchmaking app, for example, you swipe left or right based on physical appearance alone. If someone can rule someone out just because of something like their height, it's definitely possible someone will rule me out because of my deafness. I know that sometimes I'll have to ask my partner to repeat themselves, or that I can't talk on the phone that easily, or that they might have to talk on the phone for me, or that if we are in a bar or anyplace loud...I'm not going to be in my element because I can't hear as well.

I had a friend tell me once, "you know, you're cute and you have a nice personality and all, but it sucks that you're deaf, that's going to be really annoying for someone else to deal with"

Needless to say, we're not friends anymore. But what she said struck me a little too much. I started questioning myself, is my deafness a flaw? Is someone really going to rule me out as a partner because of that? What if I end up alone? You might say, that it's ridiculous, if someone does do that, then they aren't worth knowing or something along those lines.

It took me a while to learn this but I say that they wouldn't be worth it if they couldn't accept this part of me. It's a part of who I am, but it's ultimately not the defining aspect of me. To quote what somebody said in the article, **"I'm deaf. I hate the words "I'm so sorry", when I tell them I'm deaf. You didn't create me. Don't be sorry. This is who I am. And I am happy"**.

Well there you have it everyone, some of the limitations and fears of being a deaf person. Honestly, it might be frustrating at times, but if I had the chance to be hearing, I wouldn't take it. Being deaf opened my eyes to other struggles people might have in their lives, and gave me multiple perspectives to life. Next week, we'll be talking about lip-reading! If you have any concerns or questions or want to share your experiences, please comment below! Have a wonderful day and thanks for listening! Bye for now!

ENDING JINGLE: "Abracadabra" – Silent Partner