



**So you have a hearing loss...**

**oticon**  
PAEDIATRICS

So you have a hearing loss  
- make it part of who you are!





**A**s a teenager travelling towards adulthood, what preoccupies you the most? Finding your own identity may well top your list of priorities - and so will developing the skills necessary to ensure your future success and happiness.

Having a hearing loss can be an uphill struggle, but it doesn't have to prevent you from achieving your personal goals. With consistent use of hearing technology and enough hard work, you will be

able to reduce the impact it may have on your learning ability, school grades and your entire high school experience.

There's no denying that hearing loss is as much a part of your identity as the colour of your eyes or hair, but it's not the only thing that defines you. It's your personality, your style, your attitude, your interests and of course, the way you interact with others, that really distinguish you.



IF YOU WERE ABLE TO SEE ONLY TWO OUT OF EVERY FIVE WORDS....

# Learning will be easier and your grades will improve

If you were able to see only two out of every five words on a page, you'd have difficulty figuring out the story - and you might get it totally wrong.

Hearing aids can't give you normal hearing, but wearing them full-time can make all the difference between being lost in the woods without a map, and having a hand-held GPS. You still have to get to where you're going, but at least you have the right tools to make it!

Without your hearing aids you could misunderstand a teacher's question and give the wrong answer, which could be not only

annoying but embarrassing too. Any gaps in the word puzzle will cause you to struggle more than many of your classmates. Because the less information your brain gets, the less effectively you'll be able to process it.

Hearing aids (and an FM system) will let you hear and understand more, so learning becomes easier and your grades can improve. Another advantage is that you'll be able to hear your OWN voice better - and when you can hear what you're saying, your speech will be clearer.

Your hearing aids are the best tools to help you - along with your own individual efforts.



## **WEARING HEARING TECHNOLOGY IS THE HONEST WAY TO GO**

IF YOU DO, THE OTHER KIDS WILL UNDERSTAND YOU BETTER AND ACCEPT YOU MORE EASILY THAN IF YOU DON'T.

# Real friends won't care that you have a hearing loss!

**M**ost teens say that the best part about being in high school is the time spent with friends, chatting and having fun. But if you don't wear your hearing aids your ability to communicate will diminish. And you can lose out on those valuable and often lifelong friendships.

Taking your instruments off when you're in public isn't the solution either. Real friends will take you as you are - hearing loss, hearing aids and all.





# Finding your own style is what you're meant to do

**E**very teenager has something they don't like about themselves - it's part of finding out who you are and what you want to become. Developing your own personal style is what teenagers are meant to do.

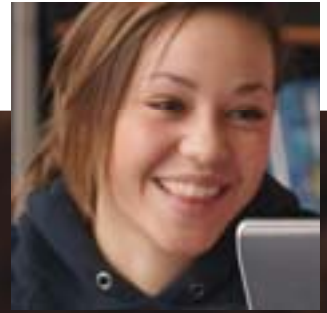
You may not want to wear hearing aids but there are plenty of designs to choose from. You can get small ones that are virtually invisible, or ones that blend in with your hair colour or skin tone. Or you can go for brightly coloured hearing aids, neon swirled earmoulds - even hearing aid decals or jewelry.

Basically, the more confident you feel with the technology you've chosen, the more respect and acceptance you will get.



**“I HATE HAVING CURLY HAIR”**

**“I DON'T WANT TO WEAR GLASSES”**



**“I WISH I WAS TALLER”**

**“IF ONLY I DIDN’T HAVE FRECKLES”**

# Why limit yourself?



The more you seem okay with who you are, the more you will be respected.



**P**eople who try to hide their hearing loss by not wearing aids end up earning an average of 50% less than those who do wear them\*. The choices you make in middle and high school really do set the stage for your future success. With hearing technology your grades will improve, you'll have more opportunities for further education, which in turn means better career prospects.

Just think about it: If your peers had the opportunity to use a special technology that could help them complete an education, get a job and boost their lifetime earnings by 50%, wouldn't they jump at it?

Sometimes parents don't understand how tough it is to have a hearing loss, especially when you're a teenager. Hearing technology is expensive and can be challenging to get repaired or replaced. And when they think about the costs and how vital the technology is for learning and your future, they can get very intense about wearing it.

Just remember that they only bug you because they want the very best for you!

\* Kochkin, S.; "The Impact of Untreated Hearing loss on Household Income." Better Hearing Institute, Alexandria VA. (August 2005).

# The more you seem okay with who you are, the more you will be respected

**A** sense of humour can be a lifesaver in all stages of life - and never more than when you're a teenager. Teens and young adults regularly tease one another, often as a sign of familiarity and friendship. Your reaction to teasing will reveal your strengths and vulnerabilities.

Everyone respects someone who can stand up for themselves. If someone asks "What are those things?" you have choices - you can either

mumble a shy response, provide a matter-of-fact reply ("High-tech ears of course - want to see them?") or say something funny to make people laugh.

Choose your own way of handling comments and questions - but remember, the more you seem okay with who you are, the more you'll be respected.





# Lindsey's Story

Lindsey Dolich



“TWEET. TWEET. “Stop! STOP!” Strong arms pull me back, legs still flailing for the ball secured in the goalie’s fetal position. Bewildered, annoyed that someone arrested the play of the game, I look around. The referee’s face is a mixture of consternation and mild amusement, the sympathy disguised in the creases of his kind eyes.

“Hey kid, the play’s over. What—are you trying to kill the goalie??”

I looked over to my father on the sidelines for interpretation. A wide grin, a hearty chuckle, a few claps of encouragement and the subtle shake of his head said everything I couldn’t hear: Great effort kiddo, but keep your head up next time ”

I never heard the whistle, nor the parents cheering ferociously from the wings, much less my fellow childlike voices of glee. I could only hear a great, indistinct cacophony of noise. The black and white checkered ball was all that mattered, and it was my job to get it in between two white posts. Simple? Not exactly.

Sure, I was embarrassed as a five-year old, beaming soccer player in

brand new kicks could be. Sure, I vaguely grasped the fact that if I had been able to hear the high-pitched chirp I might not have taken a few extra kicks to the ball (or to the goalie’s stomach). But I learned a valuable lesson: when everybody stops, you stop.

Over the years I fine-tuned this stop-and-go down to the half second, but every once in a while I pissed off some referees. One day, the word

clarity entered my aural vocabulary; I didn’t have to “eye-check” anymore. I could hear the whistle pierce through the obnoxious chatter of the female soccer-ese on the field. And I stopped dead in my tracks.

Small miracle what a few implant electrodes can do. Spring of 2002, I underwent surgery for a cochlear implant, and for one month, my world became quieter than ever. But come April, everything was abuzz-

the kind of horrible crackling that sputters ominously from a radio on its last leg. The noise was equivalent to a power saw against metal. Every day, for the next three months, I raged against the machine. In time, my auditory pathways were worn smooth, and the once unbearable frisson coalesced into something mildly pleasing.

It was my senior year, so naturally I wanted to finish my high school soccer season. My mother was wringing her hands on the sideline, her pleading voice echoing, “Just don’t head the ball for godssake Lindsey. I don’t care, duck if you have to.” I was giddy and nervous, and in the back of my head I knew there would come a moment where the ball would come whirling towards

that sweet spot - if I didn’t make the solid connection on the first try, I never would. Within 20 minutes into the first half, a blissfully soft ball

drifted towards me like an armed missile honing in on target. With a brain shuddering smack, a searing white wall of pain and a wave of



nausea dissolved quickly into relief. I was still standing, still hearing, and I sure as hell was still playing.

The omnipresent noise floating around me was fuel for my fire - the swish of my shorts, the thwack of laces kissing leather, the shouts from the sidelines, the drone of the grandstand. It was the gritty sound effects of sports that coloured the game in a synthetic light. “Representing Haverford College at forward, number 25, from Alameda, California—Lindsey Dolich!” The voice from our school’s loudspeaker sent a shiver of electric joy through my bones. But life has a funny way of switching the game on you: I found myself reminding teammates and coaches that I wasn’t exactly

“hearing”, instead of fighting stereotypes.

Even though remarkably, I could hear my coach’s shrill voice halfway across the field, aural cognizance was still elusive; I was perfectly satisfied to keep some noises relegated to the garbled background. Who really wants to hear a step-by-step instruction of how to pass the ball from point A to B, or the selfish screeches for BALL! BALL!, or even the nasty catcalling from opposing fans? All this “smog” was mere noise pollution to me, a profanity to the game. Ironically, I became more visual than ever with my implant, given that the expansive green grass called for “vision”—playmaking in a nutshell.





*One day, the word clarity entered my aural vocabulary; I didn't have to "eye-check" anymore.*

As fresh talent came in, and my tenure as a Haverford soccer player drew on, my auditory shortcomings became the "X" factor. Communication was at a premium on our team. Even if I couldn't hear others, I still had to share my voice on the field. Talk. More. Louder. When playing time became scarce at forward, I suggested the backline to Coach Was my natural position. She said no. She said no, because I couldn't "safely" perform as a defender with my hearing. So this was discrimination I thought. I played harder even though I had nothing to prove. It would be my coach left wondering, and the stigma of a little something called "close-mindedness".

Silence. No roar of the crowd, but thousands upon thousands of flickering hands waving. The dynamic sign of Deaf applause washes over me. In the final evolution of my sports career I travelled to Melbourne, Australia for the 2005 Deaflympics-except this was soccer like I had never played before. Blackout silent soccer. The kind of soccer that, scream all you want for the ball, you weren't getting anything. All my teammates were deaf, mostly deaf, and avid participants in the community. As the only non-signer, I was the outsider. A simple practis became the ultimate test of patience, an alternate reality called "Deaf time". With backs turned, heads down, it became near

impossible to get teammates to pay attention to each other, much less communicate. Ironically, it was probably the greatest challenge of my soccer career: playing with people like myself. And the catch—by

*I found myself reminding teammates and coaches that I wasn't exactly "hearing", instead of fighting stereotypes.*

Deaflympic sanction, no player was allowed to wear any assistive hearing devices during the game.

After all this time spent trying to hear the game of soccer, at least selectively, playing in my true skin

made me extremely uncomfortable. It just didn't feel right taking off my implant. But by the time we were playing for the gold medal in the championship game, I was liberated like an untethered kite.

I had finally learned to appreciate the pure visual poetry of sports.

And along the way, I got a chance to celebrate my own differences.

**Lindsey Dolich** graduated magna cum laude from Haverford College in Philadelphia with a B.A. and honours in English. During her junior year she studied for a semester in Melbourne, Australia. Now 23, Lindsey is a freelance writer for ESPN the Magazine in New York City. She was diagnosed with a bilateral profound hearing loss at the age of three and wore hearing aids up until the age of 18. She received a Cochlear Implant in the spring of 2002, and remains an enthusiastic advocate of the technology.

*Lindsey adds: "I continue to play soccer for the co-ed ESPN team, even though they are currently 0-22 ... NOT an exaggeration.... you would think a bunch of sportswriters would know how to play soccer. Talk about ironic!"*

# Nathan's Story

Nathan Walcker



“*First and foremost I feel as though it is necessary for me to share a few things about myself. My name is Nathan Walcker; I am twenty-one years young and am from Minnesota. Currently, I am a junior at Columbia University in New York City, majoring in Economics.*”

I enjoy doing what most any individual my age does, I play football for Columbia, enjoy spending time with my friends, exploring Manhattan's many boroughs and to the complete and utter shock to many, also enjoy writing poetry. In these regards I would consider myself to be normal; soaking up the bliss of youth before the real world comes knocking on my door.

However, there is one detail that distinguishes me from the rest of my peers and teammates; I am severely hearing impaired due to my con-

tracting H-Flu meningitis when I was an infant.

See, all of my life I have been wearing hearing aids. For me, it is completely normal to put them on in the morning as anyone would do with a pair of glasses, sneakers or a favorite shirt. But, like every stereotypical adolescent, I was teased at a young age due to the mysterious mechanical devices perched atop my ears. Luckily for me however, I was one of the larger students in elementary and middle school, so I could usually extinguish sneers



and jests with a mean look or two. This however, does not mean that I escaped from being teased entirely. I found this out the hard way as I progressed into high school. It was here that I noticed a different type of “good natured fun” amongst my fellow classmates. This of course was a newfound sensation for me, as I attended an all-male, military; Catholic, college prep academy, and I had been there since the 7th grade. For the most part, I had good relationships with most of the teachers, knew all of my fellow classmates and felt comfortable in my element at the academy.

My comfort level was taken for granted one day during my sophomore year. I remember like it was only yesterday. It was your normal autumn weather in the Midwest during October, slightly chilly and a perfect day for football. I had made the Varsity squad that year, and

was starting at left tackle to the complete and utter shock of many, including myself. Rounding up that day’s practise, all of my teammates and I were walking amongst one another towards the locker room, desperately trying to escape the dark abyss that was settling in the orange tainted sky behind us. After showering and tossing all of my football gear into my gym bag, I began exiting the locker room through the double doors that lead to the eternal freedom of the parking lot. It was at this exact moment when a fellow classmate of mine, who played on the B-squad football team, approached me with his hand over his mouth. At first, I wasn’t sure how to handle this situation. To be completely honest, I was unaware that he was speaking directly to me at first, as I often use my lip reading ability to offset my hearing impairment. After speaking in hushed whispers, with his hand



*“Be who you are and say what you feel, because those that mind don’t matter, and those that matter don’t mind.”*



obscuring his mouth, he eventually got the hint that I found his joke neither hilarious nor as entertaining as he had thought it would be. Opening up the doors to my jet black sedan, I quickly forgot the actions of my classmate and enjoyed my ride home amidst the acoustic solidarity of my favourite musicians. The night wore on as usual, book-ended by dinner and schoolwork, and I completely forgot about the events earlier that day. Just as soon as I had closed my eyes to go to sleep, it was time to wake up again and go to school. That morning I fell into my normal routine, munching on a bowl of Wheaties while watching Sportscentee at the kitchen table, my mother yelling at me because the volume is up too loud. At some point during my 45 minute commute to school, I started to think about the previous day and what my fellow classmate had said to me. To be frank, I thought noth-

ing of the incident that had taken place just the day before, I remember thinking to myself that no one will find out about what happened, but just as I was leaving my locker to narrowly escape the wrath of the Dean of Students, I was proven wrong about my previous inclinations.

It was as if I was in a movie, and the horrible flashback was threatening my very existence. Again, a fellow classmate of mine walked up to me, saying hello in a hushed whisper while his ridiculously large hand covered the majority of his face. Surrounded by a group of my peers, I calmly replied “What? I didn’t hear you,” and was met with the roaring sound of laughter throughout the narrow hallways. From that point on, it was if the whole school had caught on to the joke. It spread like wild fire, and as the day unwillingly wore on I continued to take it. Just

before school was about to be let out for the day, I had yet another student approach me and just as he was motioning to place his hand over his mouth, he could sense my obvious anger and frustration. He slowly lowered his hand as if noth-

*“Life is too short to beat yourself up over what others think of you; if you do, your glass will always be half empty”.*

ing had happened; it was almost as if he was trying to play the whole thing off like a cough. But then again, it really didn't matter how he attempted to cover it up, his intentions were still there. I was sick of having to deal with being different, more than anything else in the world I just wanted to feel normal, and be one of the guys.

That day, I remember coming home from football practise and marching straight up to my room. My mother, in her infamous motherly instinct, could sense that something was wrong and sought me out to speak about my day - perhaps in an at-

tempt to gain some insight into my fluctuation in mood. But I did not dare tell her a single thing. In fact, I lied straight to her face and told her that my shoulder hurt from playing football that afternoon. Seeing through my lie, she ceased to question me further and let me be by myself. The next day, I was obviously hesitant to return back to school. But for some reason or another,

the events from the prior day were not duplicated. I went from class to class without a single incident parallel to the previous day and deduced that word had gotten out about my reaction. At 2:45 the bell sounded and I was off to football practise for the night. Days turned into weeks, and weeks into months until finally I forgot about the whole incident. One may say that I pushed it to the back of my mind because I was ashamed, and to be quite honest, I was. I was ashamed of not standing up for myself. I was ashamed of having to wear hearing aids and more than anything, I was ashamed of being different. It was not until later that winter that I found a new direction in my life at the hands of one of my best friends, my brother. He and I were attending a basketball game at his university

and everyone was cheering loudly amongst one another during a heated battle with another rival college. I, on the other hand, was content with eating my buttery popcorn, sipping my favourite soda, and parking my butt on the wooden bleachers where I felt it belonged. My brother, being the outgoing guy he is, was cheering so loudly that his face was beginning to foster a reddish tint and upon seeing my sheer lack of enthusiasm, raised his voice saying, "Come on buddy! Cheer! Who cares what other people think?" Truth be told, I did care what other people thought about me, and it was this rationale that made me feel a sense of shame from something that I could never change. After reflecting on the words of my brother, I relentlessly followed his lead in cheering on the basketball squad victory. We

proceeded to spend the rest of the game exchanging high fives and enjoying our time together.

I left that musky gym with a newfound sense of direction in my life. Perception is overrated; the only one whose view really counts is the one that stares back at you in the mirror every morning when you wake up. It is here that I find implications from a favorite quote of mine by Dr. Seuss that reads "Be who you are and say what you feel, because those that mind don't matter, and those that matter don't mind". Life is too short to beat yourself up over what others think of you; if you do, your glass will always be half empty.

***Nathan Walcker** was born in Nebraska, but has lived in Minnesota for the majority of his life. He lost his father to ALS when he was five years old, so he and his older brother Ben (now studying as a teacher) were raised by their mother. Besides being involved in football, Nathan is a published poet, and enjoys spending his free time writing and lifting weights, which he admits is "a paradox".*



Teenagers with hearing loss want to enjoy the same lifestyle and opportunities as their friends. Recognising that it takes more than amplification to achieve this, we give their needs for discretion, communication and entertainment extra attention when developing new hearing solutions.