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This week is **Deaf Awareness Week**. It's a time for raising awareness and to help to highlight the impact on those who have hearing loss.

Our very own Kiran Daffu suffers from deafness, and today she offers us all an insight into her world.

When one has a disability, where do you start to explain what it is like and how it affects day-to-day life...

Both of my parents had some degree of deafness towards their senior years, but neither of them wore hearing aids, possibly more due to them having problems with the English language so not being able to explain exactly what they were experiencing. This was something my siblings and I could never appreciate, until I was diagnosed with it myself.

Being deaf or hard of hearing can mean different things to people. People can suffer from deafness at many levels, from mild to severe, and there are various ways to describe the types of hearing loss. I have moderate hearing which means I need to wear hearing aids.

Those who know me are probably thinking 'What?' For a long time I was reluctant to seek help and would make every effort to avoid even discussing my hearing impairment. However, I began missing out on conversations with friends and family, and would sometimes just sit there and smile because it was simpler to do that, than to say something wrong. Yes – I have to admit, loss of hearing can be a lonely place when everyone is having a conversation and you have no idea what is being discussed. The volume on the TV was hitting an all-time LOUD and many arguments over "you need to do something about it!" took place.

In my role as a Credit Controller, so much of my time is spent on the phone - but how was I supposed to do that if I couldn't hear people properly? My manager Karen Willis would often share instructions that would be important to my job, but she had to call me over especially to make sure I had understood what was being said. All because of my poor hearing, yet still I never said anything. Karen picked up on my hearing loss on many occasions and knew that something was wrong. She encouraged me to acknowledge my impairment and take gradual steps, driving me to toward getting some help. At times we would laugh together about the situation, which helped me feel that it was ok talk about it.

Finally, in November last year I started wearing hearing aids, and also got a 'special friend' called 'Roger Pen' to help with my hearing. The pen contains a wireless microphone, offers the best speech understanding in noise and over distance, and even has Bluetooth connectivity. I also have special head-sets that cut out unwanted noise and enable me to do my job with great ease. And now I sit where I can see people approaching me, so that I can see their faces. My friends and colleagues now know I am not ignoring them when they call out to me, so they just tap me if I don't respond.

The world of hearing is infinitely better for me now, for which I am eternally grateful. Deafness for me is no longer a lonely place.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story.

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