

Encouragement for Real Life Podcast

256 What Most People Don't Know About Me

[00:00:00] Welcome to the Encouragement for Real Life podcast. I'm Julie Lefebure, your host. Life is remarkable, sometimes raw, and always real. And some days we could use a little extra encouragement for our real lives. Here, you'll find that. Along with personal life-impacting stories, helpful life hacks, timely inspiration, biblical insight, and a fresh perspective.

The Encouragement for Real Life podcast equips you to be a light in this world and to shine bright wherever God has you. I'm glad you're here today.

There's something about me that most people don't know, and that is that I wear hearing aids. And the interesting thing is, for years, I did not realize how much my hearing loss was affecting my everyday life. I thought I was doing okay.

[00:01:00] I thought I was hearing enough, and I thought I had, you know, just simply learned to adapt to my hearing loss.

But I can see now that I was missing more than I realized. And today, I wanna tell you that story. It's an interesting one, and it's a good one. So let's get into it.

Well, welcome back to the podcast. As you know, I am Julie, and I am so happy that you are joining me here today. We are wrapping up our series, The Stories I Don't Always Tell, and this may be the most personal story that I've shared this month. Now, I've shared a lot of personal things this month, and, I was kind of nervous in sharing those things, but I, I wanted [00:02:00] to because I believe that, you know, God takes us through things, and we learn things through Him, and then He wants us to share our experiences to encourage and help others.

And so that was part of the reason for this, uh, series this month. But this story that I'm gonna share today, it's not ... I guess I wouldn't say it's my... It's not my hardest story, and it's not the most dramatic story, but it's a part of my life that most people just don't know. And yeah, it's that I wear hearing aids.

And with longer hair, you can't tell. If I had really short hair, you'd probably be able to tell a little bit easier. But, um, for a long time, I hid that I wore hearing aids. I, um, was kind of embarrassed by them. Kind of like when you get glasses for the first time and you're like, "Oh, I just don't really wanna wear these. I feel like I- I'm old because I can't see." And I was kinda going through that with my hearing aids. I feel like I'm old because I [00:03:00] have hearing aids. Uh, but now I'm not so, uh, conscientious about them because I realize what a tool they are. And, you know, as I wear my glasses for reading sometimes, and I wear them for my podcast. I wear them a lot. Um, they're just a tool to help me in my everyday life as my hearing aids are. But they're more than that, and we're gonna talk about that.

But for a long time, before I got hearing aids, I didn't realize how much energy I was spending on just simply compensating for what I couldn't hear. I just really had no idea. I knew that I had hearing loss, but as the years accumulated, the signs grew bigger. I started to miss more pieces of conversations, and I would ask people to repeat themselves more often. And I would catch myself smiling and nodding and hoping that what I heard was correct, 'cause I didn't wanna keep asking someone, "What did you say? What was that?" [00:04:00]

I would fill in the blanks when I wasn't completely sure what someone said, and sometimes I didn't fill them in correctly. And because it got worse gradually, I mean, it ... I'm gonna talk about that. It was an instant, but it got worse gradually, it, it felt normal to me. Until one day I realized it wasn't.

Now, I understand that some people lose hearing gradually, but not me. Mine, my first initial time of hearing loss was an, it's a, it was an instant thing, an instant event. And I'll, I'll tell you what happened. We were, um, we were rehearsing. I was in a band, a church band, back in the '90s, early '90s, and we were rehearsing, and, uh, something happened that made the monitor in front of me squeal. And instantly, I [00:05:00] had this ringing in my ear, and I knew that I had hearing loss. Right then, it was just like a snap of a finger, and it was painful. That, that sound, that squeal was so painful And I thought, "Oh no, what did I do?" I didn't really do it, but, you know, what, what happened? And I thought, well, maybe the hearing would come back a little bit better, and maybe the, the ringing would stop, 'cause I had instant ringing. And, uh, the ringing never stopped, and the hearing really never came back.

I found out later that that, that ringing was a sign of hearing loss, and it was my brain overcompensating trying to get those tones back and, and to replace those tones. And, uh, I still have that ringing today It's called tinnitus or tinnitus, and I've heard it, heard it, um, pronounced both ways.

But so I have had this for years, since the [00:06:00] 1990s. I was, I was in my 30s. And , uh... over the years, my hearing did get worse, just a little bit worse, more gradual. There are certain voice tones, voice tones that I couldn't hear. I couldn't say that word. Um, voice tones that , I couldn't hear.

And I remember one time being in the car with my son and his friend, and we were driving to Indianapolis to a, a Colts football game. And Zach's friend was talking, and I, I couldn't even hear him. Uh, he, he has this tone of I just really have a hard time hearing him.

So yeah, and sometimes I couldn't hear my grandsons. Um... just they had that certain tone that I just couldn't hear well.

Um, I was missing important details in conversations, and I remember, uh, I, I would have to strategically place myself in, in groups. Like I-- If it would have to be, uh-- Or like at dinner. If I was at dinner with a, a bunch of people, I would have [00:07:00] to strategically sit in the middle. Because if I sat at the end, I wouldn't hear anyone's conversation. I would be left out of the conversation as if I was sitting there by myself.

I would have to strategically place myself, like if I was at a, a conference or a, um, you know, even at church. I would have to strategically place myself where the, the speaker would be pointed at me so I could hear it well, so I could hear the speaker well.

I had to compensate constantly. Everywhere I went, I w- I, I would just like, "Okay, where do I need to sit so I can hear? Where do I need to be so I can hear?" I would ask people, like I said, to repeat themselves, and, and I would pretend that I heard when I really didn't hear, and I was you know, hoping my nod was appropriate

Um, and I would, I would also guess at what other people said, and I... it just became increasingly exhausting to try to listen, [00:08:00] not realizing that this mental strain that I was experiencing was just so much. I had no idea. Because it, it just was a part of my life. My hearing loss became something that I adapted to without even realizing it. It was just my life. It was just normal for me. But normal isn't always good, is it? It's not. We're gonna talk about that.

But two years ago, this very month, my friend Patty, she lives in Maryland, she came back to visit family. And when she does come back, um, she came back for like a week or 10 days with her family to visit, um, her her family that live here 'cause she grew up here. We were, uh, childhood friends and, uh, graduated

together from high school, and she's been a guest on my podcast here. I think it was a year ago she was a guest on my podcast. And when she comes back, we, we go for walks in the morning because her [00:09:00] family lives close. And so when we were out walking one time that two years ago, um, I saw that she had hearing aids.

I'm like, "What?" I was kind of surprised. "Patty, you have hearing aids." And she said, "Yeah." And she started to share why she got them, and she started to give me some details, details about hearing aids that I didn't know and, uh, hearing loss that I didn't know. Like the cognitive decline that can come with it and how, um, the hearing aid technology today is just, uh, outstanding. And also how the mental energy that it takes, that it requires, it required her without having the hearing aids, that she just... it was a lot for her to just mentally. It, it's just, it's a drain when we have to constantly have to, to pay attention to what we're, what we're listening to and [00:10:00] trying to hear. She normalized hearing aids for me on that morning walk. And I saw all of a sudden could see myself like, "Well, maybe this is something I need to look into."

So after that walk that day, I came down here in my office, and I got on my computer, -- my laptop, and I did some research of, of hearing loss and, um, hearing aids. And oh my goodness, did I find a rabbit hole of just, um, studies and research about hearing loss and the increases, the, the increased chances for cognitive decline. And how hearing loss, um, increases our chances for dementia and brain, um, atrophy, and that, that, , hearing loss can shrink our brains. Oh my goodness. Um, I learned about how isolation and loneliness... Well, I knew that. I knew how hearing loss could affect, uh, the feeling of [00:11:00] isolation and loneliness 'cause I lived it. Especially going out to dinner or lunch with friends sitting at a big table. Like I said, if I was at the end of the table, I might as well not have been there because I couldn't hear much.

Uh, how it, uh, can increase depression and anxiety and even balance issues. And I was experiencing that too. I just didn't know that it was all connected to my hearing. So that very afternoon, I called. I just, I prayed, "God, if I'm supposed to do this, open the door, and if I'm not, then please shut it." That was on a Tuesday. I called that afternoon to a place nearby, and it was a, um, a place that, uh, would address my tinnitus too. And I got an appointment for that Friday, that Friday afternoon. And my husband went with me. And I was nervous, and I was excited all at the same time. They did a, um, hearing test, and I had significant hearing [00:12:00] loss. It wasn't just mild hearing loss that I had been telling myself for years. It was significant. That was his words. "Significant hearing loss" , in my left ear, which I knew was worse than my

right. And they also did a cognitive test, which I became really nervous about. Because I thought, "Cognitively, am I doing okay?"

Well, that cognitive test really encouraged me because I scored very high, and he actually said, "You have scored higher than anyone else I've ever tested here," which made me feel really good. But I knew that I wanted to keep it that way. I wanted to keep my cognitive score high. And so I knew that hearing aids was going to probably be my solution.

And so he put the hearing aids in just to try it for a minute, and I, for the first time, could not believe what I could hear. I could hear [00:13:00] things that... like the air conditioning kicking on in the, in the room. I could hear little squeaks in chairs. I could hear things that everything was just-- It felt like a whole new world.

You know, have you seen those videos, uh, on social media where the little baby, um, um, that they do-- they put glasses on him for the first time, and he sees his mom, and he just lights up? Have you seen those? Or they hear-- they do s- you know, something with the hearing, and, um, he hears his mother's voice for the first time, and his face just lights up.

That's the way I felt. I felt like, "Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness, this is what this really sounds like?" 'Cause it had been years since I've heard some things, you know, heard these types of noises. And I was, I was amazed.

And then when Bill talked for the first time in that room, I, I'm like, "Whoa. You need to talk a little softer." Because here he has had to raise his voice all of these years of our [00:14:00] marriage so I could hear him, and, uh, he didn't have to anymore. So I walked out that day with hearing aids in hand, and I never looked back.

You know, I got home, and I remember the sounds that I could hear, like walking in the grass. Oh, my goodness. How walking in the grass sounded with shoes on or without shoes. It sounded amazing. And I-- Then I could also hear my knee, how my knee cracks when I go up and down steps. Couldn't hear that before. Um, my own breathing. And I could hear, hear my, my husband better. And at dinners out, I no longer had to sit at the end of the table. I could sit... or uh sit in the - middle of the table. I could sit at the end and still hear.

And my grandsons talking, I could hear what they say even better. I don't have to keep asking them, "What was that? What'd you say?" And I could hear at church and big places like that. I was no longer missing the [00:15:00]

conversations that I missed before, and I didn't feel like I continue to have to say, "What was that? Tell me again." And I just felt that my mental load was lessened because I didn't have to work so hard at hearing. I felt like a new person. I felt like I had a new lease on life.

But you know, I think sometimes you and I adapt to things so gradually that we don't even realize how much that they're affecting us, like I did with my hearing loss.

But I think the bigger picture beyond my hearing aids was addressing what I had adapted to. And I'm finding that these hearing aids didn't just fix my hearing, but they helped me with my presence. And they, they helped me with getting some peace back and [00:16:00] connection with people, and awareness of my, of my life and what I've, what I've adapted to, and some relief. How I could now slow down and maybe have the confidence too to be able to know that I'm hearing people right, I'm hearing what they're saying. These hearing aids completely changed my life.

But you know, for years I prayed for God to heal my hearing. I really did. I would pray. Um, my journals, I know have it in there. Almost every day I would pray, "Lord, please heal my hearing." I'd ask Him over and over and over again. And I know I can be totally honest with you. I expected that my hearing, - that my healing for my hearing would look a certain way. That it would... One day I would wake up and I would be able to hear. I expected [00:17:00] Him to restore what had been lost because I know God can do that, and I believe He can.

But that isn't what happened. Instead, God provided hearing aids. And for a long time, I don't know that I viewed that as healing. I guess I viewed it as assistance or a tool or a workaround, a workaround my problem.-- They were also, yeah, just something that would help me manage this, this problem that I had.

But as I've reflected on it, I've started to wonder if perhaps God has answered my prayer differently than I expected. You know, maybe God's healing has come through hearing aids. And now I'm thanking Him. Thanking Him for His healing in my life, even if it may look different than I expected. [00:18:00] Healing through hearing aids.

Now, the cool thing is, too, that this, this place, the, the hearing place that I went to, they do address tinnitus. And so-- Or tinnitus, whatever you wanna call it. So my hearing aids have this, uh, technology that, uh, it's like therapy for my ears. It's retraining my brain to hear, uh, beach waves instead of the ringing. And so

when I'm quiet here in my office or when it's not in loud places, but when I'm quiet, I can hear a constant shoreline beach waves in my ears. And that is so, so relaxing to me, and I'm excited to see what it's gonna do as it continues to retrain my brain. And the, the, the ti-tinnitus, the ti-tinnitus is so much less than it used to be. So I'm also thanking God for [00:19:00] that.

I will link, if you're local to me, I will link the place where I, um, went to for my, where I go for my hearing aids, where I go for, um, to be seen to have help with that. I will link that place in the show notes. And if you mention me, I would appreciate that when you go in. Because I really like to send people there, and they're a great group of people to work with.

But back to the story. I wanna... I always like to find a scripture and I, you know, to kinda go with what I'm talking about and, and, or a scripture that will help me, that has encouraged me. And the, the one that has really encouraged me through my hearing, through this process, has been Mark chapter 7 verse 37.

And in the New Living Translation, it says, "They were completely amazed and said again and again, 'Everything He does is wonderful. He even makes the deaf to hear and gives speech to those who speak.'" Isn't that amazing? [00:20:00] Yes. I'm gonna repeat that again because it's so good.

"Everything He does is wonderful. He even makes the deaf to hear, and He gives speech to those who cannot speak."

You know, God is so good. And He, uh, uh, He's talking about Jesus in this. And, and Jesus can, you know, He's got this healing power we see in, in example after example in the Bible of how He healed others. And He's not done healing others. He still heals people today. We're gonna cling to that healing. So if you are looking for healing today, continue to cling to Jesus for your healing.

But I know I get on , side notes, but returning to this, could you be adapting to something without even realizing it? That it's affecting your life more than you really understand. Could that be possible?

Have you adapted to exhaustion? That you're [00:21:00] just constantly exhausted and you just realize, okay, you just think this is my life now? Or the pressure of life, maybe you've adapted to unhealthy patterns. Or emotional numbness. You just feel like you're numb and going through the motions. Have you adapted to a rushing mentality? That you rush everywhere you go? Or anxiety? Have you adapted to anxiety? Have you adapted to just relationships to be, you know, that's just the way they are? Or maybe you've adapted to survival

mode. You're just getting through your days. That's all. You're not truly living. You just feel like you're just surviving.

What have you adapted to? What have you convinced yourself that this is normal? What are you holding onto that nobody knows about, but it is so exhausting to you?[00:22:00]

This was me. I was holding on, adapting to, just surviving my hearing, my lack of hearing. Until God used my friend Patty to show me that there was something else. That He was gonna use something else to bring healing and wholeness in my life.

You know, we don't realize how much something is affecting us until we finally see it. And then when we address it. Yeah, that's when, that's when we see. That's like, oh my goodness, our eyes become opened.

You know, even though my hearing aids changed my life, 'cause they did, I believe this story is more than just about hearing aids. It's about awareness. Becoming aware, aware of what we don't already see. It, it's about recognizing something that I had adapted to for so long because it just felt normal. And [00:23:00] like I said earlier, normal isn't always good. What's normal in our lives may not be God's best for us, but we've adapted to it.

And I wonder, you know, is there something in your life that's become normal, too?

Maybe it is those things like rushing and maybe it's constantly feeling behind. Maybe it's negative self-talk. Or maybe it's just the pressure that you were never meant to hold on to. Maybe it's simply just settling for less peace and joy and less freedom than God desires for you to have. He, He wants His best for you and for me.

And sometimes we adapt so gradually that we just don't even know. We don't even realize that something is affecting us until we finally stop and pay attention

And if, if you're feeling that [00:24:00] there is something, there's something but you don't know what it is, pray about it. Ask God. He's gonna show you what it is. - You know, I was praying every day for my hearing. I was praying for Him to heal me. And I had, again, I had in my mind what that was gonna look like. But God might be using something else in your life too to say, "Hey, I have something better for you." He'll show you. Just ask Him.

And one of the things I've learned is that awareness is often the first step toward us making a change. I would never have become a-- Well, I guess I shouldn't say that. I really don't know if I would've become aware of it without Patty, without her presence, without her saying, "Hey, there's a, there's a better way." Because we can't address what we don't recognize. We can't heal what we, we don't acknowledge.

You know, and, and, uh, we sometimes... You know, God just opens our eyes to something that we've been living with for [00:25:00] years to give us something better. Isn't that like Him, though? He gives us more peace and more freedom and more presence and more of the abundant life that Jesus came to give us. And that's it. That's God's best, the abundant life that Jesus came to give us.

And even if we do have hearing loss, that doesn't mean we're not living an abundant life. But maybe God has something else for us in that. Or maybe, like I said, your situation is different. You don't have hearing loss. Your hearing is great, and I'm so happy if that is the case. Abundant life is always found in Jesus, and He's gonna help us through our tough and trying circumstances. I'm so grateful He does that.

And you know, this is one of the reasons why I enjoy mentoring women so much, is that I guess when I talk to women, they aren't, they aren't often looking for someone to fix their lives, right? [00:26:00] We as women, we're looking for someone to help us slow down long enough to see what's really going on beneath the surface, to notice patterns, to process what's, what's weighing us down. To connect with truly what and who matters most, and to move forward with, with peace and purpose and intentionality. If this sounds like you, well, I would love to walk alongside of you through my Abundant Life Mentoring. You can schedule a free 20-minute connection call to see if Abundant Life Mentoring is for you. I'll leave the link in the show notes.

And I'm also excited to share that I'm exploring a new group, new group mentoring opportunity for women who, who just are looking for ongoing encouragement, maybe some community, and some support as they pursue the abundant [00:27:00] life that Jesus came to give them. And right now, I'm gathering an interest list, and I'd love for you to add your name if this sounds like something that you would be interested in. And maybe you just wanna learn more about it. You're not committing to anything, but you just wanna learn more. You would get all the details first and find out when enrollment is open, when it's ready. You'll find, uh, information on that also in the show notes.

I encourage you to today also, if you just found some hope in this, in this, this conversation and in this episode, I invite you to just share it. Maybe share it with someone who needs to hear this, maybe someone on social media. Or I invite you to subscribe or leave a review. That way, um, this message gets out to more people, more women who, who just need some hope and encouragement in their lives.

Friend, I don't want you to be afraid to, to [00:28:00] pay attention to the things that you've learned to live with. Not that you're afraid. I wouldn't even say that word. I would just say I don't want you to have to live with the things that you've just adapted to if that's not God's best for your life. Sometimes the very thing that you and I accept as normal is the thing that God wants to bring freedom to next.

I am praying for you today. I am praying that God will just show you what that is, that He will encourage you in it. I'm praying for you today. And I'm really glad that you, you just were here to hear my story. And if you ever wanna see my hearing aids, I'll be glad to show you. They're nothing fancy, but boy, what a difference they've made in my life. I'm so glad, so glad that God made me aware of what I was adapting to in my life. And He's gonna do the same for you, too.

I invite you back next Tuesday [00:29:00] for our monthly guest episode. It's, uh, a great conversation that you are going to find some timely hope and encouragement and strength for your real life and for your faith. So I invite you back here next week, and I can't wait to see you then.

But thank you again for joining me here in this series. I pray that it has blessed you and encouraged you and increased your faith in Jesus. And I'll see you soon. God bless you.

Thank you so much for joining me here today. You can find more at julielefebure.com. And until next time, stay encouraged.