

Try

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Do you have any dreams or goals? I have a dream. It is about using words and music to inspire people. I will now tell you how I came to that conclusion. I have been deaf since I was 3 years old. At that time I was having a shower when suddenly I couldn't hear anything in my left ear. My mum brought me to the doctor but at that time, they didn't know the cause. Even with a hearing aid I could not hear in my left ear. My right ear was OK, so I could hear if people spoke in a loud voice. I had many tests in many hospitals to but it wasn't until I was about six years old that the cause of my deafness was discovered. The cause was the mumps virus.

When I was in elementary school, I was bullied. When my classmates called me, "Hi Kiyoka, come here!" I didn't hear them. They thought I was ignoring them and called me names. Even people I thought were my friends, said bad things about me. I had to sit at the front of the class but even then sometimes I couldn't hear the teacher. As an elementary school student, I was bitter, frustrated, and could not find a solution. I blamed my parents. And many times I blamed myself.

During Junior High School and High School the bullying disappeared and I met some understanding friends. But I still found it difficult to hear the teachers. Even now I can find it hard to hear the teachers. You see, I don't have a hearing aid – they don't work in my case – and I can't have an operation either. But when I am talking face to face with someone, it is easier to understand. For one thing, I can try to read their lips – I can watch their mouth. But that was before Corona virus. Now everyone is wearing masks so I can't see their lips moving! So that is hard.

One day, **when I was in Junior High School**, while browsing social media, I saw a post about a woman contestant on the TV program – America’s got talent – you know it’s a program where ordinary people audition to become singers and musicians. Her name was Mandy Harvey and when I looked carefully at her story, I found out that she had been deaf in both ears from when she was 18. And although it caused her to give up singing for a time, she continued to play music, relying on muscle sensation and looking at a tuning machine. When she sang, she felt the rhythm of the bass and piano through her feet, instead of hearing the sound. I could not stop crying when I heard her life story. It was because it felt somewhat like mine. But I felt she was many times stronger than I was. I have always believed that I am the unhappiest person in the world and have missed many opportunities. If I wasn’t deaf I could have expressed myself much more clearly over the years.

I also love to sing very much. And when I was a little girl, I dreamed of becoming a singer but I thought it’s impossible. But seeing the way Mandy lived her life, I knew I had to be stronger and more positive. After she appeared on America’s Got Talent, Mandy became a professional singer. One of her songs included the phrase "There is on one for me to blame ‘cause I know the only thing in my way." Inspired by these words, I wanted to live a life that is uniquely mine, joyfully and beautifully. And like her, I want to cheer up those who were suffering and having a hard time. Words and music have the power to move people's hearts. I trust that my speech has reached some of you. Thank you for listening.