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ENGL 1121-28

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### Am I Rude or Am I Slow-witted?

The thing about hearing loss is that no one can see it. Most people are so impatient: they just assume that the person with hearing loss is being rude or slow-witted, most of the time the persona that you are trying to talk to cannot hear what you are trying to say to them.

Growing up my peers always labeled me as the “nicest friend anyone could have” until one day, my mom came and picked me up early from kindergarten, I had no idea why all she simply told me was that we were going to the doctor. I was a very smart kid I knew the streets and directions to the doctor’s office, and I realized we weren’t going to the doctor when she kept driving past the main street of the doctors. I was looking around outside the car window when I noticed a bunch of tall buildings with a lot of windows. One building stood out to me; it was taller than all the other buildings surrounding it, I remember it had a bunch of colorful squares all around the building. We pulled into the parking lot and my mom told me that we had to go now, or we would be late, my mom was already inside the place. Walking into this building holding my mom’s hand startled my small 7-year-old body. Many adults smiled and greeted us, and we walked upstairs, once we reached the top floor immediately, my mom pulled me to the front desk to sign papers and check us in for a quick visit or so I thought. 2 hours later we were still sitting in the waiting room for my name to be called, after a long wait a nurse called out the name “Madisyn” My mom and I jumped up as if we just won the lottery, they put us in an average patient room this lady was asking my mom questions with words I did not understand yet, the

nurse left the room with the door closing behind her, I looked up at my mom and she looked back at me, she had a worried look on her face, I didn't understand why. 20 minutes go by, and a doctor opens the door and leads us to a room where it had a huge soundproof box inside of the empty spacious room. I was a bit worried when I saw this huge box that looked like a padded cell used for the mentally insane, we sat down in chairs outside of the box, and the doctor asked my mom more questions, one caught my ear, "How does Madisyn do in the classroom?", All of my focus was on the doctor trying to figure out exactly what they were talking about, eventually the doctor turned to me and said, "Okay Madisyn, we are going to have you go into that box, I know it looks scary, but we are just going to run a couple of tests on your hearing and reading", WHAT?! What is wrong with my hearing, I wondered. I was sitting in a chair facing away from the window so I could not see my mom, The doctor was speaking through a microphone and explained the directions to me, "If you hear a beep press the button on the white remote in your right hand" Hmm Pretty simple, this specific test took about 20 minutes to do. The look on my mom's face was concerned, eventually, the door opened, and I was able to step out of the soundproof box. The doctor told us they needed to do more tests but did not tell us it would take weeks for the results to come back. So, I did not go to school for about 2 more weeks. When we went back to the doctor about 2 weeks later, they put a blue liquid in my ear that eventually hardened when dried Doctor called it a "fitting". I found out I scored so low on my tests that I am now being fitted for hearing aids. I honestly did not know how to feel, I feared what others would think of me.

After a long 3-4 weeks of Testing and fittings, it was finally Monday the day I would head back to school, I was nervous about going back, thinking about what I would have missed. would kids ask me where I was? My nerves were taking over my body at this point. I decided to

wear my hair down for the day to not draw attention to my ears, I personally thought it was embarrassing that I had hearing aids. One day in the fall semester we got assigned seats in the classroom and this one girl was trying to get my attention but for some reason, I did not notice. My chair suddenly jerked forward, and I looked over at her “What?” I spoke. “Wow so rude.” I was labeled rude until summer hit, others asked me if I was hot because I had my hair down in 85-degree weather, and I always told them I was fine.

Now, I thought I had fooled my peers until my mom suggested I put my hair up, she exclaimed the kids would love my hearing aids, and I should embrace them. We fought back and forth for about an hour or so, I did not win this battle. So, I chose to wear my hair in a bun. Walking into the kindergarten classroom I had a bunch of eyes on me, many were shocked by the sight of my hearing aids, which answered their question as to why I was being “rude” all this time. Others were pointing at my ears and laughing, all throughout kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade I was looked down on for having hearing aids, nobody wanted to be my friend, so my mom suggested we change schools and that is what we did.

Everything was going great, nobody suspected anything after I changed schools. It was 4<sup>th</sup> grade beginning of the year, 2<sup>nd</sup> week of the trimester. I was in Mr. Matlashewski’s class, in elementary school we had what was called a 4-Block period meaning we would have set teachers for each class that prepared us for 5<sup>th</sup> grade. A week ago, Mr. M told us 4<sup>th</sup> graders the class expectations for science and one of them was, if we had hair longer than our shoulders, we would have to wear it in a ponytail or bun. As soon as I heard that my heart dropped. I was immediately thinking, will kids make fun of me again? Is it mandatory to wear my hair up for science? I thought to myself, I’m not going to listen to his rule and see how long I could go. Every class period I purposely left my ponytail or whatever I had that day to put up my hair in

my locker so I would not have to deal with the rule. Eventually, this brought up multiple warnings for not following directions. Day after day I would get warning after warning, but I was not really frightened about the punishments. That Friday, Mr. M put me on the spot and asked why I didn't have my hair up and I gave him a look of "Do I have to say this out loud." Somehow, he got what my facial expression was saying and explained to the class "Everyone grab the tools needed for the experiment at the front of the classroom." He then looked at me and gave me a look of let us go talk in the hall. Honestly, I was a bit nervous to tell my 4th-grade teacher about my hearing aids. He genuinely asked me why I never wear my hair up for class, I took an extended breath and sighed, lifting my hair to show my hearing aids. He reacted in an unexpected way, A friendly grin appeared on his face. Then, he asked for my permission to tell the class. I was nervous about the reactions, but I told him he could. We both walked back into the classroom, and I took a seat as he walked to the front. Kids were trying to get my attention, but I never seemed to notice until they tapped me on the shoulder, and I turned around "What?", "Wow, are you dumb? Did you hear anything of what I just said?", I shook my head no. Mr. M announced to the class, "All right before we begin, I need to share something. Madisyn and I had a talk in the hallway, raise your hand if you currently wear or had glasses." Almost everyone but a couple of kids raised their hands. I was truly in shock. He continued "Now people need glasses to see right." our classmate Madisyn needs hearing aids to hear. He glanced at me; I slightly raised my hair to show my hearing aids. Many exclaimed "Wow those are so cool" which made me feel better, but I was focused on the one classmate who called me dumb. She had a sorrowful look on her face and looked up at me. "Madisyn, I didn't mean what I said, I didn't know you had hearing aids, I'm sorry".

Next time you walk up to a persona, and they are not responding to you right away/ at all or are being “rude”, don’t think too deeply into it, they may suffer from hearing loss. Those who suffer from hearing loss are not rude or slow-witted, they are trying their best to understand what you are saying and most of the time they cannot hear what you are saying.