

My name is Rosemary, and I lost my hearing on 2nd March 2011, the day after my birthday. I was visiting my daughter, who lives near Portsmouth. My daughter took me to a giant antiques fair at Ardingly as a treat for my birthday. We had a wonderful day buying things for her new house. I went to bed as normal and woke up the next morning to a frighteningly silent world. I have been hard of hearing since birth, but with my hearing aid I lived a practically 'normal' life, a few 'pardons' here and there.

That morning my daughter took me to see her doctor, who said that I had a massive infection in my 'good' ear, the one I wore my hearing aid in, which was a surprise as I had felt no pain or discomfort. She gave me antibiotics and told me to see my own doctor when I got home the following day. My doctor agreed with the diagnosis and immediately sent me to the hospital for examination, where I was prescribed more antibiotics and sent home. After about 3 weeks and more antibiotics, I was referred back to the hospital expecting to have my ear syringed, and my life to get back to 'normal'. After examination and a hearing test, the doctor at the hospital told me that my hearing loss was permanent and irreversible, and sent me on my way, with no offer of help or support whatever. To say that I was in a state of shock is an understatement. I don't even remember walking out of the hospital with my husband or even being on this planet.

The following weeks are a bit of a blur, which I couldn't have got through without the love and support of my wonderful husband, it must have been pretty traumatic for him too.

Slowly I started to come back to the real world, and went to the doctor for something to help with the constant dizziness I was experiencing. I emailed the local college for information about lip-reading classes; the nearest one was at Stone, a half-hour bus ride away, which I joined. This boosted my confidence considerably, and I started to go into town (Newcastle) again, not quite so worried that I would meet people that I knew, that I would have to talk to. On one of my visits to town I saw a leaflet about Deafvibe cafe in a charity shop window. A couple of weeks later I decided to visit the Deafvibe cafe, and I'm so glad that I did. I was made so welcome, and people spoke to ME rather than to my husband, who would then have to translate for me. Alison and Rowan immediately made me feel at ease and comfortable with myself. To know that they knew EXACTLY how I felt meant so much to me.

Last, but not least, the practical help and support from coming to Deafvibe, especially Alison and Rowan, has been immeasurable. I will continue with the lip-reading classes, and I hope to try and learn to sign in the future.

I would recommend anyone with any kind of hearing loss to come along to Deafvibe, and experience the difference it will make to their lives, they have certainly given back to me my feeling of self-worth.