

Carmen Wei

**TED TALK: Can't Hear? Have No Fear!**

I know that almost everyone of you guys here have talked or held a conversation with me throughout the years. But how many of you guys have had to repeat yourself maybe two or three times because I didn't hear what you said the first couple times??? \*people raises hands\* To be honest with you guys, I probably still to this day don't know what you said those times and probably nodded yes or no or said I don't know because I was afraid of asking you to repeat it over YET AGAIN!

When I was 9 years old, my elementary school held a hearing and eye site test as a check up for the students. I went in not thinking much about it, except hoping that I wasn't going to be THAT kid who was going to fail it. But you guessed it, I was her. My doctor told me that while taking the hearing test I missed a lot of the low sounds that the typical person should be able to hear. I remember going to the doctors and having my brother take the same test and would only take one minute, while I would take ten minutes. She recommended another doctor that prescribed me fitted hearing aids that will help to improve my hearing.

It took weeks of going to my appointments and getting more tests before I actually got the actual thing in my hand. My doctor always reassured me that this was better for my health in the future and that it looked good on me to make me more comfortable with the idea of wearing it out everyday.

Still, I never wanted to wear them, but when I did, I would always have my hair covering so no one else could see it. They were so ugly, loud, and distracting for me. Eventually, I stopped wearing them. There were two reasons I gave my classmates when they would question why I didn't wear them anymore: one that I told everyone, and the other was the REAL REASON.

I would tell everyone that they were too distracting rather than helpful. But really, I just didn't want to be judged by my peers; I didn't want to be different, or have to explain "why I had to wear them" or "what was wrong with me".

Fast forward 9 years later I still have trouble hearing and did not once touch my hearing aids. No surprise! I spent 9 years trying my best to act like I know what you're trying to whisper to me in class and answering questions after saying "what?" "huhh?" more than three times and still not knowing what you just said because I don't want you to repeat what you said again and again. I tend to do this thing where I try and guess what you are saying to me if I can't hear you and use up all my energy on that, leading me to tire out my brain. I did not consider going back to wearing hearing aids again until my doctor brought it up to me after a recent check up. After so many years, I still dread the moment of wearing them, but I feel like I have grown enough respect for myself and my health and not caring what others have say to go ahead and try to give them one more chance. As much as I told myself that I didn't care what others would say about me when I was younger, it really did affect me and was my main issue. Of course I wanted to be able to hear the little whispers again Haahaha!

When I recently went back to my ear appointment, my doctor highly suggested me to get them again... so I did. But at least this time they are going to be less visible and smaller so I don't have to be so embarrassed about it and have to talk about it.

I tell myself everyday that I should embrace my different characteristics. It takes a long time before someone can truly be comfortable in their own skin, some faster than others. I'm here to tell you that it's okay to be self conscious about something that you feel is not like the others. We all eventually will get to a point in our life when we are satisfied with ourselves, even if it takes years. For those of you who finds out something like out of the ordinary about someone, don't do what Ms. Kapchan did and make a joke out of it. Right after she read my rough draft of my Ted Talk, she wanted to tell me someone so she said, "Can you hear me?" Of course I just laughed it off and don't mind it anymore because I have grown to respect and accept my characteristics, but if it were someone else it might not have been the same reaction. So be careful with what you say.

