



“Losing my sight took away some of my power, but it’s given me a new kind of clarity”

Seema Flower, managing director of successful London hair salon Coloumnation, started losing her sight in 2006. Now registered blind, her focus and determination have only grown

Losing your sight is a grieving process. I felt like I was losing a part of my identity and it was very difficult to come to terms with, psychologically and emotionally. In the space of a few years, I went from having full independence to not being able to do things I always could do. I've only been severely visually impaired for a while compared to many people who've been blind for all or most of their lives, so I'm still building my confidence. It's only in the last year or so that I've come to terms with it and I'm happy with who I am again.

It definitely took away some of my sense of power. I'm a bit of a control freak and, as I can't see, I need to know things are done the way I want them done, so I have to rely on people more, which is sometimes disheartening. I don't want to put too much pressure on others, especially my daughter. I used to stress about being able to get things done myself and it's been a challenge for me to think 'OK, calm down, if you need the help you're going to have to take it'. The thing is, if I spend my life struggling to do everything on my own, my quality of life and my daughter's quality of life is not going to be the same.

While it has taken away some of my personal power, it has given me another sense of power. I've found I'm clearer knowing what I want and don't want. My decision-making process is instant. I'm more focused, determined and driven - I'm working at 150 miles per hour, multi-tasking and often get frustrated when people don't keep up. Because I can't see, I don't have all the visual disturbances sighted people are distracted by. I've realised losing my sight is not the end of the world and in fact, it's opened up different opportunities and given me more clarity.

Join Seema and RP Fighting Blindness to raise awareness and funds for pioneering research to prevent sight loss and treat eye disease on the Carrots Night Walk (see fightingblind.org.uk) nationwide this September. Visit justgoing.com/coloumnation