

# Stories for Lipreading

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## **A GRAND DAY OUT by Nick Coe.**

[This text is read aloud at the beginning of this video:]  
Welcome to Stories for Lipreading. If you haven't used our website before, we suggest you look at our 'How to Use' page before you begin. We hope you enjoy this autobiographical story, which is called 'A Grand Day Out' by Nick Coe.

### **A Grand Day Out by Nick Coe.**

Sometimes I struggle to remember what I did yesterday but this happened over twenty-five years ago and I still recall it vividly.

It was a Saturday afternoon in Cheltenham. I was out shopping with my wife, my elderly mother and my two-year-old son, who was in a pushchair. We were walking along the pavement, opposite the public library, when a man, leading a young boy, elbowed his way past me, muttering angrily, "Scuse me for the third time of asking".

Deafness in one ear is a curious, 'part-time' disability. It makes you worry constantly that you might appear to be ignoring someone who happens to be on your wrong side. But equally it makes you defensive and indignant when people immediately jump to the wrong conclusion without considering alternative explanations first.

I know I shouldn't have called after the man, inviting him to consider an alternative explanation – namely that I might have a hearing problem. And OK, I probably expressed it in slightly more robust language than that. But what happened next is a classic example of how deafness, far more than any other disability, is often met with scepticism and even, occasionally, physical violence. After a few more verbal exchanges between us, the man halted, turned towards me and started to take off his jacket. In such situations I would normally say "I'll get my big brother onto you" but he wasn't around and therefore it was left to my ageing mother to intervene and send the fellow on his way.

Looking back, it occurs to me that, even if I had heard the man, I would not have known he was behind us and talking to me specifically. With only one ear you have no sense of where sound is coming from.

The whole incident felt like a car accident narrowly avoided and it spoiled the rest of the day, of course. I felt that my mother viewed me in a different light from then on – as though a trusted family pet had suddenly bitten a stranger for no good reason. But I bet everyone with a hearing problem has got a collection of similar anecdotes.

What I've learned over the years is that deafness, uniquely among disabilities, is always your fault. So would I prefer the patronising sympathy which blind people get from the public? You bet I would!