



SoundBites Podcast Transcript

Episode: Justin Osmond

Dave Fabry: Welcome to Starkey Sound Bites. I'm your host, Dave Fabry, Starkey's Chief Innovation Officer. Our guest today is Justin Osmond, a longtime friend of Starkey. He joins us virtually from his home in Utah to talk about his many years of advocating for people with hearing loss and his advice for those navigating their own hearing loss journey. Justin, thanks for joining me today on Starkey Sound Bites.

Justin Osmond: Thanks for having me, Dave, it's great to be here. Appreciate it.

Dave Fabry: Well, I was thinking about, in prepping for this podcast today, how long I have known you. I know it's over a decade, but I couldn't put the actual date when we met. But I've been a long time admirer of you and your advocacy for those with hearing loss. And I've come at it from the professional side, but I'm just amazed at how well you have articulated the messaging for people who are struggling with hearing loss and thinking about it as a disability when in fact, although it certainly is, the hearing loss has impacted you. And I hope we'll be able to talk about that today, but you've turned that challenge into such an opportunity to represent for so many millions of people with hearing loss, what possibilities exist.

Justin Osmond: Thank you, Dave. And to be honest, someone gave me an opportunity to be able to hear with conviction, to be able to speak with passion. And when someone touches my life like that, it's an honor to be able to give back and to pay it forward for the blessing that I've been given from wonderful people like you, Dave and all your skillset and your talents and bring it to the table so that we can have a better quality of life. There are so many incredible resources that are available to us that I didn't know about. And then when I came across it, I'm like, oh my goodness, everybody needs to know about this. And so I on behalf of all the deaf and hard-of-hearing community around the world, thank you for blessing our lives and helping us to hear better and to live better.

Dave Fabry: Wow, right back at you buddy. And many inventions die a lonely death unless they're innovated. And you find a way to express in ways that go beyond the technology, the impact of hearing loss and the impact of technology to make people's lives better. And I know you've been a brand ambassador for Starkey since 2021, but I want to start really earlier than that, I want to go back to sort of the beginning.



Your dad, Merrill, is one of the founding members of the Osmond Family and the lead singer in those early days. And Donny and Marie are your aunt and uncle. Your grandmother, Olive Osmond, started the Osmond Fund and the Osmond Foundation to raise money for hearing aids for people. And I'd like to talk a little bit about that. What inspired her to develop this fund, which later grew into the Children's Miracle Network? And I believe your Aunt Marie still manages that today and it's over \$5 billion in terms of funding that goes for people with hearing loss. But talk about your grandmother in terms of what inspired her to do this and how you've picked up that cause today with the Olive Osmond Foundation.

Justin Osmond: Thank you, Dave. And I got to make it very clear, my grandmother has lots of grandchildren, but I am her favorite grandchild.

Dave Fabry: I have no doubt of that.

Justin Osmond: So, this is one of the untold stories of our family. A lot of people don't know this, but my sweet grandmother, Olive, her two oldest boys were born deaf. And after she had two children, the doctor told her not to have any more kids because it was genetic and she said that all the rest of your kids would have a deafness in the family. And thank goodness, she didn't listen to the doctor. She had seven more children, nine kids total. You can just imagine that's a lot of kids, a lot of work, and a lot of expenses and cost to raise a big family like that.

And so they didn't have the money to purchase hearing aids for the two deaf brothers or her two deaf sons. And so she, like you and everyone at Starkey and myself included, she became an advocate. She saw a need and there was really not a whole lot of programs back in the '50s or the '60s, I'm sorry, to help with deaf and hard-of-hearing. So she took it upon herself, started a charity called the Osmond Foundation to help not only her two deaf sons, to provide resources and products and what have you, and to help them with their speech and hearing. But at the same time, she lacked the resources.

And so she just kind of went to a bulldozer and took that on. My grandpa, a Wyoming cowboy and a lieutenant in the army, when they had more children, he noticed that some of the other boys had a musical talent. They seemed to love music. So he started this little barbershop quartet. And really one of the main reasons why he did that is because he was trying to think of ways, creative ways on how they could raise some money to purchase hearing aids for the two deaf brothers. He said, "All right, boys, just go out and sing. Let's go perform at these different little



local community events so we can raise some money so we can purchase hearing aids for your two deaf brothers. What do you guys think about that?" And they were all on board and that is how the Osmonds really got started. And so-

Dave Fabry: For the younger generation, how'd that work out? These Osmonds, you refer to the Osmond Family and Donny and Marie, I mean, I grew up, I got about 20 years on you. I grew up with the Osmonds and the Donny and Marie Show and it was all over the place. And it's remarkable that you just told the origin story of that and the impact that has made worldwide, and then not the least with what the Children's Miracle Network has grown into as an outgrowth of that. And then as well, you're now the CEO of the Olive Osmond Foundation today, too, correct?

Justin Osmond: Correct, Dave, thank you. And just for the younger generation, many of you and generation, you're right. I'm glad you brought that up. A lot of people have not heard of the Osmonds, because there were more back in the '70s and the '80s, but just to kind of give you a kind of an idea, a comparison of today, I have to know what they were back then, if you know The Jonas Brothers, they were like The Jonas Brothers today, like they were back then, would you agree with that, Dave?

Dave Fabry: On steroids, yeah on steroids. I can tell you that there were many times and now we'll have the Okay Boomer moment for the day, but there were cereal boxes that would actually have on the back of them records for the Osmonds and the Jacksons. They were sort of competitors at the time, The Jackson 5 and the Osmonds and cutting that record off, which I'm sure damaged more than a few of my family's phonograph needles. And again, I would say in the past, I'd say people go, what's a phonograph, but that's enjoying a renaissance now too phonographic records. But my friends who have high end audio would never let me come at it with the back of a cereal box that had "One Bad Apple" or many of their other hits.

But thanks for filling that in, you've grown up then within this famous family, and yet you've carved your own niche out in terms of your advocacy and taking that to the next dimension, really. I mean, you're an author, you're a motivational speaker. You've continued to advocate for people with hearing loss and like many in your family, you're also a musician. Talk a little bit about that because I know you mentioned that the physicians that your mom, your grandmother rather sought out after she had these two deaf sons also had an impact on you by telling you that you'd never be able to play a musical instrument.



Justin Osmond: Dave, we may be a little bit country, we may be a little bit rock and roll, but we're a little bit, actually not a little bit, we're a lot about helping help people hear better and raising that awareness in fact you've said. Yes, when my grandmother passed away, I was so touched by what she did for my deaf uncles and so many people around the world that I wanted to kind of pay that forward. Continue the legacy, kind of be an advocate if you will, to help raise that awareness for what she started. And you're right, I started of the charity Olive Osmond Hearing Fund.

And we've been able to sponsor and partner with many Starkey events around the world with so much fun to do. In fact, I brought my two deaf uncles on some Starkey events and that was so fun. Just being a part of the Starkey family. It has blessed our lives in so many different ways, but this also inspired me. You're right, I may have a hearing loss, but, but because of all these amazing amenities and product and services that have been provided, that hearing loss no longer has me.

Dave Fabry: I love that you use that as your mantra. I love that I have hearing loss, but that hearing loss does not have me, unpack that a little bit.

Justin Osmond: Really, we all have something that's broken in our lives. In my case, my ear, I was born that way, but that's okay, I don't let it define me, I let it refine me. I let it purge me. I let it challenge me. And to be better with that, I embrace it with all my heart, but then I don't. Then I allow it to propel me forward, empower me forward instead of holding me back because I have a lot of friends and Dave you know that too, from a psychological standpoint, people tend to put themselves in a holding pattern or let them hold themselves or limit themselves. But don't let those limit your challenges, challenge your limit, challenge the limitations that we may have in my case, my hearing loss, but in general, you may have a particular challenge, but do not let that challenge have you, control you, or even define you instead, let it refine you, let it make you a better person and stronger person because of that.

Dave Fabry: Well, I love how inspirational that message is. And yet, I mean, in seeing your TEDx Talk, which I think should be mandatory viewing for any parent of a child with hearing loss who thinks about their child having limitations, they really need to see this video because it's so inspirational, and it's not without a little bit of heartbreak along the way. You actually weren't diagnosed with hearing loss, even though you have a significant hearing loss, it wasn't diagnosed until I believe you were about two years of age, correct?



Justin Osmond: Correct, Dave, they didn't have the newborn screening back then. And so I kind of fell by the wayside and after two years of living in complete silence for two years, I guess in my mind, that was normal. That's just how it was. And then you're right, I was playing in the sandbox with my brothers and my mom came out and said, "Hey, time to come in for lunch." And they all responded but me. And that's when my mom knew there was something wrong with me. They took me into the doctor. They diagnosed me right away, put on these devices. And for the first time, in two years, after complete silence, I was able to hear my dad's music. I was able to hear my mom's voice, I heard my dog bark. And I even got to hear the toilet flush. I mean, all these things we take for granted, right?

Dave Fabry: Exactly.

Justin Osmond: Absolutely life changing. And I did just enter this whole new world.

Dave Fabry: Well, and then you also talk about really with great transparency and authenticity of an event where you had the opportunity to go to Madison Square Gardens, to hear the Osmond Family perform and your dad as the lead singer. And here you were surrounded by thousands of people. And with your hearing loss, even with hearing aids in an environment like that, it's awfully difficult to hear. Talk a little bit about because you express that in a way that many of us really have only become aware of during the pandemic with loneliness and isolation, but talk a little bit about that feeling that sort of immersed you, surrounded you when you were sitting there listening to the Osmonds perform.

Justin Osmond: Hey, Dave, I have to say one of the biggest challenges and mountains that I've ever had to climb in my life was being born into this musical family. I mean, don't get me wrong, I love my family, it's so fun. A lot of cool experiences, but you're right being in a venue, thousands of people watching my dad take the lead and I could hear him, but I could not understand the words of my own dad. And it was so frustrating and it did, it created isolation. It created a disconnect, a gap, and I felt isolated and separated from life on so many levels. And I went kind of into the little depression and anxiety and thank goodness I had a really good family support system that helped out with that.

But I'm telling today that was a very, I wouldn't say a dark time in my life, but it was hard. It was really difficult, but I would go back after every show, I'd say, "Dad, what would the lyric to this song?" And course my dad, coolest dad ever, he would write down the lyrics and I would have to learn it that way. But back then when I was younger, Dave technology



was analog. It was all analog hearing. And so it was just like a power. I was a power junkie that you took in everything, but nowadays I go to, my dad is still [inaudible] you believe it or not, he's in 60 years and entertainment business. And he just loves it so much. He'll do it until the day he died. But today, Dave, I can honestly say, and I get so emotional when I say this, but I can not only hear my dad, but I can now understand my dad.

And it's so awesome and I'm so grateful and thankful. I know technology has come a long way with the innovation. And now we're in the artificial intelligence era. And it is just so amazing to be able to be reconnected with life and not just with life, but with my family, my dad's music because like you, I love music. Everybody loves music, but when you feel disconnected from life because you can't really understand, it's so difficult. But I feel like that bridge had been re-put together and that feelings of loneliness and isolation is no longer there anymore.

And that even with the mask today during the pandemic, I think I can be honest and say, I could honestly say I hate masks more than anybody because it does, it causes a separation. But even with that, the hearing aid today, I would've struggled really bad 20 years ago, but today I can understand more clearly what they're actually saying. So I mean over 40 years now of wearing hearing aids, I've been able to see the transitioning from the analog to the programmable, to the digital and the artificial intelligence. And it can't get any better now, Dave, I mean, it's just amazing.

Dave Fabry:

It will, we're going to keep working to make them better and better, but I know the last time you were here, when we updated your technology with Evolv AI and Edge Mode, we talked about the mask, the way that Edge Mode does help restore audibility for voices when you're encountering people who are wearing face masks, because people may not realize or appreciate that with the degree of hearing loss that you have. And I hope you don't mind me saying, I mean, we know you have, and you've been quite open about the fact that you have a severe degree of hearing loss and you rely on lip reading to help fill in those blanks.

And I'm delighted that our technology helps provide more ability to give you that little edge in those challenging listening environments, because hearing you relay that story and just trying to put myself in your position with your dad in this musical family. And I can't remember who made the quote, "People don't remember what you say, but they remember how you made them feel," and to be able to understand your dad singing and



hear the words and this is your dad with thousands of people performing and to really be able to connect with him on that way, must have been overwhelming. And it's so cool.

Justin Osmond: Right, Dave, it was a hard period of time in my life. But it is gotten so much better now and I'm so grateful for that. And words can't even express how almost weight if you will. I just come off my shoulders and being able to just the sheer contrast between hearing and understanding. And it's just amazing to be able to witness that, to see that and to live that and experience that on so many different levels. So thank you.

Dave Fabry: Oh, thank you. And you said, and you're in your mid forties now and when you were diagnosed, we didn't have newborn hearing screening, universal newborn hearing screening. We have Marion Downs and others to thank for really recognizing the need to not only identify hearing loss, but then intervene as quickly as possible with hearing aids or cochlear implants if necessary. And really looking at those changes that have taken place has been extremely important for people, particularly like yourself with significant degrees of hearing loss. And in your TED Talk, you reference data that talks about the fact that only a third of those with profound hearing loss in the past have completed high school. And that even another statistic from your 2018 talk was that, a fifth of those who go onto college, complete their degree. And one of the things that I think, people may or may not be aware of you completed your bachelor's degree I think it was Utah State, right?

Justin Osmond: Correct.

Dave Fabry: And then you went on and got a Master's degree with your brother and you walked the stage together in 2010, when you received your MBA for Professional Relations and Marketing, how did that feel? I mean, again, it's the burden of you as in this position where you're running this foundation, you are an icon for those with significant hearing loss and parents putting the limits or thinking of imposed limits of their kids who have hearing loss. And here you are getting your Master's degree and doing it with younger brother. Talk a little bit about that.

Justin Osmond: Oh, Dave, you're right. It's probably one of the hallmarks accomplishments of my life. One of the hardest things I've ever done, but one of the most rewarding. I got to point something out here. When I went to college, one of the most frustrating things that I'd be sitting in the front row. And yet I'm looking around all my classmates. They're listening to music in one ear and then still writing notes and still able to



get everything in. Here I am, I'm trying to have my undivided attention and I'm still missing out on so much. And that was just a frustration for me, but I'll tell you, Dave, I could talk about this for an hour, but just to kind of condense everything, my little brother, my younger brother, he's the one that challenged me to go get our Master's degree together.

And here I am, I'm supposed to be the older, smarter brother. But I'll never forget he finished before I did. And it took me another whole year to accomplish and to complete my Master's degree. And my younger brother, he waited a whole year so that we could walk across that stage together. So I don't know who does that, but it meant a lot to me, and I'll say this, getting my Master's degree with a profound hearing loss was so difficult for me because I would miss out on so much that I remember taking one exam five times. I failed four times before I finally completed that last one. And so I'll say this, we have a motto in our family. We're going to keep doing it and we're going to keep doing it and we're going to keep failing until we get it right.

And I think I'm grateful to have that mentality of that attitude growing up is that we get bounced off the saddle we're going to get back on the saddle no matter how many times. And I'm so grateful for my little brother that he believed in me, he studied with me and he believed in me. And that's one thing that it built that confidence in me over time because with my hearing, it did, my self esteem was rock bottom a lot of time, but you keep looking at it, you work hard at it. And many people, my audiologist, my hearing professional, my speech language pathologist, they all instilled in me at a young age that I can do hard things. And also say this, I believe that all the hard-of-hearing and deaf friends out there, we have to put forth more mental exertion when we listen and when we hear, we have to put forth with a little bit more hard work compared to a normal hearing person.

So we're not trying to compare ourselves, but we really do. And so when we do finally reach our goal, the reward is 10 times more rewarding because we knew we had to work or go the extra mile or work 10 times hard if we have to get that goal. And so it would just, it's not always about crossing the finish line in first place. It's about never giving up and I'm grateful for all those who helped me along the way. All my audiologists and hearing professional, my family and friend, of course, my younger brother for never giving up on me.

Dave Fabry:

Oh, that's cool. Well, and with your characteristic glass half full attitude, I think I've heard you speak in the past about the fact that one thing with a



severe to profound hearing loss that enables you to have extraordinary focus is unlike the rest of us, you can sort of shut off your hearing when you want to, if you are just fatigued from all of that additional cognitive effort and cognitive load, you can just take them out and experience silence. And I wondered if you'd speak a little bit to that.

Justin Osmond:

Oh, I could tell you so many different scenarios. First, if my little babies are screaming and yelling, I can turn them off. If my wife is yelling at me, I could turn them off. No, I don't do that. But one cool experience I had, I went to my dad's concert and it was loud. People, the fans are screaming. And so I did, I drifted my microphone because I can do that, which is cool. And then all of a sudden my wife called me and of course it's so noisy and it's so loud in there. But what I did is I went in my Thrive App. I turned my microphone off in my hearing aid now because of my profound loss, all the music and the yelling and the screaming went completely off. So now it's completely quiet in a room of 120 decibel [inaudible] sound, but I can't hear anything.

And then I answered the phone and I was able to hear my wife clearly and perfectly and no worries, I could understand and communicate just fine, no problem. And once the phone call was completed, I turned it off, then I turned my microphone back on, on my hearing aid and I was able to hear the music again and all the screaming and the yelling.

Dave Fabry:

But remember to listen carefully, to keep those levels below a level that can cause more damage. I just have to pun. I have to put that in as your sort of ambassador for hearing in this respect to make sure to not add insult to injury with that loud exposure. But that's such a great story. And with your molds, which seal an awful lot of the outside sound, they're plugging that outside sound. And then when you shut off the microphone on the hearing aids, so that the stream phone call is coming through, you could still hear your wife, a familiar talker in a manner that enabled you to have this conversation on it.

It actually gives you superpowers. You could have a conversation in an environment that those with normal hearing couldn't easily do so. The other thing, I think you cite the fact that you saw many audiologists and speech language pathologists over the years with the fact that you weren't identified with hearing loss until the age of two, you went through some of those critical periods. And you mentioned that you were made fun of and bullied, even growing up with your hearing loss accent. And then talk a little bit about how you flipped that script and turned it into sort of an advantage for you.



Justin Osmond: Absolutely. I can't tell you Dave, how many times people, when they hear my accent I'll be honest. I think it's perfectly fine to make yourself vulnerable, but they'll ask me, they'll say, "Hey, where are you from? Are you from England? Or are you from the Australia or Canada?" And don't get me wrong. I'll take it as the compliment, because I love their accents. But deep down inside it hurt because I've worked so hard to learn how to try to speak normal. And I remember growing up, I was always socially embarrassed or socially awkward because I wanted to sound normal like everyone else. And I remember thinking, man, I wish I had the golden throat, like my dad or my uncle Donny and Marie. And I even remember thinking, man, I wish I could sound like Justin Timberlake, but it dawned on me one day, Dave, why do I need to sound like Justin Timberlake?

I want to sound like Justin Osmond, my unique voice and my accent. That's who I am, is my brand, it's my signature, it's, it's who I am. And so once I accepted myself for who I was and not what I was, I was so much happier with myself. And so I think that's a very critical point, especially with a lot of the deaf and heard-of-hearing community, you're right. We may have a different accent, but it doesn't matter how the rest of the world looks at that. That's who you are. And as soon as you can accept the reality, embrace who you are, embrace our challenges like I talked about earlier and then allow that to empower us forward instead of holding us back then you're right. That's when our superpowers come out. And that's when we're experience unbelievable sites, indescribable feeling and showing and tumbling through an endless diamonds sky, and as we enter that whole new world, it changes our mentality. It changes our attitude and we're able to, our perspective on life is so much different. And we can say, you know what, we can do hard things.

Dave Fabry: And I mean, and normal implies average if you think of the bell curve, I mean, know who wants to be average? I think, I don't want to live under an average definition and a normal definition. I think you've done extraordinary things. And you've made with your hearing accent, as you refer to it, made you more exotic too, it gives you a little bit of mystery. So I mean, but I just think in so many ways that again, that inspiration that we all have differences and we can't be put into, we're not a melting pot. We should be a Mulligan stew and embrace those differences that we each have in terms of the ability to communicate with each other and display that emotion. And so-

Justin Osmond: And I'll mention this if that it's okay.

Dave Fabry: Of course.



Justin Osmond: We have a mutual friend, Lou Ferrigno. He and I, we were both bullied when we were younger. And I love his inspiration. He took that as a motivational factor and he got bigger and bigger and bigger, and he's now The Incredible Hulk, but I'll never forget what he taught, what he told me. He said, "Justin, it's good to be physically tough, but it's more important to be mentally tough." And then he taught me the whole don't limit your challenges, but to challenge your limits and to make yourself a better person because of that, because it doesn't make it right when people abuse you and bully you.

But you can take that as a motivational factor. And a lot of times, when I was bullied Dave, they just didn't know how to react towards a young boy that had wires coming out of your ears and a big box attached to my belt. I mean, I stood out like a robot and of course, people just don't know how to respond to that or react to that. But as I try to help them understand my situation, pretty soon, they're like, I want one of those. You can hear your teacher in the teacher's lounge, that's awesome. So it's just a matter of educating the public.

Dave Fabry: So you were spying on the teachers, you were getting the signal from their transmitter in the teacher's lounge. And again, it gave you a superpower that none of your classmates had. And again, not everyone would be able to take that glass-half-full aspect. And I think that's why it's such an important message that you have to parents. I mean, as you know I've worked in industry for half my career and the other half has been working in clinical work with patients and with family members. And there is this feeling, I think that a lot of parents have when they're first identifying the audiologists and the ENT are identifying their child with hearing loss and whether there's any surgical options and then discussing amplification or other things, and is sort of my perfect child, but that reinforcement for you that we're all different and embrace those differences and turn that into a strength is what's so cool with your story.

Justin Osmond: Oh, thank you. Thank you Dave.

Dave Fabry: Now, we've obviously talked about, you had the support of your family with your grandmother. I mean, and having those two oldest uncles who had hearing loss, it was sort of built into the mix and the support that your family had. Any advice that you might have for other families who don't have that incredible support and network that you had? And then later with the resources that you had as a member of this remarkable family, any advice for parents or individuals who are thinking about, I'm struggling with hearing, what can I do?



Justin Osmond: Yeah, I think it's, you do right, Dave, I have a lot of friends too, that don't have that support or that advocacy in that stronghold, if you will. I was very lucky and very privileged and blessed to have the family I have, but they still didn't have all the answers. And so I remember they took me all across the country to the John Tracy Clinics and lots of different places out there. I think a lot of people that look at a miracle, something that God had done for them, that's not out of our control, but for me, my hearing, my amazing hearing now that I have that's been provided to me, I believe it created by God, but implemented by hardworking people, their innovation, their skillsets, and their talents and whatnot.

That's coming from family, that's coming from friend, that coming from wonderful people like you, Dave and everybody at Starkey. To me, that's a miracle. And I think for those, they may be struggling for help and support. The big word I want to say is hope. Don't, it's not a lack of hearing, it's a lack of hope. That is where people get and struggling and have a hard time with. But I can tell you that there's today, especially with all the resources out there that's more accessible and more able to get to, as opposed to back then you can do it more on an individual basis if you wanted to.

And that develops hope in my opinion, that develops being able to reconnect with family and life and so many other things. And so I will say because of today, there's no better time to have a hearing loss than now because of what is available to us. So I wouldn't be too worried about, "Oh, how can I get access to this and this and that?" It's there. We just need to get the word out better. And then that will just help them be able to elevate their confidence and their way of life and to be able to restore that hope.

Dave Fabry: Thank you for that. Well, you talked about the advances that have taken place in your lifetime with hearing aid technology from analog to digitally programmable and digital technology, to where today you feel as though you're hearing your best life, but sometimes also hearing aids alone are not enough. And when you were here a few times ago, we fitted you the Table Mic and you promptly started developing, sorry to be a little technical, but use cases for where that Table Mic would work, that we didn't even anticipate.

I remember talking with you and introducing the technology as something. So the Table Mic for those not familiar with this is a remote microphone that uses artificial intelligence and beam forming microphones. Yeah, you got it. And for those listening, he's showing it on



the camera. Now it's about the size of a coaster and it has eight different microphones on it that automatically select the dominant talker or the dominant sound in an environment, and then improves the signal, the desired signal to background noise ratio automatically. And I remembered that I showed you this and we went all through and I knew that technically you'd be able to handle it, but tell me what you tweeted on your return home to Utah, how you immediately discovered a new use case for the Table Mic.

Justin Osmond: I mean, it literally, I entered a whole new world, Dave, and for the record, I don't know if you remember it changed my life so much, I called it the holy grail.

Dave Fabry: I remember.

Justin Osmond: It just amazing. It's the holy grail of my life, but on my way home, I struggle on airplane, the airplanes are loud, baby screaming. And I could never watch a movie without, it's just hard to understand, but I plugged it into the entertainment set and I turned the microphone off so I can't hear the plane, I was able to hear the movie. It was amazing. First time in my life, I've been able to watch a whole movie, being able to understand it on an airplane. So that was life changing.

I get home, I remember I'm taking my girls to school in the car, and I've always struggled. Being able to hear my little girls say daddy, and then they say something I can't quite understand what they said, and I got thinking, wait a minute, Starkey just gave me this. Why not try this out? And so I put on Velcro on the back and I stuck it on the top of my seat. And Dave, it was like, they were like talking right into my ears, like right next to me, instead of way in the back. And I almost, I got a little teary eye because I could finally be connected to my kids while driving and in-

Dave Fabry: A very challenging listening environment, the automobile for those with normal hearing, don't fully appreciate all of the noise coming in from the sound and the cacophony of sounds that are in the car and then with multiple kids. And I remember when you started to say how much better you were hearing in that environment, that challenging environment through the use of the Table Mic.

Justin Osmond: And that's something that we do every single day. And it just, it got to a point where, that going to be how it is for the rest of my life. But when this was introduced, the wonderful accessory, Dave, I can't begin to tell you how much... and even my wife next to me, I would have to take the



rear view mirror and adjust so I could see her lips while I'm driving. So I could understand what she was saying, but I don't have to do that anymore. I could use this. And bam, it connected me to my wife and my kid in all of our travels now.

Dave Fabry:

And now you can revisit that experience that you had when you were in school as a younger kid, but now in real life, you want to learn what people are saying behind your back. You can put it on a table and then leave. So just warning to your friends that, again, I'm only kidding, but it is really remarkable what the technologies can work with this wireless interface, so that you have a wireless, I always call it like a third ear that can get closer to the voices or the sounds that you want to hear. And in particular, for people with more significant hearing loss, but not limited to people with more significant hearing loss, there's noise everywhere and soft talkers or distant voices. It's really a game changer that a lot of people with hearing loss and even hearing aid users, aren't aware exists today.

Justin Osmond:

Even in restaurant today that a huge game changer in restaurants. For those that like to go to church, I even put that on the podium for my leader. And I would be clear in the back of the room. And I could hear like he's speaking right in front of my ears. Yes, Dave, all scenarios of life, it covers it, on top of these amazing hearing aids has that accessory with that. It's absolutely amazing. It's incredible. And everybody needs to know about this.

Dave Fabry:

Yeah, and so even those people, you've talked a little bit about the inspiration for people feeling overwhelmed that they have a hearing loss and taking that first step, even for those people who are hearing aid users, as we're coming out of COVID pandemic, hopefully, and we're going back out into social situations again, even hearing aid users may not fully be aware of this type of technology being available. Not only can they connect directly to their smartphone, but they can connect to these types of accessories. So talk to their dispenser, talk to their audiologists about what technologies are available to help them hear better, live better in all kinds of listening environments. And like I said, you're the best brand ambassador for the Table Mic, I can think of.

Justin Osmond:

Oh, thank you, Dave. I can't thank you all, everybody listened to this. Everybody needs one of these, especially if you could benefit from that. I could go on more technical accessories that you guys have —the whole two-way communication thing. Going back to the car, I used to always have to hold it and then drive with my left hand. I don't have to do



anyway. I can just set that down. Have both my hands on the steering wheel with my-

Dave Fabry: Because you're hearing aid microphones pick up your voice. So the person on the other end hears you clearly.

Justin Osmond: Yes. All those little things makes a huge difference. And all those innovative nanoscience discoveries, have just made our lives like we've now been invited into the normal hearing society, if you will. But I like being where I'm at to you, because I can kind of go on both and have the best of both worlds and you provided that for us. And so that's why I've been talking to a lot of my deaf friends. In fact, one of them I just sent to Starkey and he just got his Table Mic. And he had been texting me every day telling me, oh my goodness. He's like me. He's had hearing aids his whole life, but had no idea that this was even available. And so he's so grateful and thankful that we got the word out on that, but just, it at the truly life changing matter.

Dave Fabry: Well, and just on that topic and then already we're running out of time, but you talk a little bit about the way that you kind of have hacks that you use to improve the ability of technology to help you better. Maybe some people also aren't aware as we've gone into the pandemic of other tools. I mean, it used to be close captioning was for TV, but now on Zoom calls like this, you can turn captioning on, on PowerPoint presentations. I'm quite adamant, I keep it on. If I'm speaking to audiologists or hearing professionals, I turn the captioning on my PowerPoint because even with normal hearing, it's beneficial. But certainly for those with hearing loss, it is. Are there other technologies out there that you've sort of discovered or built into ways that you communicate better on a daily basis that people with hearing loss should be aware of?

Justin Osmond: So Zoom is a big thing right now, right? Everybody has Zoom especially during the pandemic. One thing I struggled with on Zoom was audio. The audio for my computer was not quite, I mean, I turn up the volume, but it's not always the volume controller that makes the difference. The difference maker, Dave would plug in this in, and you taught me that you told me that on another Zoom call, "Justin you have this plugged in." I'm like, no, I plugged it in. Oh my goodness. I can turn off all the background noise and I can only hear on that device. So that's one thing I learned.

Dave Fabr But for those who aren't used to this, there's an adapter with a Table Mic. So even if they have the Table Mic, they can take an adapter and plug it directly into a television or a computer.



Or as he talked about the seat back on an airplane to directly and wirelessly transmit the sound to their ears. And so some people may have a Table Mic and not be thinking about the way that they can use it with their computer on Zoom calls. And there's just so many things to be aware of. And so much of that lack of awareness is really the lack of communication. And I think just encouraging people to, if they have questions about the technology on their hearing aids or on their accessories, talk to their hearing care professional, talk to their audiologist, their dispenser about what is available. And if they have questions about how to use it or are confused about how to use it, just ask.

Justin Osmond: I'll tell you a quick story, Dave, as far as what connecting it to the TV, my whole married life, my wife has always complained about the volume being too loud, because I need the volume to be louder so I can hear and understand better. But since I got this and I've connected it to the TV, my wife is now complaining that the volume is too low, meaning I don't need it to be so loud anymore. And now she needs more volume because you can't hear it as much.

Dave Fabry: Maybe you need to check her hearing next time you come.

Justin Osmond: Good point.

Dave Fabry: Well, that's just outstanding. And you speak about being a husband and a father. Are there other anecdotes or advice that you can give to family members? So people who are hearing aid users or who have hearing loss — tips that you've learned over the years that might be beneficial to not only the person with hearing loss, but the family members, the children or the parents, the spouses.

Justin Osmond: It's been funny when we talk about family members. I'm to a point now in my life where all my siblings and my parents and my cousin, they now wish that they had a hearing loss because they want the gadget that we have. They really do. They love it and they appreciate it. But for those living with members that have a hearing loss to experience that, just remember don't ever give up on them. And just remember, they're not the only people that had something broken in their life. I believe everybody has something that's broken in our life, but we just need to get rid of that misconception or that misunderstanding that just because something is broken in their life doesn't mean that they're impaired or that they're disabled, to me, it's an advantage. It's not a curse, but a blessing.



It's not a penalty, but an opportunity. And especially with everything that's available for us today, we can be just as good if not better than the next person. So don't ever give up on someone just because they can't hear very well or whatnot, they may need a little bit of help and support and whatnot, but we all do. I feel like we all need a Lightning McQueen in our lives. If you remember, I love the story when you look back and the defending champion Dinoco was struggling, who went back and helped him and together they cross the finish line. And I believe that's what my family did for me. They were my Lightning McQueen, Starkey you're my Lightning McQueen. I was struggling. I was having a hard time, but you helped me. You created a remedy and a solution for my problem. And I'm so grateful for that. So we all need Lightning McQueens in our lives to help us live a better quality of life. So don't ever give up on them.

Dave Fabry:

Well, I think we'll just leave it at that. I don't think we can top that. And I think going back to a discussion we had earlier, it just breaks my heart, that you, as someone in your mid forties were told or your parents were told when they identified you with hearing loss, that you'd never be able to learn to play an instrument like your famous family members.

And on that TEDx Talk, which as I said, should be mandatory viewing for parents or people struggling with hearing loss and really coming to grips with removing that lid. You play the violin beautifully. You are also a drummer and I believe there's a few other instruments in there. It makes perfect sense with even without hearing aids, the drumming, you could feel that in your chest and it, when you're holding the violin up and you perform that beautifully on your TED Talk, but talk a little bit about the importance of music to you. And how did that feel to prove them wrong when they placed that limit on you by saying, "Well, he'll never be able to do a musical instrument," like the rest of your family members. What did that feel like?

Justin Osmond:

Dave, and I'll make the record clear. It was never any of my family members that told me that I couldn't do it.

Dave Fabry:

Oh, no, I know it wasn't the family. It was someone who will go unnamed, but that they were limited... they tried to impose and the limitation on you with a significant amount of hearing loss.

Justin Osmond:

And to be honest, I can see why they would come with that, they would, your ears are broken, you can't hear very well. So what's the point of playing music? I mean, I get that, I understand that where they're coming from on that, but you're right, when someone ever told anyone in my



family, especially me, that I can't do something that just fuels the fire. And I do love being able to go back and prove them wrong and really how it all started. When you said earlier, you'd like to turn my hearing aids off and go into my quiet place. And that's what happened. I was playing my violin and I could not get the right note. I was always flat or sharp. And you couldn't, my intonation was no not where it should be.

I remember, and my siblings were practicing their instruments and it was just so loud, turned my hearing aids off. I'm in my happy, quiet place. But then I experimented. I started to play and I remembered, I went into this whole new world and I was able to hear it, not by hearing it with my ears, but by feeling it through the conductive vibration of the instrument, like you just said, and at that moment, Dave, I knew that I could do anything I set my heart on and my eyes on my focus on. Everything that we accomplished in life is not really our circumstances, but had everything to do with the focus of our life. And you're right, I went on and I mastered the violin, I mastered the viola and the reason I switched to the viola, because it has a lower tone voice and I have a high frequency loss I can't hear the high.

I would never shifted high on the violin because I can't hear the notes at all. That always stayed low. So why not switch over to the viola so I could hear the note better because it's in more of the bass tone, but yeah, it was just one of those things where, we all have limitation, Dave, but we've also got potential and which one we embrace would determine the outcome and the quality of our life. And I chose to go with the potential fact, because we all have that. We all have that even though we have limitations too, but with one you choose, I think will make the biggest difference in our life. So, but thank you.

Dave Fabry:

Well, thank you. It's been an absolute pleasure to have you on the podcast today. And I look forward to seeing you again soon and for our listeners. Thank you for listening to this episode of Starkey Sound Bites. If you enjoyed this conversation, please rate and review us on your preferred podcast platform. You can also hit subscribe to be sure that you don't miss a single episode like this one. See and hear you next time.