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For Olivia Hill, an “anthem” for the NDIS, scripted from the songbook of her life, was a tune needing to be sung.

Through her song, “Courage,” Olivia, who lives with bi-lateral hearing loss and anxiety, has shared her story of self-acceptance and self-love.

Using her NDIS supports to access music therapy before writing and singing Courage, Olivia said she no longer hides behind her voice, but embraces it, on a journey she wants to share with the world.

'I wrote this song as a way to share my journey of receiving a cochlear implant and realised after I wrote it, the words were universal and listeners could relate,' Olivia said.

'It is one thing to write the words and compose the music.

'It is an entirely different thing to sing your own words, and this is where I have had to find the courage within myself to face hearing my own voice and learning to accept it’s me.

'As someone who has had to face the fear and the myth that deaf people can’t sing, I have come to learn and believe in myself as someone who can and does.

'So, the song itself when sang, is literally about courage.'

Olivia, 35, from Sydney, is now living her best life.

However, she said the journey from receiving her hearing loss diagnosis at age 2 to receiving her cochlear implant had not been easy.

Learning to listen and speak through the Shepherd Centre, Olivia was able to attend a mainstream school where she built her capacity and confidence through being appointed school captain.

A sporty child, Olivia found a love for soccer, which shaped her future pursuits.

'There were times on the field where I didn’t hear the whistle and went ahead playing,' Olivia said.

'A referee even said, "what are you, deaf or something?" It was at that moment that I knew I had to find some courage within myself to stand up for who I am.

'This moment was one of many that contributed to me writing the words for Courage later.'

While obtaining a degree in occupational therapy, Olivia had barriers accessing the curriculum, and found socialising in traditional environments difficult.

Olivia said there were times she couldn’t function.

With debilitating panic attacks and anxiety, it was hard to continue with employment.

Experiencing further hearing loss after turning 30, Olivia made the decision to try a cochlear implant, which put her on a path to the NDIS.

'I had lost further hearing and then, eventually all my hearing in my right ear.

'This experience led me to make the decision to get a cochlear implant, and to speak up and advocate for myself,' Olivia said.

'Receiving NDIS funding has enabled me to develop the confidence and communication skills to participate in work and social life.

'It has supported my social skills development, speech articulation and in learning to integrate new sounds of the cochlear implant.'

Always possessing the knack for song through a musical family, Olivia’s first speech therapy sessions at the Shepherd Centre saw “My Favourite Things” from The Sound of Music used to teach her language.

Playing the clarinet with a school orchestra, music continued to help Olivia with speech and articulation.

Fittingly, it’s combining old sounds with new which led Olivia to all-round success, after developing and embracing her ideas through Tuned in Music Therapy.

Using her NDIS supports to access the service weekly, Olivia has been able to develop her singing and song writing skills, which have helped her speech articulation, confidence, and enjoyment.

'It has created the opportunity for me to develop confidence and ability to write music, and record my own songs that I have written,' Olivia said.

'The speech therapists that specialise in using music to develop better communication opened up new and exciting opportunities.'

Empowered and thriving, Olivia said finding her courage while singing the praises of the NDIS makes for a long and enduring tune.

In finding her own voice and focusing on helping others to find theirs, Olivia’s long-term plan is to continue to improve her communication skills while sharing her music with the world.

'Courage is about experiences in life and staying true to yourself and singing my songs has helped me communicate and express my opinions and ideas,' Olivia said.

'I currently work in administration for a disability organisation where I am able to share my knowledge, skills and personal experience to help others around me.

'As my lyrics indicate, we all have a story that we need to share, we all need courage to speak up and show who we are and have that opportunity to shine. We all have the right to have our voice heard.

'So, for me, the NDIS means an opportunity to advocate for myself, have a voice and be heard as well as develop my communication skills and confidence to participate in life.'

To listen to Courage, visit: https://on.soundcloud.com/NUpiULx5HZGMtjpH8

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