THE SWEET SPOT

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A woman with progressive hearing loss is separating from her wife. It’s not her decision. There’s lots wrong in the marriage but also lots right, and she has developed a number of dependencies—many, in fact—around her hearing loss. As the marriage falls apart, the ex-wife withdraws some of these safety nets, and the woman has to reconfigure who she is and how she finds support.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As Isa’s hearing deteriorates, so does her relationship with her wife and her kids. How do personal relationships impact health, and vice versa? How can we assist individuals and families dealing with the complex emotional toll that health and medical issues can have?

2. The loss of hearing—and the use of hearing aids—affects Isa’s quality of life, her relationship with herself, and her identity. How has a change in health for you or a loved one impacted the way in which you see yourself and others?

3. The hearing technician tells Isa: “You want everything to be the same, to locate sound perfectly, but you’re going to have to work at it, to listen differently, to mark and measure space and find your sweet spot.” In today’s changing society, how are you finding your “sweet spot” for building a Culture of Health?

4. Louise and Esther and then Isa and Esther form a strong bond, and eventually, with their children, become a family. How has the concept of “family” changed over the years? Whom do you count as “family”?

5. Family disconnection is a theme that runs through both “The Sweet Spot” and “The Masculine and the Dead.” Is modern living making it harder to keep families together? How could we make life easier for families in the future?