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Audiologists I Have Known And Loved

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Long-term relationships are valued in our society.

"Wow, that couple have been together for a million years and they still seem to like other!"

"Annie's son, bless his heart, has been taking care of her since Joe passed and she became incontinent 20 years ago."

Unfortunately, you won't hear anyone say, *"Gael Hannan has been with the same audiologist for 25 years"*, mainly because I haven't *lived* in one place for 25 years straight. With every move to a new city or country, I adopt a new audiologist. Most of my defections have been for geographical reasons, although I will drive a fair distance to see someone I've come to trust and understand. (A minimum of scientific jargon, good articulation and eyeball-to-eyeball discussion).

I love audiologists. Their role in my life is on par with my family and best friends. They hug. They laugh. They dry my tears. They help me with clothing issues.

Not every hearing care professional and I have been a match made in heaven.



#1: I told a new provider that I wanted a new BTE in a dark colour. The fellow exclaimed, *"What? You don't want that, you're not Black!"* He actually used a different term, so I found a new HCP who got me a lovely dark BTE that matched my dark hair.

#2: During a hearing assessment in the torture booth, the audiologist paused the dingy-dinging and

said, *"Gael, I don't think you're trying."* It's the only time I threw a temper tantrum, albeit a mild one, with an HCP. *Not try, are you kidding?* I try very hard! I've memorized the words. I press the buzzer at irregular intervals, or at the merest possibility of a sound playing somewhere in my grey matter. The 2% speech recognition score on my last pre-cochlear implant hearing assessment, came solely from two very good guesses!

Sometimes, the provider is the one who dumps *me!* Sonia (her real name) decided to go into labour the very day I was to see her. She *knew* I was in deep stress over the sudden onset of severe tinnitus, but oh no, she gives in to the first twinges and went to the hospital instead of the clinic for our appointment! Mother and child continue to do well, I understand.

My most recent audiologist M, (her real initial), takes client-centered care very seriously. During an appointment, I saw a tiny hole in my black leggings. *"No problem,"* exclaimed M.She reached into her desk drawer and before I knew what she was doing, she'd filled in the spot with a black magic marker. Is that service, or what? But what a shock when I took off my tights that night and found a black growth on my leg.



Some of my favourite audiologists go beyond filling my ear with green guck. They calm me, counsel me and respond well to the training I give *them* on the client's lived experience. Many have become friends and collaborators on hearing advocacy projects; Jo Deluzio and I created the best book *never* written on the importance of the client-professional relationship years before client-centered care became a buzzword.

These hearing care professionals are just a few of the audiologists I have known and loved. My affection extends to the entire profession.