

Love Poem to Hearing Aids

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It's an urban myth that people who use hearing aids *dislike* them. We don't—not all of us anyway.

We may resent having to use them in the first place.

We may be suspicious of their value, and may occasionally spit with soft rage at their cost.

We may become frustrated with the *process*, we must endure to achieve the desired pinnacle in the three C's: comfort, comeliness, and communication.

But after we get through all of that, most of us actually *like* them. I love mine. Not just the particular brand and model I'm currently using, but the *fact* that they have changed my life in ways that really only become crystal-clear when I'm *not* wearing them.

I do try to express my gratitude on occasion, giving shout-outs to the collective modern genius that has created these marvels.

But I seldom direct my praise directly *to* my hearing aids, and I would like to correct that with a love poem to my beloved hearing aids.

Ode To An Aid

You're lying on my bedside table and before I fall asleep
I'm looking at you *closely* for the first time in a long time
I'm thinking about how much, to my surprise, I love you—and why.

Well, it's not because of your *looks*.
One square inch of plastic and wires,
Your colour referred to professionally as *flesh tone*
By people without imagination as *beige*
And by me, in all honesty, as *ugly*.

Your shape is a cross between an extracted tooth and a kidney bean
With a white beard that locks you into my ear
Your shiny surface reflects light, except where bits of cerumen
Nestle in your curves and creases, waiting to be wiped clean.

For such a small creature, you have a lot of orifices,
Openings that suck sound in one end and belch it out the other
An air vent that keeps feedback to a minimum
Except when my ear canal widens as I brush my teeth,
Chew my food or laugh my head off.
Out of the biggest opening comes a plastic wheel-well
That clasps a fresh battery and disappears with it inside,

Then you chime your delight and immediately change
From a lifeless lump of plastic
To a life-changing spark plug.

Do you know what they say about beauty?
It's what's inside that counts, and I guess that's true about you.
But I don't really want to see your inner machinery
Because I believe in magic and I'd be disappointed
Not to see tiny hearing elves
Making magic happen when that battery comes in.

Once I had a glimpse—
I removed an aid from my ear to show a group of students
Half of it stuck stubbornly in my ear canal, and
Aghast, I held up the top half with its forlorn wires
Hanging naked and useless.
There was nothing to do but laugh, so we did.

I *do* love you, you know.
For all the times I've cursed you, dropped you, and lost you,
I'm sorry.
I have expected more from you than you can deliver,
Because you cannot be a perfect hearing system. Not yet.
And I have not thanked you when you delivered more
Than I ever expected, giving me sounds that my memory had forgotten
And new ones that did not exist before my hearing left,
Like the sound of my own baby breathing.

No, you're not pretty.
You're high maintenance.
You cost money.
But if I didn't have you, I would be heartbroken and
Isolated, cut off from my people.
So no, you're not pretty — you're beautiful
And I love you,
Good night.

What more can I say?

(Ode to an Aid used with permission by HearingHealthMatters.org.)