"29 years old and hearing myself for the 1st time"

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“29 years old and hearing myself for the 1st time!”

Viral Video

Informant:
My name is Kaylee Dudley and I am 26 years old. I’m a senior Professional and Technical Writing major at Utah State University, but my academic interests also include social justice, design, and psychology. When not at school, I enjoy playing board games, reading long books, and drinking very large cups of coffee. I was born in Evanston, Wyoming, but I moved a lot as a child, so I wouldn’t say I’m “from” anywhere. I have been living in Logan for the last three years with my husband and two cats. I am currently enrolled in a social justice course so when it came time to collect folklore I decided I would turn to the disability community for my content.

Context:
I think it is important to first note that not all viral videos are considered folklore. What makes this type of video both viral and folklore is the number of people participating in telling the same story in the same way. In this case if you search “hearing for the first time” on YouTube you will get 5,100,000 video results. This video was uploaded by user Sloan Churman who is the husband of the woman in the video on September 26, 2011. At time of discovery the video has 26,907,363 views. The video has 255,000 likes and 58,103 comments. The video length is 1:32.

I originally came across the content of this video in a montage on Facebook a few years ago. I don’t remember much about my original discovery except I remember feeling happy for this woman and smiling. I probably had tears welled in my eyes and shortly after returned to mindless scrolling. While speculating what sort of folklore I might find, I thought of turning to social media and this is one of the videos that immediately came to mind. I went to YouTube to find this, but I decided not to use the montage as each segment is worth its own entry to the archive.

Text:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsOo3jzkhYA

In this video we open to a woman, Sarah, and a nurse sitting near each other in an office. The computer desk has its back to the wall and Sarah who received the hearing implant is to the left of the desk in a chair with her back to the wall. The nurse is sitting at the desk facing the woman with a computer by her side.
After spending some time working to turn the implant the woman says, “It’s beeping,” while the nurse simultaneously says, “There you go.” Then alone the nurse says, “So, now technically, your device is on. Can you tell?” Sarah, nodding smiles really big, then immediately begins crying. “Oh, it’s exciting!” The nurse says. After about twenty seconds she says, “I don’t want to hear myself cry.” She laughs a little then she returns to tears very soon after. The nurse tries to engage her in conversation and offers her tissues. The video ends while Sarah is wiping her eyes.

**Texture:**
Sarah seems incredibly happy in the video, but also completely overwhelmed. The nurse seems alarmed by the tears and tries to soothe Sarah. When I watched this originally it was in a montage called something like “Try Not to Cry Challenge”. This framing implies an emotional reaction is expected while watching.

Sarah Churman, after posting this video, was asked to come to the Ellen DeGeneres show where you learn that she is a wife, mother of two, and that her mother-in-law cached in her retirement to pay for the implant for Sarah. The procedure costs $30,000 for each ear, so as Ellen does, she paid the family back the $30,000 and then asked the company to perform the same surgery on Sarah’s other ear for free, which they did. There is a follow up video of Sarah’s experience turning on the second implant that can be viewed, but that video is much less personal and much more obviously created for YouTube.