



Your smile

To my friends with Down's syndrome

I really like your smile. Yes, yours. I love your smiles, Guillermo, Berta, Jorge, Verónica, Tere, Cristina, Julie, Roberto, Esther... Because it is a smile that helps me to be a better person and to appreciate the little things in life even more. Sometimes it's a mischievous and playful smile, like that of a child who wants to get away with something. Other times it is a smile of affection, almost a hug, that says without words: "I love being with you". And at other times it is a smile of well-being and the happiness of enjoying the present moment.

Your smile is almost always spontaneous and not posed. It is a natural smile, far from premeditated acts. It needs no make-up, no teeth whitener, no anti-wrinkle, anti-fat or anti-ageing treatment. It is not a calculated smile. Your smile is not looking for applause, or likes, or to form a fan club. No, your smile is a universal gift for all human beings who want to receive it.

Lately, I've read that in some places, your smile is a source of scandal, that it can create discomfort, even guilt for the person looking at it. What a provocation! Because your smile can mean that you are happy, it is totally unbearable for those who do not see with their heart. I know you and I know that you like to live, to make plans, to be with your friends, to dance and sing, and even to laugh out loud. You like to enjoy life to the fullest. Your disability doesn't stop you, even though it may limit some things.

You know, I also have disabilities, but I hide them very well. I hide them under the mask of a responsible and efficient man, organised and attentive. In fact, I have a collection of masks to make my fragility as discreet as possible. I have told you about my disabilities, but I don't want to dwell on them now. I just want you to know that I have them and that, like you, I learn to walk with them every day, and when I see that I can't get rid of them because they are part of me, I try to accept them and even love them. But sometimes you have a harder time than I do because we are used to putting labels and even little signs. And you wear one that says "Down's syndrome" because your physical characteristics

are very recognisable. And there are those who can't stand the smallness or the mud with cracks in others or in themselves. Some of us know that behind a cracked pot there can be an infinite treasure.

In these times, life is at stake, yes, your life. That others like you have the right to be born and their lives are not cut short because they have a genetic alteration due to a third chromosome 21. Your life, my dear, is a gift, just like mine and every other person's. Because you exist, because you are you, today I can enjoy your smile.

I know that you are sometimes not very talkative and that your gestures can be clumsy or imprecise. I even know that, in most cases, you will not be able to have an independent life or a paid job. But I also know that I need your smile and that many people do. In fact, your smile should be a lasting legacy for humanity. Because that's what we need: less shouting, less bombs and more affection and smiles, like the ones you give. Your smile is like a pearl that amazes us when we find it or the most admired painting in the most beautiful museum in the world.

Don't stop smiling, it will remind me that I shouldn't stop smiling either. Your smile shows me that in spite of everything, there is hope. Your smile moves me and makes my soul vibrate to the rhythm of your gaze. Your smile is the best. I imagine God's smile, and sometimes I think it must be similar to yours.

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