

The Dishwasher Is Busted

So cancer blogger Adam Hayden blares punk rock and gets to work until the dishes sparkle.

March 29, 2024 By [Adam Hayden](#)

The dishwasher is busted.

Or it was. There was an error code.

“AE”

This indicates an internal leak. Users should remove the kick plate, investigate for a leak beneath the washer, evaluate the spray arms, a spray arm directing water to the side of the tub could be making its way into the basin beneath; disassemble the door assembly and check the vent; examine the door seal; is the washer level?

I turned it off at the breaker.

Otherwise, the alarm continued to chime. Chime. Chime. Chime.

Door seal. Fine.

Spray arms. One mangled. But this all seems too simple. I removed it anyway. We ordered a replacement.

The unit is level. Well, the little bubble was between the lines. What do I know?

Whitney thought she found me down when she wandered in from the garage, and I was on my belly unscrewing the kick plate.

Floor dry.

And I was in trouble. Like, punished, I mean.

Brain cancer makes everyone crazy.

I was scolded for laying on my belly without advance notice.

“I thought you were down!”

I will be in trouble when I publish that last line.

I flipped on the breaker.

Chime.

I flipped off the breaker.

Whitney's good friend at work is in a wonderful relationship with a good dude and a plumber. I don't know if he's a good plumber, but he's a good dude, and I'll let a good dude in my house to break something before I let in a mean-spirited expert. He is a good plumber, though, I'm sure. He's helped us a lot, and if it weren't for my insecurity involving my ineptitude, I'd hang around more when he's here. I guess I'm worried he'll ask for clamps, and I'll hand him a circular saw. I do know that I own a spark plug wrench, and when my neighbor wandered into my garage last summer to ask for one to change out the spark plug on his mower my adrenaline swelled like I was receiving a presidential honor as I sauntered to the toolbox to retrieve the exact tool he needed. I placed it in his hand like a scrub nurse handing the neurosurgeon a scalpel.

Those tools are Whitney's Dad's, lovingly curated by Whitney's step Dad, who is both a good dude and good at fixing things. I think I'm honoring David when I use his tools. I hope so, anyway. He's Grandpa David around here, and the kids know him as that. This is good. I wish I could have a beer with him. I wish we could sit around with big beards and grandkids. We owe it to our ancestors, and all of us, we're to-be ancestors, too, so don't be a mean-spirited expert. The kids have their Grampy and their Pops, and they are deeply and unconditionally loved.

Still. I'd love a beer with Dave. I love his daughter very much. His son, too, because that dude is one of the best I've ever met.

He flipped on the breaker. We're back to Whit's friend's boyfriend.

No chimes.

"I'm not sure what's going on," he texts, "but I ran a cycle, and everything seems fine."

That's good news.

But the spray arm was mangled, I realize, and we don't yet have the replacement. It shipped from California on Tuesday. If it's here tomorrow, I won't hand wash a dish until at least Sunday. I've earned it. We're going on two weeks.

Whitney fills her bath before I start the dishes. A rested soul is better than a clean plate, so I lean against the counter waiting for the hot water to stop filling in the back before I turn it on at the kitchen sink.

I sure do like the look of a drying rack full of shiny glassware. It's almost worth the handwashing.

I was a bar-back at a high end cocktail bar and restaurant while in grad school. A James Beard type place. The head bartender said on day one, "This job is thankless, do not speak unless you're spoken to, and no matter what, do not speak to the guests."

As a bar back, you're head down, hands moving. Fill the ice, stock the liquor, rotate the beer, bus the dishes, clean the bar top, at shut down you're going to drag the heavy mats to the back, mop the floor, spray the rubber mats, drag them back, take out the trash. Clock out with my vans Sk8-Hi's soaking wet in booze water, jeans sticky, and a cigarette hanging from my lips. I miss the shit out of that terribly toxic job.

My glassware was goddamn spotless.

I became a bartender there after a year or so because I approach thankless jobs like a challenge to get thanks. When you walk out, I dig in. I'm a sleeper. A dark horse. You don't know what I can do, but it's more than you think.

I earned those thanks.

I work hard at whatever I do, and if it's not plumbing, or bar-backing, or building shit, it's in these words, and each of the thousands of words that I tap out on this 2012 era Macbook Air is an effort that I'm proud of.

Those bar days were ten or eleven hours, more on the weekends, and it was a terrible thing to do to Whitney who was raising our kids at home, while I worked 80+ hours/week at a bar and stumbled in at 2:00am to fall asleep on the couch before schlepping the kids to preschool in the morning and me off to grad school.

Anyway, the dishwasher is still busted, but I do blare punk rock while I make the dishes sparkle. That's what made me think about the bar tonight. I used to love the opening and closing hours because it was skeleton staff, and I'd just put on music and grind. Busy hands. Busy hands take your mind off things. Whitney lets me know that her bath isn't as relaxing when I'm in the "I wouldn't call it singing" mode in the kitchen. Fair, but those thirty or 45 minutes are mine. My music. My singular task. Dirty dishes. Dishes that got dirty because it's one way I care for our family. I made the food that hit that plate; that's in our kids' stomachs; that's in the dry rack. The dishes are the continuum of care.

I don't want to die. Not yet.

The dishwasher is busted, but it's healing me.

At least for approximately 37 minutes, three to four times each week.

It's a thankless job, but I'm in no rush for the new spray arm. Head down, hands moving. Like Frank Turner says, "Maybe rock and roll will save us all."

[This blog post](#) was published by [Glioblastology](#) on March 21, 2024. It is republished with permission.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

<http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/blog/dishwasher-busted-brain-cancer-glioblastoma>