



Creative Intervention

Words, Thoughts, Actions, and Congruence in Autistic Social Justice

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Introduction

Originally written as a poem, “Words” was created in response to “person with autism” and other such pathologizing labels and stigmas being projected onto my neurotype during a working group of parents and caregivers of neurodivergent children, which will remain unnamed. Believing my participation could contribute to conversations and actions enabling better understandings, acceptance, accessibility, and support for Autistics in our community in self-guided, meaningful, and humane ways, I eagerly joined the working group with open heart.

As the lone Autistic parent in the room, it soon became apparent that my voice was only needed or wanted if it was in alignment with the non-Autistic majority. Alienated and feeling spoken over and gatekept on issues directly related to me, every meeting was an exercise in patience. When the topic of “autism” arose, it was difficult to hear the sympathies parents felt for each other over having to “manage” their Autistic children, but when I tried to explain or present the experience from an Autistic perspective, I was told that my voice was better off silent or that I “took up too much space.” I departed that committee dejected, and any bits of my voice or suggestions that remained were co-opted and appropriated, but not necessarily for the right reasons. It was not my first experience of being silenced, and of oppression and appropriation, and it was certainly not the last. These experiences inspired me to write the piece “Words.” Soon afterwards, it quickly became apparent “Words” were not enough. And so began the journey of “Words, Thoughts, Actions and Congruence.” I hope you enjoy.

¹ Editor’s note: Kate Keto is a pseudonym. The author is an autistic mom to an autistic child, and a social justice advocate. In this case, *Studies in Social Justice* respects the author’s preference to remain anonymous. Any correspondence may be sent to the address below, from where it will be redirected to the author.





WORDS

Because the words "Person with Autism", "Living with Autism", "Therapies for Autism", "Interventions for Autism", "Behavioural Therapy for Autism" are allowed to prevail or remain, I write:

**WORDS MATTER.
THEY CAN OPEN DOORS, BUT ALSO
CLOSE MINDS.
THEY CAN INFLICT PAIN, OR BRAISE
WITH NUANCE.
WORDS MATTER BECAUSE THEY CAN
CARRY THE WEIGHT OF 100 YEARS,
OR DISMISS SOMEONE IN THE BLINK
OF AN EYE.
WHEN YOU CAN SAY SOMETHING IN
2 SECONDS THAT CAN DESTROY
ANOTHER FOR A LIFETIME,
WORDS MATTER.**



THOUGHTS

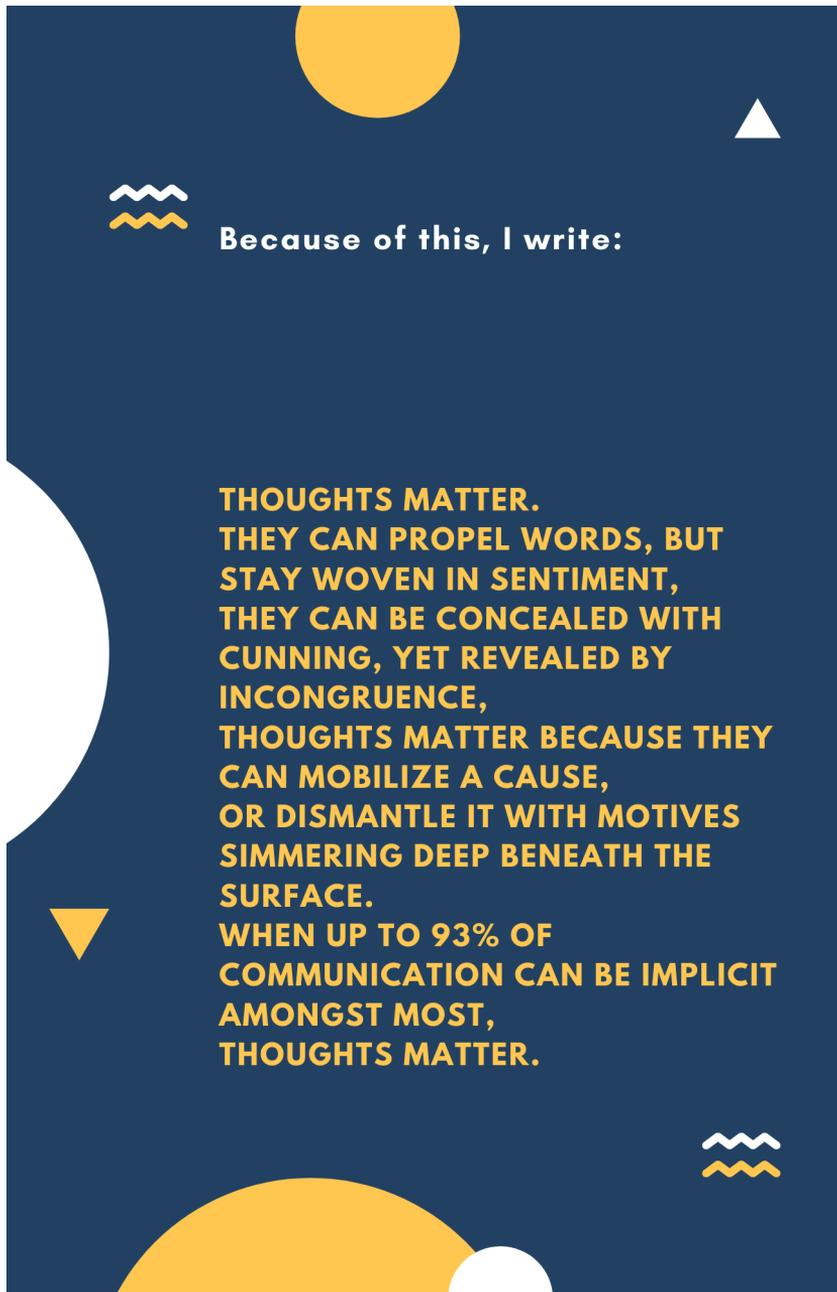
Because ableism exists in non-Autistic persons, and can be internalized by many Autistic people too.

People are quick to get rude, nasty, incensed, upset, or defensive because they assume an Autistic person is being:

"defiant, selfish, demanding, difficult, combative, argumentative, noncompliant, aggressive, attention-seeking, manipulative, controlling, or avoidant".

People do not have compassion for Autistics the way they do non-Autistics. Their compassion has limitations for Autistics because they do not see past their own privilege, and therefore will NOT assume that an Autistic person might actually be:

"dysregulated, afraid, traumatized, anxious, confused, communicating, engaging, coping, info-seeking".

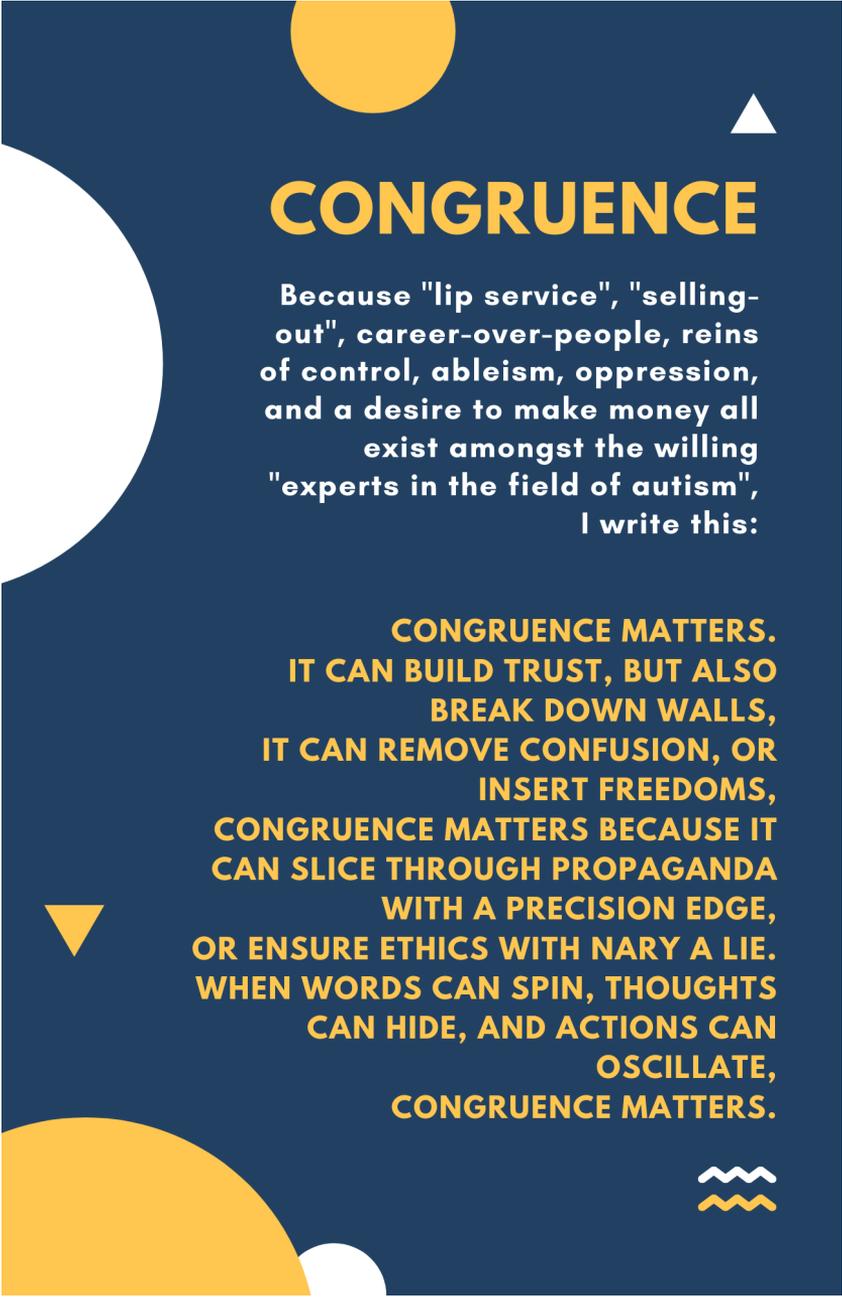




ACTIONS

Because many "autism" organizations with unhealthy narratives and motives will always have people who are willing to donate to them, work for them, with them, take their money - I write:

**ACTIONS MATTER.
THEY CAN SPEAK LOUDER THAN
WORDS, YET NEED NO SOUND.
THEY CAN EXACT INTENTION WITH
CAT-LIKE STEALTH, OR BECOME A
WAKE-UP CALL IN THE DARK.
ACTIONS MATTER BECAUSE THEY
CAN ENACT NEEDED CHANGE,
OR ARE NEEDED TO CHANGE
ENACTED DAMAGE.
WHEN ACTIONS ALONE CAN BOTH
LIBERATE AND OPPRESS,
ACTIONS MATTER.**



CONGRUENCE

Because "lip service", "selling-out", career-over-people, reins of control, ableism, oppression, and a desire to make money all exist amongst the willing "experts in the field of autism",
I write this:

**CONGRUENCE MATTERS.
IT CAN BUILD TRUST, BUT ALSO
BREAK DOWN WALLS,
IT CAN REMOVE CONFUSION, OR
INSERT FREEDOMS,
CONGRUENCE MATTERS BECAUSE IT
CAN SLICE THROUGH PROPAGANDA
WITH A PRECISION EDGE,
OR ENSURE ETHICS WITH NARY A LIE.
WHEN WORDS CAN SPIN, THOUGHTS
CAN HIDE, AND ACTIONS CAN
OSCILLATE,
CONGRUENCE MATTERS.**



**WORDS DO NOT MATTER
WITHOUT THE SUPPORTING
THOUGHTS**

**THOUGHTS DO NOT MATTER
IF THE ACTIONS DO NOT
MATCH**

NOTHING MATTERS IF...

**WORDS,
THOUGHTS,
AND**

ACTIONS

AREN'T

CONGRUENT

WITH EACH OTHER

Acknowledgments

Referenced words used to describe Autistics, as listed in “Thoughts” were identified by Meghan Ashburn in her public Facebook group, *Not An Autism Mom*, which can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/notanautismmom/photos/a.323348721443783/927102087735107/> (retrieved June 26, 2020). The graphic design for this piece was created by Kennedy Ryan.