

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)

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Behavior Is Communication

Some 2E Anarchists

Dear Parents,

I see the weight you're carrying. The endless pitying gazes and contempt for you for your kid "not measuring up" and you for "caving" and "not modelling well" and everything. The housing prices, the logistics, the patriarchal pressures on any partnerships you're in. The endless hours at the office forced to hide all emotion, smile, and put just the right amount of pressure to keep a living wage. The bodyshame around pregnancy and not pregnancy and former pregnancy. You are loved in all of this, I know that's nowhere near sufficient, but we can work this out.

I know you're afraid for your neurodivergent children and what will happen if they don't have the skills to be safe in the world. I know you see the onslaught they will face for their atypical traits as they get older, and already do today. All the school board meetings and bullying and threats.

But your childrens' subversive, unrestrainable, desperate urges to flap their hands, spin, bite themselves, read that physics textbook at age 6, NOT TALK, NOT BE PERCIEVED, and all of the above are not achievements, they are not delays, and they are not just "attention-seeking." They are the products

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of desperation in the cold amethyst pulsing and shredding, like a thousand bladed mace, of the fluorescent light, the voices that to you are a distraction and to them are swarming insects. They are a brain that cannot be changed and whose cravings for meaning and comfort cannot be socialized away without great torment.

They are not just Regulation and a Life Stage either—they are the core of a joy that cannot be fathomed or observed. The transcendent presence of that noun declension in that East African language where the genitive and instrumental merge with the brain's love of concord. The gorgeous flaring of pain as we pick layers upon layers of skin, like a magnetic orbit-rush.

If we were an alien civilization who experienced these wonders, and there were no context for fear or restraint, you would dance among us, all of us. But we, my beautiful neurodivergent people, are your species. Alas, that for sharing the same genetic and chemical and evolutionary lineage, we are walled even further apart behind expectations and terror.

I know you may feel a need to reward and punish, to limit Loud Hands and infodumps and crying and joyous spinning, to protect against the gaze of the world and its laws. If you ever feel this deepening the powerlessness of your child and your own exhaustion, I am here for you—these dynamics are so painful. But I do believe they are not the only way, and I am here to urge you to hear me out—a neurodivergent adult who has grown up happy and healthy without behavior modification—and beg you to consider another way to relate.

It is a lonely journey. With all the barriers to our childrens' truths, you may feel alone and like you have no choice. You may feel like you have failed, like your children have failed you, or like giving yourself or them beauty is unearned or unsustainable.

But the school administrator, the police officer, the judgemental fellow parent, all lie within prisons of fear and self-

denial of their own. And the very act of transgressing and sharing your truth—your emotions and explorations beyond the office, patriarchal care work, and behavior norms—will shatter and open and liberate all of the restraints of the world.

What do you deny yourself because you Haven't Earned It? Because you need to eliminate a Problem Behavior? Is it any food that comforts you? The mathematics you crave to see the twisting structures in but deny yourself As Punishment for fitting poorly in the compulsory education structure and as a means to Focus on your career? Give yourself a glass of water and a good dissertation, and savor the excruciating unpeeling of all power.

Your sacrifices for your child, your child's sacrifices for their Future, all of our sacrifices for the cardboard cutouts of compliance, are not obligatory. Don't you crave to shatter all of it? We could love so deeply in the dance of one another's unrestrained truths.

If the nuclear family makes you feel alone to care for your child, know that there are five other people who, if you reached out, would love to lend a hand. If you are economically oppressed, know that there are so many people of all income levels craving to provide mutual aid who are restrained from doing so by families, employers, and capitalist expectations. If your child is embroiled in conflict or endangering themselves, there are so many adults who have been that child who want to be there for them. We don't need the right reform or some morally perfect revolution. We need each other.

There is always someone behind another cage of panoptic glass shame who is craving to connect with us. The walls of right and wrong behavior separate us from so many feral relationships. And we can create a world where our children's Loud Hands can be joyous and unrestrained. <3

When your kid stims in public, they are expressing a joy that they cannot govern—and why should they, or you, be forced to? As 2E anarchists who have very much been that

kid, we ask that you support your child in the *jouissance* of their unmasking. The world is often hostile to neurodivergent kids and humans, especially those of us who face other forms of control; I am transmasculine, and my unruly gender is repressed just as often as my loud hands. Our neurodivergence is not the problem; judgemental people are.

Applied Behavior Analysis is the problem. Shouts of "QUIET HANDS!" and prying eyes, and secondhand embarrassment are the problem. Toxic schools that don't accommodate neurodivergence or transness or humanity are the problem. The all-consuming pressure to Control Your Child, and constant questioning about whether your kid is "on the spectrum" (always from people who refuse to name *what* spectrum), are the problem. And, yes, capitalism and the state are the problem.

All forms of control and restraint are the problem.

And as a parent, in the face of this behaviorist hellscape, you can model ungovernable 2E joy for your kid, or at least support them in expressing what is beautiful to them.

If your kid's stims cause harm to people or the environment, that has absolutely nothing to do with stim and everything to do with the specifics of the situation. As a child, I would often want to touch everything (my cat still has this problem), to the point that my family had to tell me to only touch objects with one finger. I was still able to explore the world with my Loud Hands, but without the risk of knocking things over. The only thing I was breaking and shattering was the very construct of neurotypicality.

Similarly, if your child is truly causing harm, you can redirect them to another stim, a fidget, or a different environment—without shutting down what brings them ND joy. For example, if your kid is grabbing another kid, you can identify their need for gross motor release and steer them toward a physical activity.

If your kid is terrifying your pets (as, let's be real, many small children tend to), you can hand them a fidget rather than pinning their Loud Hands to their side.

If your kid is throwing things, they can do that outdoors or somewhere else they're unlikely to break something.

And if your kid is flapping their hands in public and truly not harming anyone—just leave them be.

If your kid is existing while neurodivergent, that's beautiful, and it's equally meaningful for you to support and care for them in that. And even in spaces where people aren't supportive of unmasked neurodivergence, it's crucial for your kid to learn to stay strong and vulnerable and human. To notice the stares and not let it stop them from stimming. To reach out for support. To liberate themselves, and in doing so liberate others. By supporting your kid unmasking, no matter where they do so, you're laying the groundwork for them to make public space liveable, not only for other ND people, but for everyone.

While "QUIET HANDS!" might appear to chill them out in the moment, in reality it leads to pent-up physical energy, neurodivergent masking, and the groundwork for a lifetime of self-repression. No "chilling out" is worth our mental health, our insurgent joy, our humanity.

When we're causing harm, we don't need more control—in fact, often we're overwhelmed by control. I know I was as a kid; when I was five, I tried to sabotage my elementary school. In our overwhelm, we need care and support and liberation.

You can trust that, in public spaces that are explicitly supportive of neurodiversity, nobody (or at least, nobody other than the most repressed people) will have a problem with your kid's unrestrained neurodivergence. ND kids can have needs and boundaries, and so can our environments, and we can honor that without ever self-repressing or forcing ourselves and others to mask. We can release into 2Eness, and in doing so transform public space. <3

With endless surges of love,