



What a Nonverbal Autistic Teen Wants You to Know

Excerpts from
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Makayla's Voice:
A Letter to the World
.....
A Netflix Documentary



Makayla Cain, a nonverbal autistic teen, unlocks a joyous world of self-expression as she shares her thoughts for the first time, using a letterboard.

I dream of one day hearing my voice. I hope it's raspy, giving me a unique sound.

The most beautiful sound I have ever heard is the empty way the air flows between the trees. This sound goes unnoticed by most, but to me it sings. It creates melodies that resemble my own silence.

I belong in nature. Effortless noise. The wind is my muse. It inspires me to beam in my own way. Silent. Not us. We are the sound of hidden beauty. Winds of autism. I soar in trees.

I have autism. Silence is my cage, but it is my gift to the world to say my silence out loud. It is my hope to inspire you with my journey. Thanks for being here. This suits my song.

Like I said, I have autism. I am also a girl who loves music and has an interest in art. I recently went to Paris and saw three pieces by my favorite artist, Vincent van Gogh. He was trapped inside his emotions the way I am trapped inside my body.

Van Gogh used color to communicate, and I use letters on a board. For speaking people, language is only worthy if spoken by someone with speech, but the deepest messages come from people like Van Gogh and me, who communicate differently.

I am super super smart. I learn by listening. My mind is a sponge that drinks knowledge like it is juice. All my senses are heightened, and I can feel emotions as if they are music.

In my silence, I've learned that many assume silent equals dumb. I don't like that. It hurts my feelings. It's mean. But I also understand why it is thought, and that makes me sadder.

I need to ask for help. I run when my body separates from my mind. And then I notice and get so my legs move forward. "Eloping" is what Mom and Dad call it. The hard thing is I panic, so it is kind of hard to pause when I'm freaking out. I need help. My hunch is that I need space to hear my music, but my body takes my idea too literally.

My head hurts, and this happens a lot in thunderstorms. I'm thinking I'm needing a little rest. Silence.

I did not like school today. It really confuses me how my body creates so much trouble for me. How is it fair that I have these troubles, and it's only me?

Everyone has everything and nothing is hard. All hardships erase joy. I have an example. Autism.

How can I feel so mad in silence? Emotions are hard to keep inside. They rupture our insides if kept in. With silence we are forced to hold it in. We don't get to choose how to release or express how we feel.

We also experience so much alone, thanks to autism. So we are left in our big feelings alone. That causes us to do things we normally would not dream to do.

Forgive yourself. That's the best way to release. And by doing that, you teach forgiveness to others.

I see how the autistic mind mirrors the soul in a cosmic way. It sees colors in sounds. Music in the wind. My soul sees what others cannot. Truth, honesty, and love are colors surrounding the heart. I literally see that. It's music, silent like me.

I want to be an advocate for autistic people without a voice. I think my father can help, because he knows a lot of people.

I was once asked this question, "Snakes, are they interesting or creepy, and why?"
This is how I answered:

I once noticed a tiny snake slithering on the ground. It dared to exist in a space made for others not like him. Some people ignored it, others feared it, and some deemed it dumb and unworthy to live. They laughed and sneered as they became the predators to fear. Soaked in their own misjudgment, they dared to end its life. Noticing this threat, the snake began to hide. Like a lightning in a nocturnal sky, the snake began to move. Back and forth it went, as if demanding to be heard. Back and forth it went, becoming the new predator.

I often feel like that snake. Small, unseen, unnoticed, and sometimes feared. I live silently in a world of talkers. The snake lives discreetly in a world of walkers.

My letterboard is how I demand to be heard. Back and forth I move my index finger, spelling out each chosen word. Back and forth I type unbecoming the mute that once lived inside. Creepy or interesting, I'll let you decide.

I hope to keep learning about the world. I hope I can end silence and autism.

I love this voice. It is raspy, like I imagined. But I want to use my real voice now.