What if they've been wrong about every single one of them? What if they're all walking around without the ability to speak but brilliant, or at least cognitively normal? How many people are we talking about now, and how are they living their lives, and how have we missed this? And how
long is it going to take us to admit we've missed this so we can help as many of them as possible? It's a new adventure. That's basically what I always tell Aidan when we do this, something new. I said, okay, we're on another adventure, because we've been on adventures before where we've tried different therapies and different treatments. And the two of us will kind of leave the rest of the family and go off and try these new adventures, I say to him.

So far, We haven't seen a lot of results, but I'm always hopeful. I don't lose hope on that. And there is a time where it's like, okay, is any of this really going to help? Maybe I should just accept things the way that they are. But then, I don't know, I just, I, I just don't see it that way. I, I've always thought that Aiden was gonna find a way, that there's going to be something that he's going to do. It might not be the way in which I had hoped for or what I had originally expected, but I think he's gonna find a way. It's coming. I want to I don't know, all of it.

Just what you really feel and what you like, what you think. What are your philosophies? What's your favorite music? Yeah, it's like you guys, the nonspeakers, you guys are on the precipice of something really big, I think. Like a new frontier. All right. What do you think? What do you think of these new letter boards? Go for it. G.

Keep going. G-Q. Keep going, Dory. R-N. Keep going. Move your eyes. I see you moving. E-N. Eyes have to move around. G-R-E.

What makes sense? What makes sense? G-R-E. Keep your eyes ready. Read me. Go. G-R-E. Uh-huh.
A-G-R-E-A. Great, great.

L-N. Make it make sense. I-N. Look for it, look for it, look for it, look for it. F-N. Great life, great life. What? I am. Look for it, look for it, look for it, look for it. I, oh, didn't make too much sense.

Keep going. Well done. Great life. I, start at I. Start at I. So I have that I. Keep going. Is. Great life is. G.

G. Start at G. G and keep going. Make it make sense. G, G, J doesn't make sense. So G, mm-hmm.
Great life is what? You got this, buddy. Trust yourself. I love that.

Great life is— look at me for a second. Can you put your eyes up here? Thank you. Great life is— now look at the board. Go. O, A. Keep going. A and H and— keep going, keep going— E and

move your eyes, get that— A and move your eyes, move your eyes, move your eyes— D, great life
is ahead, was my question. Wow, sorry, just— no, I'm okay.

Just, he always looks at like, uh, he always gets concerned, so I'm just trying not to. So, all right, Aiden, so we got some new letterboards, huh? I believe you. I thought he was looking at the words and spelling them to you. He can't see them at all. I'm already astonished. What we do is we take the movement out of the fine motor of the digits and put it in the gross motor of the arm because that's so much easier to control. And he took to it like a champ.

I mean, he rarely, you know, if he missed a letter, it was generally a one-off or he was at the opposite end, and that's just kind of a starting at the wrong end. Plus there's a really strong draw to go to that left side of the board because he's been taught all his life, start left, go right. Speech is 100% motor. Language is 100% cognitive, and you can tell they're in 2 different areas of the brain. Speech is up here, language is down here. So just because the motor and the speech is affected does not mean the language is affected. So I'm not— I didn't ask those questions for comprehension. I asked them to give him an opportunity to practice spelling so I could coach the motor of his spelling.

There's never any doubt in my mind when someone walks into my room that they can and will spell for me, that they can and do want to learn. Yes, I, W-A-N, I want to, T-E-A. L-L-M-Y, my. F-U-T-T-E-R, my future. S-E-L-F-T-O-N-E-V-E-R-G-I-V-E. Go ahead. E. U-P-O-N-T-H— go ahead—
E-O-T-H-E-R-N-O-N-S. Go ahead.

P and then E and then A and then K and then E and then R and then S. I want to tell my future self to never give up on the other nonspeakers. I was, I was really dark, dude. I was— that was a really hard fall and winter, and I was starting to fray at the seams, really. About Jamie's future and just where, where is this all going. And I've been fighting cognitive dissonance ever since. As you know, what you're presenting is an incredibly radical thought. It's a beautiful thought. Yeah. And I'm starting to believe you.

It's a wonder I'm not on the ground weeping in the fetal position. I'm just gonna like go with the flow. Yeah, it is pretty amazing. And it's— and sometimes I say, you know, like, why would you believe this one crazy lady sitting here in front of you versus all the people you've heard. But there's a real logic to it if you back into it. All tests of cognition, of motor, of academics require— all tests of, sorry, language, uh, cognition, academics, IQ require motor. Every single one.

No, I'm, I'm— so you either have to speak it or you have to do it, you know, put the thing in the thing, touch this, touch that, give me the this, give into that, but we never teach the motor. We do not teach the motor. For some people, you know, it's hard for them to believe that letterboarding is real. What would you say to those people? Yes. Y-O-U. Mm-hmm. J-O-Y.

U-S, just. N-E-E, need. T-O, 2-O, go ahead. P and then E and then N and then Y and then O and
then U and then R and then go ahead, E-Y and then E-S. Yes, you just need to open your eyes. The early research in autism focused on the cognitive disabilities, and that is mostly due to the researchers being psychologists or psychiatrists who focus primarily on the cognitive aspect. The assumption that individuals right from the get-go who have autism also have a cognitive disability is completely inaccurate. And the reason is, is because of what's called apraxia.

And apraxia is an inability to perform on demand a specific movement even though it is fully understood. Traditional assessments, neurological testing, academic testing, all focus on pointing, writing, or speaking, which all are motor skills. When we start to address the motor skills by practicing functional-based movements, purposeful movements, by practicing and coaching their body, they're then able through neuroplasticity to build those motor skills in order to be proficient in the things that they want to do. Is it an easy process? Absolutely not. Is it something that they're all of a sudden going to have perfect motor skills? Not necessarily.

However, they're now going to be able to, one, communicate, two, ride a bike when they've never been able to ride a bike before. It takes some longer than others, but with that perseverance that most, if not all, of them have, it won't be a problem. If you're looking at autism through the lens of it's a social deficit model or it's a cognitive disability model, then you see what you believe. But if you actually understand it's not those things, it's a sensory motor processing challenge, suddenly you're like, oh, maybe what I'm asking right now is for you to do something purposefully with your body. That's the problem, right? That you need me to coach you through that, not that you don't understand what I asked you to do. You hiding from us?

You can't hide from us. Is it hard for you sometimes to understand where your hand is using the letterboard? S-E-N-S-O-R. Sensory. S-T-O-R-Y. I-M-U-L-I-F-A-S-S. Oh, A-S-S-A-U-L. Assault.
Sensory stimuli. Assault.

Keep going. M. You're good. Yeah. My. My. Which one, G or B? B. Can we hold the pencil like that? Good.

I got the B. Keep going. O. D. Move your eyes. Y. Assault my body. Eyes. C-O-N-S. T, that makes sense.

Go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go. A, get it, get it, get it. N-T-L. Constantly. Okay. Sensory stimuli assault my body constantly. T-E-N-T-L-Y. H-E-S-E, these. Hold your pencil like that. These, B-R-U-S-H-E-S, these brushes.

H and E and L and P, help. M and me. Go ahead. F and E and E and L, feel. M, my. Feel my— in a
second, finish the sentence. H, finish your sentence. A, stay here. And don't finish— wait, finish the word! I hate it when you leave the word.

H-A-N. Almost done. N-D-S. Yeah, assault. Sensory stimuli assault my body constantly. These brushes help me feel my hands. I would say growing up I was the I'm an eternal optimist. In fact, I used to say my political party was possibilitarian. Like, I'm like, I can just— whatever, anything's possible. Really optimistic.

And when Evan was diagnosed with autism, I totally just took it in stride. Like you just said, my kid has red hair and blue eyes. I'm like, okay, okay, like, so what do I do? What does that mean? Dad. Dad. Good job. There he is. I swim with Dad. I wasn't discouraged by it.

I was thrown off. I was thrown off like this isn't what I was planning on doing. I didn't think I was going to raise a kid with special needs, but I also wanted to always be a special ed teacher. So it was sort of like in alignment with who I was. But when Trey was diagnosed a year later, it blew my mind and I literally sat in the rocking chair in his nursery for 2 days. Like, like almost catatonic. Trey's playing what? Trey's learning how to play Jenga.

All right, baby, this one. Try this one. Oh, it's gonna fall! Do it again! I just like shut down, and I remember their dad finally coming in after a couple days, and he's like, Dawn Marie, Like, I get it. Like, I totally get it, but we need you. Like, you can't do this. Like, you have to, like, snap out of this and, like, come help me.

And what was happening for me at that moment was just massive overwhelm, and I lost hope that
I would ever be enough for them. Like, it was a lot. I'd already spent a year helping Evan and saw how intense the level of intervention was to get just at that time moments of eye contact or minutes of his gut feeling okay. And I thought, wow, like I'm working around the clock for this one kiddo and now I've got 2 of them. Like, how is this going to happen? So in that moment I thought, we're screwed. Like, this isn't going to go well.

Then the universe has started opening up all these paths and and now I'm this practitioner and now I'm helping all these other families. And I spent 3 years trying to teach Evan how to spell before I would introduce a letterboard to him because I thought he had to know how to spell in order to do it. Yeah, look, uh-huh, uh-huh, look, stop tripping on the regular and I promise to work in the flow better. Yeah, This hunger in the game, I learned that from Jennifer. Things stick even if you got your bed in y'all. Working on things that's so broken on the inside. I internalize every word I never meant right. Perception bent right, falling off the cliffside.

But I bought the rent. No, I've been nice, I've been tight. I'm a reckless Gemini. Probably die young if this rap biz never tried. Somebody come get me, I brought it out with me. I gotta act, it's really a— Whoa, Vicky, 2 balls popping like— So Ricky, Lil Peck, got you coffee, Mr.

Poe with me. I stay litty, I'm getting the strip pity, giving too much pity to those that don't give me damn luck. Send a fam to the DR, bringing straight love, just showing who really we are. One day I'll do a buck 10 just for the PR to blow across the globe, just to see how I be on.

I keep on young, don't know Teflon. Double play, it's always down the lead, y'all. Stop riding back and forth seesaw, knocking on doors, just know I got the Kilo, talk big, come at angles. Yeah, Young Sway, read the label. Bless, straight from the manger. Glory to my God, bigger than
the paper. You know where I stay, you know what I do. Flexing on them with the sweats. Get comfortable, don't flinch. Uh, just passing you, faded at the park, and I'm gone.

Mr. Baybrook, Mr. Big Shot, you can get rocked, you can get popped. Mr. Tic Tac, finna blow. Yeah. Yeah, I'm pissed off out this neutron blast off. I've been assessing another lover, shame on my size. Never eating and never pleasing a humble pie. Starvation, a motivation, a different life.

Maybe hungry and never settle for nothing. Life, look, if it ain't real, then it's not real.
All right, what do you got? Oh, we got— yeah, yeah, yeah. I see A-N-G. I can't— I know this board's a little different, the stencils. W, G, A, I, I can't wait, I can't wait, T, keep
looking at the board, T, N, O, and C, N, throw your hand back, O, and M, N, I'll find it, buddy, E, N, A, N, C, N, K, I can't wait to come back.

So I'm wondering if you have any thoughts on that quote, and if you could make a comment about
the brain-body disconnect in advocacy for yourself or other nonspeakers, what would that be? I might start from the top. You got this. Let's start from the top. Ready? Go. I and L and I and V and— get it?— E and I lived in S and I and L and E and N and C and I lived in silence. F and O and 4 I lived in silence for— go for it.

A-L, all. M, all my. All my. I lived in silence for all my— eyes on the board. Whichever one you want. L and I and F and life. U and N and T and I and until. L and A and S and T last. M and O and N and T and H until last month. I lived in silence for all my life until last month.

Oh, no way. Reality. F and O and 4. M-Y-S-E-L-F for myself, A-N-D and O-T-H-E-R-S and others.
All right, let me read it for myself and others. So I lived in silence for all my life until
last month. Other than a finite number of my family members, most people thought I was dumb. I
hated being talked to like I was a baby. Now I'm going to change the reality for myself and others. Well done!

Well done! Well done! I heard you say that. That was so good too. Communication is everything, and without any real means for Cade to tell me anything— if he's hitting himself, why he's

hitting himself, is he hungry, does he have a headache, does he feel terrible, you know, is he constipated, why are you doing that, why are you upset— and unable to tell me anything. What does he want to eat? Do you like what we're doing?

What do you want to do? I mean, his only real ability to communicate with me would be either to make noises which were, are you happy about that or upset about that? Because sometimes it's
hard to figure out if it's happy or upset. So yeah, we had no real reliable form of communication, and, um, I had to, or we had to, just basically guess for 20 years. Okay, you've gone from the laminate. Yeah, laminate. Laminate. Well, it was actually first the stencil.

The stencil. Stencil to the laminate to the keyboard. I did. That's— he did. He went from all those. I'm good at this and will become independent. What do we need to do to, to help nonspeakers? I think knowing that we are intelligent and treating us with respect helps. That's right.

Why did it take take my good friend from Portland to call me and say, hey, listen to this breakthrough miracle for our son. Why is it that these parents around the world are having to get to each other and tell each other? Why isn't science— why, why, why aren't they looking for how to really help our kids? You know, that's the thing that's the most upsetting. He should have been— he could have done this years ago. He's told me that. All I want is research to happen. It's not discredit. As a special educator, everything I do should be evidence-based, and that's not— it's not an evidence-based procedure.

For an evidence-based procedure that we can do, you have to have 16 studies by like a peer-reviewed program, and they don't have that. Well, I think they need to be interested in anything. That's why we're innovative. And so we'll follow the research, see if it comes out. If it does, It's a game changer for kids. Where are we going today? Legoland! All right. Hey Madison, where are we going today?

Madison, what are you doing today? Where's Madison going? She wants to swing. Hey Madison,
what do you got there? Hey, hey, hey, Madison, Madison, hey, what you doing? Yeah, hey, let's say the camera. Did we go to the car wash today? Here, look at Daddy, look at Daddy. Come on.
Hi, hi, you're really engrossed in those toadstools.

Do you go to a public school, or did you go to a public school? There's a couple people that we're going to interview where their schools wouldn't let them use a letterboard. They didn't believe in letterboarding. Ready? Call me Super Reader. Hey. Crying. R-O-U-N-D, around. A-G-E,
age. I can see you.

2, 2, around age 22. I-F-N, I-N-N, I-N-N. S and H, E and D. I finished P. Uh-oh, try again.

Bubbles. Got it, babe. P-U. Good. You got it, T.

B-L-I. I finished public. S. No! Get your eyes there. C and H and O. Quiet. O. I finished public school. I, M and I and S, S, E, D.

I missed O, U, T. I missed out O on. Wink it. R and E and A and Real. Where's Stella? G-N-O-O-I. Keep going. Good. Real good. C-N— I'm sad!

Go ahead, go ahead, go ahead. C-N-O-N-N-T. Mama! Around age 22, I finished public school and
missed out on real good content. Yeah, I'm gonna guess some of your emotions right now are because of that experience too, but you can tell me if that's true or not. I could be projecting. Dawn, go get in the bus. Here you go. Hello!

There we go. Madison, look at Mommy! It's your first day of school. There's the kindergarten. There it is. Hey, Madison, you going to school today? Say yes. Yeah. You're gonna have fun, huh? Say hi!

They don't even talk to me. They forgot all about me. This is your class and you had snack here? Yeah, I like it when my mom really pays attention. Do you think you can say Miss Marner? No. I'm Miss Marner. Hi, I'm Madison. Say hi, I'm Madison. This is Dawn's birthday.

Remember Dawn's birthday? From BB? So how does that make you feel as a parent to realize that
all these years she was in school and, you know, she was truly saddened? Yeah, you know, you know, there was— there's a famous quote, Charles Dickens, best of times, worst of times. And it was actually in the book Underestimated, which I parallels our experiences 100% as parents. It was wonderful. We're excited the first time you see it, first time you understand it, but then you start thinking about, oh my gosh, this, this poor— my child had to go through these experiences.

Teachers who didn't understand, that thought she didn't have any abilities whatsoever, probably went through situations where maybe other, other young people teased her or were mean
to her. And she had no way to be protected. Also, all the things that we did that were probably wrong, or we should have been doing things to encourage her. So that's, that's the downside. She recognizes it was there, and she recognizes, and she understands that people didn't understand. Most people just don't understand. So, Maddie, thanks for being here once again. Why do you want to do the interview over? I, W, A, S.

I was. E, M, B. Keep going. A, R, R. Good. A and S, S, E, D, embarrassed. B, you got it, by. M, my. S and C and R and I and P and T and I and N and G, by my scripting. Do you, do you have
like a goal in life, a mission in life?

What is your dream? I'd love— move your eyes— L-O-V. Here, pull back. L-O-V. Good job. I'd love T, to. A, D, V, O, C, A, T, to advocate. F, O, for. S, I know what you want. S2C-I-N-N-S-C-H-O-O-L-S.

I'd love to advocate for S2C in school. And what needs to change? T-E-B-A-C-H-E-R. Teachers. Teachers. N-E-E-D. T, 2, S, T, O, stop. Stop what? U, N, D, E, under, E, S, T, I, M, A, T-I-N, underestimating. A-U-T-I-S-T-I-C-S.

Teachers need to stop underestimating autistics. Specifically— boom, boom. Yeah. And what about— mic drop. What about specifically, like, for unreliable speakers, right? You've talked about how your speech is not reliable. How would you suggest teachers not underestimate students like you? T-H-E, they, N-E, E. They need T-O-U-S-T-A-R. Start.

Go ahead. P-R-E-S-U-M-I-N. Good. Presuming. U-P, presuming, up. A, keep going, G. Good. A-I,
again. A-N, keep going, D, and. A-G, keep going.

A-I-N. They need to start presuming up again and again. It's hard to put into words the feelings that we have as a result of this small, seemingly small thing happening, and we're amazed that it hasn't happened before. What took it so long? I mean, it's not— I don't understand really, in a way, because it's fairly simple and straightforward, why we haven't had this solution before and why No one's figured it out. But now that we have it, it should be fully embraced by the school systems, by therapists everywhere. It should be— there should be research, academic literature focused strictly, specifically on this area to help promote it.

Because I can guarantee you, parents, when they see this and they watch their— excuse me— when
they watch their children for the first time speak and articulate their thoughts and feelings and emotions. It's, well, it's something else. I would like to request one thing of you. Can you take a few seconds to take a quick intellectual snapshot mentally of this child? And you can raise your hands and feel free to be honest if you observe any one of these things. For example, do you see a child with a low IQ, a child with cognitive challenges, a child with learning disabilities, or even a child who should, you know, focus on learning functional life skills as opposed to academics? Any of these?

No judgment, you can raise your hands. Okay, some of you. And maybe some of you are shy and
suspect that this is a trick question. Well, well, Sid does happen to be my son, so yeah, sort of. I remember the day that I walked into my son, who was then all of 6, into his classroom, and I saw him passively strapped to a chair for no reason, just because. How many of you think that this treatment has at least in part to do with an intrinsic lack of respect for the child? Assumption of intelligence brings respect, whether that intelligence is on display or not.

I'm going to say that second phrase again: whether that intelligence is on display or not, assumption of intelligence brings respect, and respect brings dignity. Go ahead and refer back to that snapshot you just took mentally. Reassess. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, right? Just the absence of science doesn't mean that it's not true. So, you know, we, we might have to wait until the science comes out. When a child is communicating, you don't need the science. So you'd say, you know, this is one of the cases where everybody keeps saying
science, science is stupid to wait for. Who— I don't want the science.

I want Sid to talk. I don't care. I'm a scientist. I don't care about the science. I know that Sid is talking. And like Sid says, if you don't believe it, go get a life. Can you control your thoughts? Okay, that's interesting. I'd like to know as I am— keep going. A.

I am a— I think that was an M, but double check. Not an M. R. I'm an— I'm an R. Go fix it. Okay. Are you Are you— are you— I keep moving. Are you D? Okay, D. Sit, look, and go.

Are you D-D-E-R? Rudder. And then what? L-E-S-S. Yes, okay. I'm a rudderless S-H-I ship. I in T-H in the S-E in the sea. Oh, and look, look, please. O-F in the sea of— T-H. Keep moving.

O-V. T-H-O. Keep moving. O-U-G-N-H. Sea of thought. Done. I'm a rudderless ship in the sea of thought. I think we're paying too much attention to validate something that is working for thousands of kids. These are not 3 outliers that are trying to prove this to the world, that, oh, autistic kids that are non-speaking can communicate, this is magic.

Thousands of kids are communicating. Are all the parents fools? Are we trying to live wishful thinking? No. So we're not in some mass hoax to deceive the whole country. I mean, what's anybody going to gain by this? Vincent definitely puts extra pressure on himself to prove to people that these are his words. When he works in front of anyone, he becomes a perfectionist, that he has to do it without any mistakes, which we keep trying to teach him to relax. You know, everybody has a typo when they type.

You know, everybody flubs up their words. Like, I stumble on my words all the time. It's the same thing. He's such a free bird now because he keeps saying he was like in a cage and he's really truly dedicated to helping other nonspeakers see you can do this, I can do this, we can do this, and we need to come together and show the world that We have a voice. What is the best
message that we can put out there for nonspeakers? I want them to have hope. Why is hope important?

Really dark tunnels are illuminated. So this is your message to the people that don't believe that you're typing your own words, what would your message be to those that have disbelief? I think judgments are my fuel to persevere. You can't unsee what you've seen with these spellers, and I believe that, you know, presuming competence is critical. Right off the bat, 5 years old,

we should have all been presuming competence in our kids, and we should have been encouraging
them, telling them we knew that they were in there. It's time to shift that whole paradigm. Like, we need to make a shift to say, start talking to your kids the way you would any other kid right off the bat.

So when I started to see the growth that Vincent was having with Spelling to Communicate and the depth of these conversations, I knew I needed to start sharing it with some of my friends who had kids that were similar to Vincent. And sometimes I get a little thought and I can't get it out of my head. And JB kept coming into my head. I just really had this drive to get his son Jamie to try what Vincent was doing. So I sent him a text and I'm like, hey, how are you? What are you doing? It was confusing because she basically said Vince has learned how to communicate, check this out.

And then all of a sudden there's just these screenshots of this insanely complex language that purportedly her son is the one making these words. And so I'm, I'm literally in a state of confusion. What is going on? You know, and I literally sort of text back to her like WTF, question mark. Like, what the hell is going on? What are you talking about? And she starts sending me more screenshots of the things Vince has said. And this is like complex language that, um, somebody in college or beyond would kind of make, right? I was like, yep, that's Vincent, and I'm pretty sure Jamie can do the same.

And I started to tell him about spelling to communicate, and he said, can I call you? I walk into a private room I hit my phone and I call her and I'm just like, what are you talking about? She says, there's this communication method, it's called spelling to communicate, and Vince started doing it about 4 months ago. And we used to think that his most advanced word—words were, I want juice. And now you're seeing what he's writing. And then we had a conversation, he went home, And then he gave me a video of his son to say, honey, this is Jamie. He's not going to be able to communicate like that. And he sent me the video and I knew right then. I'm like, yep, he's going to do it.

Autism can take you as a parent to a really dark place. The future is really, really, really scary. And everything is different when your child can communicate. Everything is different, and I, I just, I sometimes shudder to imagine where we would be as a family, where I would be as a person, where Jamie would be if we hadn't had the luck of having another parent reach out to us and encourage us to give this a try. I asked Jamie about Honey the other day, and he said, Honey saved my life. He understands the gravity of what gift her selflessness gave him. And I would say Honey didn't just save Jamie's life.

Honey saved our family. Honey saved our family, really. You walk into the room to begin your first Spelling to Communicate session. The thing that really blew my mind was when Elizabeth Vosseler turned to Jamie and she said, I know you can do this. I know how smart you are. Yeah, and I already know you're smart. You don't have anything to prove to me, okay? And I'm going to

teach you how to do something new, totally new, which may feel a little bit weird at first. Okay, so I really, I really think about that. I've even watched the videotape back.

I don't think anybody has ever said that to Jamie before. So on the first day, I'm texting Lisa going, holy shit, he's spelling words. My mind is already blown. We get into the second day and they're doing a lesson on plants. She asks him to spell carnivore. No problem, spells carnivore. Then she says, Jamie, spell the opposite of carnivore. And I'm like, wait a minute, wait, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, in my head. She didn't say that word in the lesson. That word that is the opposite of carnivore.

She didn't say that word. He spells herbivore perfectly. And I literally— it's on video— I go, uh, excuse me, uh, was that word in the lesson? And she's like, no, no, that's what we call prior knowledge. I think that was where I went from wanting to believe to going, okay, Okay, we're really on to something here. When the texts started to trickle in that like this is happening, like it's— this is true for Jamie, it's, it's happening, it's real, you know, you let out a little bit more hope, a little bit more hope. Um, and then pretty soon, you know, I don't know what— I think it was probably that first week with Dawn Marie, like then we just let the floodgates go.

It was such a magical I mean, it's so emotional, but I wouldn't trade it. I'd go back there even right now because it was, it was the very beginning of believing that his whole life is gonna change. You know, he's gonna be okay. It's all gonna be okay. He's gonna be fine. The first time I saw Jamie using the letterboard was in a video sent to me at the start of my lacrosse season in 2020. It was right before, like, we had played a scrimmage. Usually I try to get, like, serious and and get a little angry before, and I broke down in my locker room.

I think it's the, it's the best thing that's ever happened to this family. Find it. Up, up, up, up, up. Good. L. How have you seen the relationship change for Jamie's brother and sister now? It's obviously the whole dynamic of the family's changed. There's so many, but, but one of them is just knowing that, yeah, your, your brother loves you and has loved you all this time.

And it may not have felt like that, and I know that you did feel like that at times, you know, when he would get agitated or mad. It's scary sometimes to be around, especially for a younger sibling. And for our daughter, it was, you know. And I think she doubted if he loved her, even what he might have known about her. And Jamie is so loving. And so for her to get that feedback, like, you care about me, you know me has just, I mean, opened up everything. Yes, I-N— go ahead— A-M-E— I named— M-Y-S-E-L— I named myself— N-O-T-O-R-I-O-U-S-L. Y-S-T-R-O-N. I
named myself Notoriously Strong.

B-E-C-A-U-S. Because. I-H-A-V-E. Have. Uh-huh. A-L-W. Go ahead. A-Y. Always. B-S.

And then E, and then E, and then N, and then A, and then F, and then I, and then G, and then H, and then T, and then E, and then R. I've always been a fighter. Mm-hmm. E, V, E, even. I,

if. N, O, O, N, E. Go ahead. K, and then N, and then E, and then W. Yes, I named myself Notoriously Strong because I have always been a fighter, even if no one knew.

I just want you to read this, the letter that Jamie wrote. Oh, you bastard. All right, you ready? Dear Bibi, happy birthday. I love you. No words can make you understand how much I appreciate you. You have always believed in me and have never given up on me. You are a special
grandpa, and I'm lucky to have you in my life. You've always been the one not to let my disability get in the way of loving me. You are a great person.

You must know how much I love you. I hope you have a great birthday. Love, Jamie. That's the kid. That's him. So when you got that letter, how was that? Weepy. Weepy. I mean, I just, you know, I spent a lot of time with Jamie when I— when we lived in Oregon.

I drove him to school 2 or 3 times a week, picked him up, spent a lot of time just, you know, I tried to. But to realize that all that time, all that effort was appreciated was just, you know, I mean, I just weepies. How exciting is it now that you can communicate with your grandpa? Yes, I am glad that he N-O-W, knows. W-H, who. I-A-M-B-E. F-O-R-E-D-I-E-S. I am glad
that he knows who I am before he dies. You're a good man.

The East Coast-West Coast hip-hop rivalry was essentially a feud between Bad Boy Records and
Death Row Records. Oakland-based rapper Tupac Shakur then kicked off the rivalry with Biggie by
alleging that he and Puff Daddy were behind Tupac being robbed and shot 5 times in the lobby of
a New York recording studio. Biggie's track Who Shot Ya was released soon after Tupac's attempted murder, although Bad Boy Records denied involvement and claimed the song was recorded
months prior to the incident. Still, the hip-hop community interpreted it as a taunt at Tupac. What do you think? Check it out over here. Do you see that picture of Puff Daddy up there?

Yeah, then you too. Look at the picture of Puff Daddy. What adjective comes to mind? What do you think of when you look at that? Good, good. Ready? Go. Good. G-A-N-C-E. Come on.

G-R. Find your letter. And keep going. Enter. Gross. Gross. What do you think of when you look at that picture of Puff Daddy? Here, come up here so I can spell. Come on. What do you think of that?

T and H and E, the G. Keep the G. R, S, gross. P, A, R. The gross part is— his— S-M-E— S-M-I—
keep going— R. His smirk— stay here— his smirk— W and H and I and L and while. Uh-huh. P-L-A-N-N-I-N. While planning what? Stay in your chair, you're doing great.

T and U and P and A-C. Yeah. While planning Tupac's what? I or D-E-M-I-S-T. E. The gross part is his smirk while planning Tupac's demise. I-N-S-E. Good, good. F-E. Keep going.

Eyes up. My brother Evan is feeling anxious. Yeah. How's that making you feel? Yes, I get it, get it. And keep going, buddy. Yep. And you're so sweet, Jamie. Like the worst friend because I can't help him. Yeah, it's not— you don't have to.

He's getting better just by you being here. Yeah, look at— he's pacing off the extra energy. You got it. You're there. And then, and then, and then go ahead. You're gonna— you are amazing,
Evan. Oh, but I and O and U, A, R. You are, you are good. J, A. Um, James, you are James.

So guys, I'm going to read this to you. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, ASHA, has reviewed the evidence for RPM and spelling to communicate and warned against their
use. They conclude there is no evidence clients are actually doing the communication. Would you
care to comment on that statement? I think they are delusional. That's one of my favorite words. Can you— do you care to comment? A-G-N-O-S-E. Diagnose. I— keep going.

I-N-T. Which is ironic because SLPs are the ones to diagnose it. It's all in there. Yeah, you said it all. Yeah, yeah. Come on, Evan. Can't you see that you are they? You keep me locked up this way. Give me a test and you will see. A brilliant mind inside of me.

Set me free. Set me, set me, set me, set me. Why have nonspeakers been forgotten by the world?
We have no voice. I see how non-speakers suffer needlessly in silence. Communication is a basic
human right. The world needs to change the way it sees non-speaking autism. It is a neuromotor
disorder, not a cognitive one. I know something about shared achievements because I am affected
by a form of autism that doesn't allow me to speak. My neuromotor issues also prevent me from tying my shoes or buttoning a shirt without assistance.

I have typed this speech with one finger with a communication partner holding a keyboard. I am one of the lucky few non-speaking autistics who have been taught to type. That one critical intervention unlocked my mind from its silent cage, enabling me to communicate and to be educated, like my hero Helen Keller. I have struggled my whole life with not being heard or accepted. A story on the front page of the New York Times page of our local newspaper reported
how the principal at my high school told a staff member, the retard can't be valedictorian. Yet today, here I stand. Each day, I choose to celebrate small victories, and today, I am

celebrating a big victory with all of you.

The freedom to choose our own way is our fundamental human right, and it is a right worth defending, not just for us, but for every human being. For me, I have a dream. Yes, just like Martin Luther King Jr., I have a dream. Communication for all. There are 31 million nonspeakers with autism in the world who are locked in a silent cage. My life will be dedicated to relieving them from suffering in silence and to giving them voices to choose their own way. God gave you a a voice. Use it. And no, the irony of a non-speaking autistic encouraging you to use your voice is not lost on me.

Because if you can see the worth in me, then you can see the worth in everyone you meet. My fellow classmates, I leave you today with a quote from Alan Turing, who broke the Nazi encryption code to help win World War II: Sometimes, it is the people no one imagines anything of, who do the things no one can imagine. Be those people. Be the light. Fiat Lux. Thank you. The blessings of liberty have been limited or even denied, and the Civil Rights Act of '64 took a bold step towards righting that wrong.

But the stark fact remained that people with disabilities were still victims of segregation and discrimination, and today's legislation brings us closer to that day when no Americans will ever again be deprived of their basic guarantee of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We must have our rights of effective communication as guaranteed in the Americans with Disabilities Act. We need all typers to join us in the battle for communication rights. The provisions in Title II of the ADA say that people with communication disorders have the right to equal communication of their choosing in schools. So when a school says, oh, I'm sorry, we can't do that, it's just not true. It's the law. And so Elizabeth says, no more, it's got to stop.

The most important thing that I did was to find Elizabeth a teacher who could teach her how to type, because without being taught, nonspeakers have a problem with initiation. That is the contribution I made, and now I've gotten out of the Because Elizabeth is taking the lead and teaching me what needs to happen in the mission so that every nonspeaker can have a voice. How
do you feel about society trying to model autistics to look and act quote unquote normal? Yeah. Get it, get it, get it. The core issue that is wrong in ABA is exactly that. In really supportive worlds, a person is celebrated for their unique traits, not punished.

And, and, and keep going, keep going. Nice. And get it, get it, get it, get it. Nice job. Yeah. Should schools choose to really work with a student's strong suit? Autistics will become tomorrow's innovators and leaders. And find it, find it, and then hit comma. And go, go, go. The average autistic child can read and do math by age 4 but can't show it.

Imagine the difference we can make in the world if taught how we learn. Ah, good. Excellent answer. Autism parents are going to push every boundary to help their child. They're not going to let whether something is emerging or not fully tested get in the way. The only people that

autism parents really trust are other autism parents. So if something comes along, no matter what it is, if it's helping children, the word is going to get out. You think about how we got into this. I got a phone call from an autism parent, and I don't really care what anybody else has to say.

I had an autism parent telling me that her son was now fluent on a letterboard and able to communicate with his family, and that their whole life had been changed, and that every day was
a joy. I think what's happening with Jamie on a letterboard is proof to me that we did get the whole thing wrong. It's proof to me that we've gotten the whole thing wrong. That we believed that this was a cognitive impairment in most of these kids, when in fact it's been a motor planning impairment the whole time. And that's actually really important because if you know motor planning is the real issue, now you can really target your science. How do we rectify that? Is that something we do in the brain?

Is that something we do with therapy? Is that something we do with nutrition? I don't know the answer to that, but by having a better idea of what the disability actually is, is so important. And that's why what's been discovered with these nonspeakers is so critical, that people start to take this seriously, that they realize that maybe millions of children have been misunderstood and underestimated, and we start rectifying that as quickly as we can. Let the revolution begin. Let's go, y'all. Spellers, check. Spelling to create this sound, but they gonna hear you now and laugh.

Yeah, no, they gonna hear you now. The doubts they seen is no longer fair. Been on this road too long to ever give up. Determination, not complacent, they can never mirror. Expression through these letter boards can make it any clearer. No longer underestimated souls of this era. Look at these souls glistening, ready to prove fact from all that they thought was fiction. Life-changing missions and making sure teachers see the difference. Talking about some evidence, all you gotta watch and listen. Might have failed to mention that they have really closed the distance.

Take a dip in now, they y'all been swimming, just didn't care you missed it. Now this the revolution, miracle past the movement. They challenging you, prove them stigmas and things you
bought them. Mountains to mounds you moved them. Don't working, only tuning. Tell them Opening
up their eyes. Hello, how you doing? Like the world is yours. Keep them with the pressure, applying it full court. Know you gonna live it, child.

Leaps and bounds to miles round, spelling the creative sound. But they gonna hear you now and
loud. Look, know they gonna hear you now. They doubt they seen is no longer fair. Know you gonna live it, child. Leaps and bounds to miles round, spelling the creative sound. But they

gonna hear you now and loud. Yeah, no, they gonna hear you now. Uh-huh. The doubts they seen is
no longer there.

Up on your feet, standing strong, they cannot test. Came out the jungle with meeks. One is the peak, belief not a stretch. What do you seek? Talk is cheap, the world's neglect. Form the fiddle, must preach, settle the tides and make it connect. I know the pain real, I'ma tell you that I hear you. Say for your closest ones, they're right now, they sneer at you. And how you've turned around and made passion out of tribulations. Days that were overdraining, but it's a virtue speaking, singing patience.

'Cause so long that you've been waiting to release this greatness. Held it in that bottle shaking on the path you pacing. And you afraid if they be hating on the path you making. And ain't no bouncing, ain't no aching on the trail you blazing. But make sure to smell them roses, baby, catch that fragrance. 'Cause the battle came with beauty all through these stages. Leave it all up on the floor, all on the pavement for the change you chasing. Know you gonna live it, chair leaps and bounce to miles round, spelling the creative sound, but they gonna hear you now
and loud. Look, know they gonna hear you now.

They doubt they seen is no longer fair. Know you gonna live it, chair leaps and bounce to miles round, spelling the creative sound, but they gonna hear you now and loud. Yeah, know they
gonna This one goes out to Kay, Evan, Trey, Madison, Aiden, Elizabeth, Vince, my boy Jamie, and
other nonspeakers worldwide that's been waiting to be heard. Sway.