

“I need to speak on this as someone who lives with Tourette’s.

When you live with this disorder, you lose control of your own voice sometimes. And that is a terrifying thing.

Tics are not thoughts. They are not opinions. They are not secret beliefs hiding underneath the surface. They are involuntary neurological impulses – like a sneeze, or hiccup except sometimes they attach themselves to words that carry weight, history, and pain.

Can you imagine how heartbreaking it is to say something you don’t mean?

To hear a word come out of your own mouth and feel immediate shame?

To want to crawl out of your own body because your brain betrayed you?

People think if a slur comes out, it must reflect what’s in your heart. But Tourette’s doesn’t pull from hatred – it often pulls from anxiety, from fear, from the very thing you’re most scared of saying. The brain misfires on what feels charged or taboo.

It doesn’t excuse the hurt a word carries. Words matter. History matters. Pain matters.

But so does neurological reality.

There is a difference between intent and impulse.

Living with Tourette’s means constantly apologizing for something you didn’t choose. It means living with the fear that one moment could define you forever. It means knowing that no matter how kind you are, no matter what you believe, one tic could make the world decide who you are.

And that’s devastating.

You can hold space for the harm of a word while also holding space for the reality of a disorder. Compassion doesn’t cancel accountability – but education matters.

Please understand this: when someone with Tourette’s says something offensive as a tic, it is not coming from their heart.

It’s coming from a brain that sometimes doesn’t give them a choice.

Love,

*Baylen Dupree*

