

Why you shouldn't support Autism Speaks this month (or ever):

In their ad "I Am Autism" (2009) they narrate the voice of "autism," which says the following things:

"I work faster than pediatric AIDS, cancer, and diabetes combined.

If you're happily married, I will make sure that your marriage fails.

Your money will fall into my hands, and I will bankrupt you for my own self gain.

I will fight to take away your hope. I will plot to rob you of your children and your dreams.

I will make sure that every day you wake up you will cry."

What kind of message is that, to send parents of newly diagnosed kids? What kind of message is that to send to autistic people trying to love themselves?

In 2013, only 4% of their revenue went to "Family Services, Grants & Awards." Meanwhile, a combined 62% of total revenue went towards "Advertising & Donated Media" and "Salaries, Benefits, & Payroll Tax."

In 2008, Autism Speaks paid their "chief science officer" over \$669,000, including over \$269,000 just in "relocation expenses" for the employee to move her family from Washington to North Carolina.

Autism Speaks' CEO makes over \$370,000 a year, meanwhile only \$4,000,000 of total revenue gets allocated to family services for the entire country.

Autism Speaks organizes walks and events around the country to raise money for their organization. Where does that money go? Oh, that's right, to board members and executives. The following is copied from their 2013 financial statement:

The Atlanta Walk had net proceeds of \$542,000, 50% of which was granted to The Marcus Institute, the co-founder of which is an Autism Speaks Board member.

The Winter Ball for Autism had net proceeds of \$2,682,000 in 2013, 50% of which was granted to New York Collaborates for Autism, the co-founder of which is an Autism Speaks Board member.

As if that weren't bad enough, just on the financial mismanagement side of things, here is their "Mission Statement" from 2013:

“We are dedicated to funding global biomedical research into the causes, prevention, treatments, and a possible cure for autism.

We strive to raise public awareness about autism and its effects on individuals, families, and society, and we work to bring hope to all who deal with the hardships of this disorder.

Autism Speaks aims to... urge the government and private sector to listen to our concerns and take action to address this urgent global health crisis.

It is our firm belief that, working together, we will find the missing pieces of the puzzle.”

Autism is a genetic, lifelong neurodevelopmental condition. It is not a disease, a disorder, or a public health crisis. Autistic people are not puzzles with missing pieces. We are full human beings. We do not need to be “treated,” and we don’t want to be “cured.”

Autism Speaks is a hate group. They espouse harmful rhetoric about autistic people, advocate for eugenics (biomedical research, causes, prevention, treatment, and cure), and have even partnered with white supremacists. Yep, you read that last part correctly.

In 2017 in Ontario, Canada, Autism Speaks partnered up with a white supremacist biker gang called the Sons of Odin, to organize one of their fundraising walks. Members of the Sons of Odin have been reported harassing Syrian refugees, and one of their members vandalized a synagogue in 2006. The Sons of Odin have been officially labeled by the Anti-Defamation League as a hate group. Yet, Autism Speaks still chose to partner with them.

Not only that- Autism Speaks has also partnered with the Judge Rotenberg Center (JRC) in Massachusetts, which is a center that “cares” for people with developmental disabilities, including autism. The entire philosophy of the JRC is based on aversive punishments, which include starvation, sleep deprivation, physical assault, solitary isolation, and electric shocks.

The JRC administers electric shocks to autistic people who do things as simple as speaking out of turn, sneezing, or looking at someone the wrong way.

When being punished, inmates at the JRC may be strapped down to a board, where electrodes are placed on all four limbs. Then, staff members press buttons to send electric shocks onto the person’s skin. The bursts of shock can last anywhere from five to ten seconds at a time, and shocking sessions can last anywhere from minutes to hours.

Since it was founded, six people at the JRC have been killed, with the causes ranging from electric shock to assault.

Yet, Autism Speaks chose to list the JRC as a “service provider” for their “Walk Now for Autism” event. They actively promoted the JRC, and what the JRC is doing.

The FDA has since ruled that the use of electric shocks at the JRC is illegal, as it constitutes torture. But the JRC hasn’t been shut down, and the use of extreme aversives continues.

So, if it wasn’t clear to you before why you shouldn’t support Autism Speaks, I hope you have a clearer picture now:

- They treat autistic people like we’re defective and diseased burdens on society
- They partner with white supremacists and torture facilities
- They spend most of their money on advertising and salaries
- Autistic people overwhelmingly hate them, and everything they stand for. That should be enough.

~Eden 🐸