

The Silence We Dance With

Slashing through the air, imposing its presence on all those around it, wielded with respect and power—I carry it with me. Silence.

A quiet ballet that floats past you, pirouetting gently amid the thunder of the orchestra—I carry it with me. Silence.

A word so innately powerful that she misleads others into underestimating her prowess—I carry her with me. Silence.

Silence has often been weaponized to diminish women, to quiet the uninformed, and to appease the restless. The silence I carry is different. It is chosen.

I first felt the weight of silence in a rural, three-room preschool for children on the autism spectrum —cared for by a loud, bold woman with wild raven-black hair, who seemed to channel every child's voice through her gaping heart. Silence blanketed me when I called out a name, expecting playful engagement, devastated by the jarring absence of any response. Silence choked me when children cried out of frustration, unable to make us hear all that they felt and shared.

It wasn't until I took silence to be my friend that everything changed. I stopped trying to fill it with noise, finding instead fluent, eloquent communication. Words pleaded through the darkening of eyes; full sentences were conveyed through a tap on my shin or a tug at my pants. Once I surrendered to her, conversations whipped around me—urgent, precise, and alive.

Silence gave me the beat to pick up on voices not yet given a chance. When I finally relented—when I allowed silence its latitude—I began to feel the rhythm. I noticed favorite spoons. I felt when certain shirts were too itchy, too warm. I heard the quiet distress when a favorite blue truck was nowhere to be found, and the familiar rumble of its wheels against skin would be loudly missed.

Through this lens I find it quite beautifully fitting, then, that Dr. Linda Brodsky devoted her career to pediatric otolaryngology, a field grounded in listening—attentive to silence, to breath,

and to voices not yet fully formed. In a field dedicated to hearing, voice, and airway, silence is never empty; it is information.

I will never again forget the transformative gift of silence. Once an ominous shadow peering down the back of my neck, now my partner—agency I choose, clarity I cultivate. Intentional silence became a source of power, and ultimately, of action. It became the space that allowed patterns to emerge—revealing redundant echoes and creating room for voices often eclipsed by the pride of the loudest. My silence is not one of invisibility, but rather a moment shaped by pause and presence, a tool to listen earnestly, and a deliberate action. My silence fortified my spine. It taught me that the strongest presence in dance emerges not from center stage, but from the grace of knowing when to step back and make space for the ensemble.

In medicine, silence has long been expected of women —mistaken for agreeableness, endurance, or professionalism. The silence I carry is not that inheritance. She is chosen. I wrap her in bows and sparkles, encouraging others to uncover her, and revel in her brilliance, but not as compliance, as strength. I applaud her use and honor the discernment it takes to wield her breadth with intention.

In my career, subtle silence will not shrink me or the women around me. It will be used to listen more closely, to recognize where inequities persist, and to illuminate the cracks that only seem to widen when ignored. In honoring Dr. Linda Brodsky, I will carry silence with me—not to vanish, but to carve room for women physicians to be heard, recognized, and lifted on strong, graceful arms, claiming the roles, recognition, and respect they deserve. I will find my silence beneath the stage lights, not as a soloist, but within an unforgettable shared choreography earning a standing ovation long overdue.