

FROM REBEL YELL CREATIVE

How to Be An Autivist

A GUIDE AND WORKBOOK

FOR NEURODIVERGENT CREATIVE PEOPLE

Autivist =

AUTISTIC/ADHD/NEURODIVERSE + ARTIST + ACTIVIST.

Because resistance is more than protests.

Which is a good thing. For many neurodivergent people, traditional activism is an impossibility.

But we want to resist. We need to resist.

And we can, through reframing our limits and exploring art as a route to rebellion.

Resistance doesn't need masks.

When we become an autivist, we can unmask. We can be our true selves. And we can make art that matters to support the things we believe in.

Resistance is driven by art.

In terrible times, in cultures like ours, art is important. It's resistance, and our way of fighting back.

But it's also our way of taking care of ourselves. Of staying sane. And connecting in restorative and empowering ways.

So let's reset.

THERE'S A REASON...

BOOKS ARE BANNED.

MUSIC IS CENSORED.

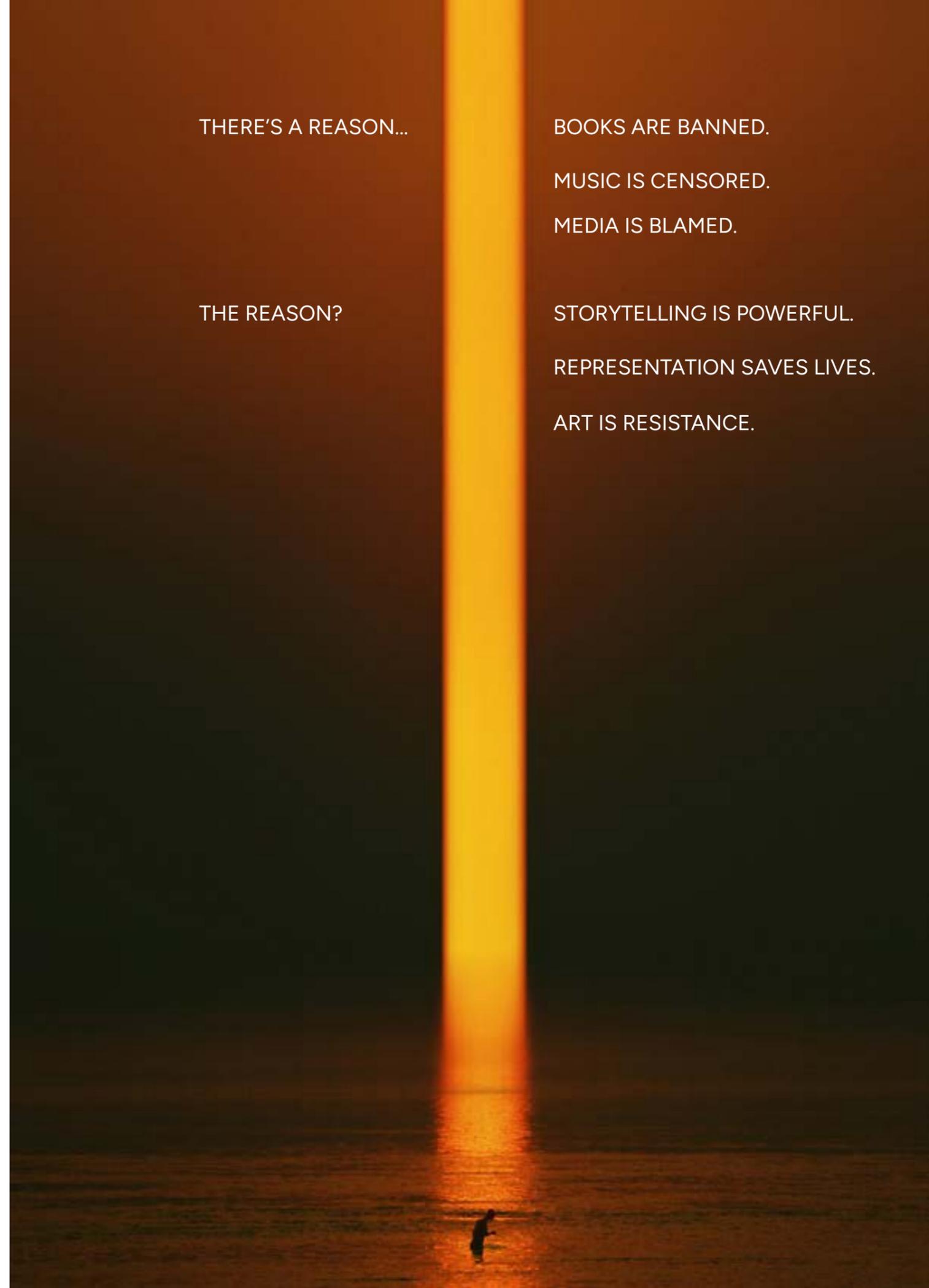
MEDIA IS BLAMED.

THE REASON?

STORYTELLING IS POWERFUL.

REPRESENTATION SAVES LIVES.

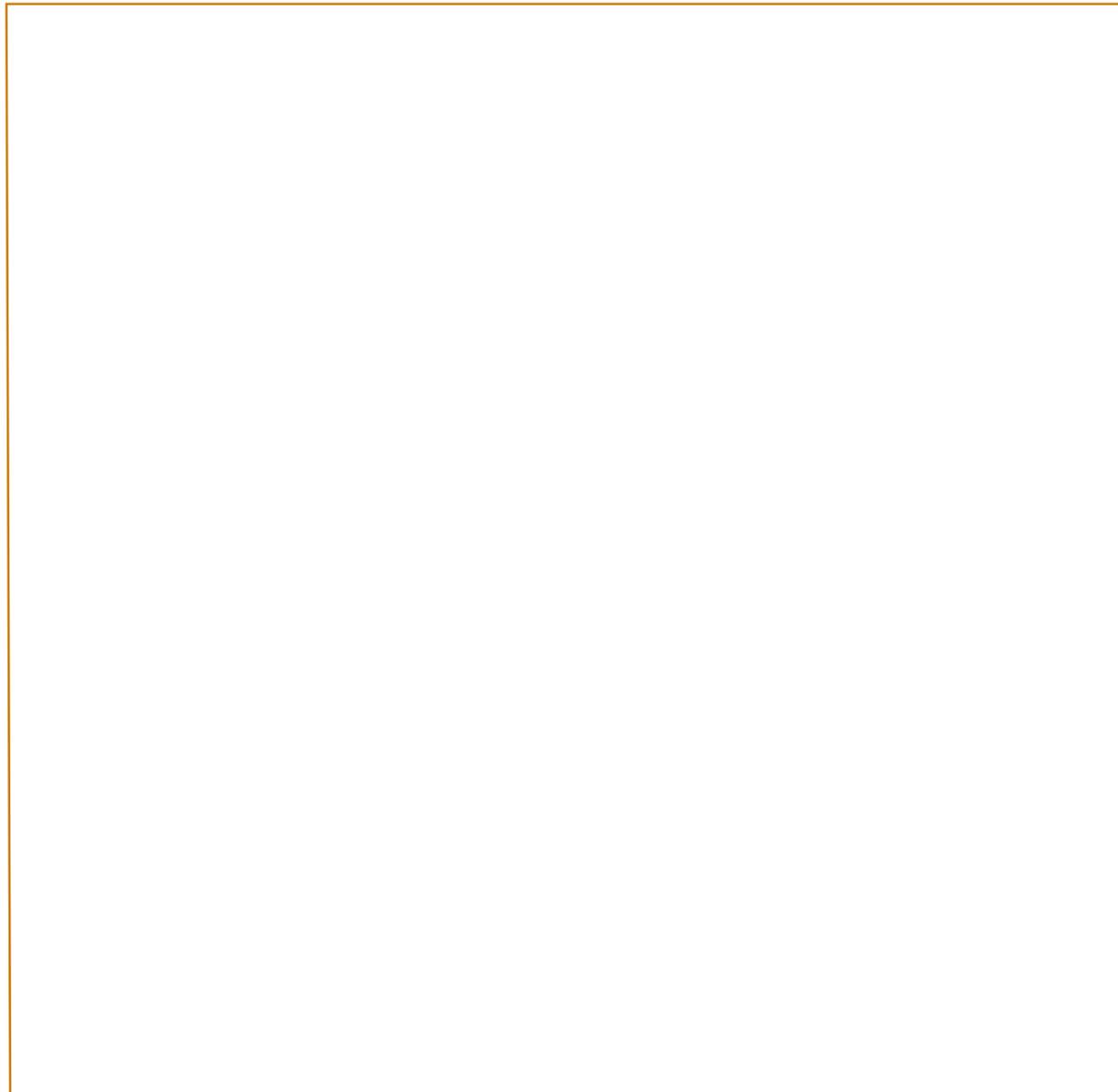
ART IS RESISTANCE.



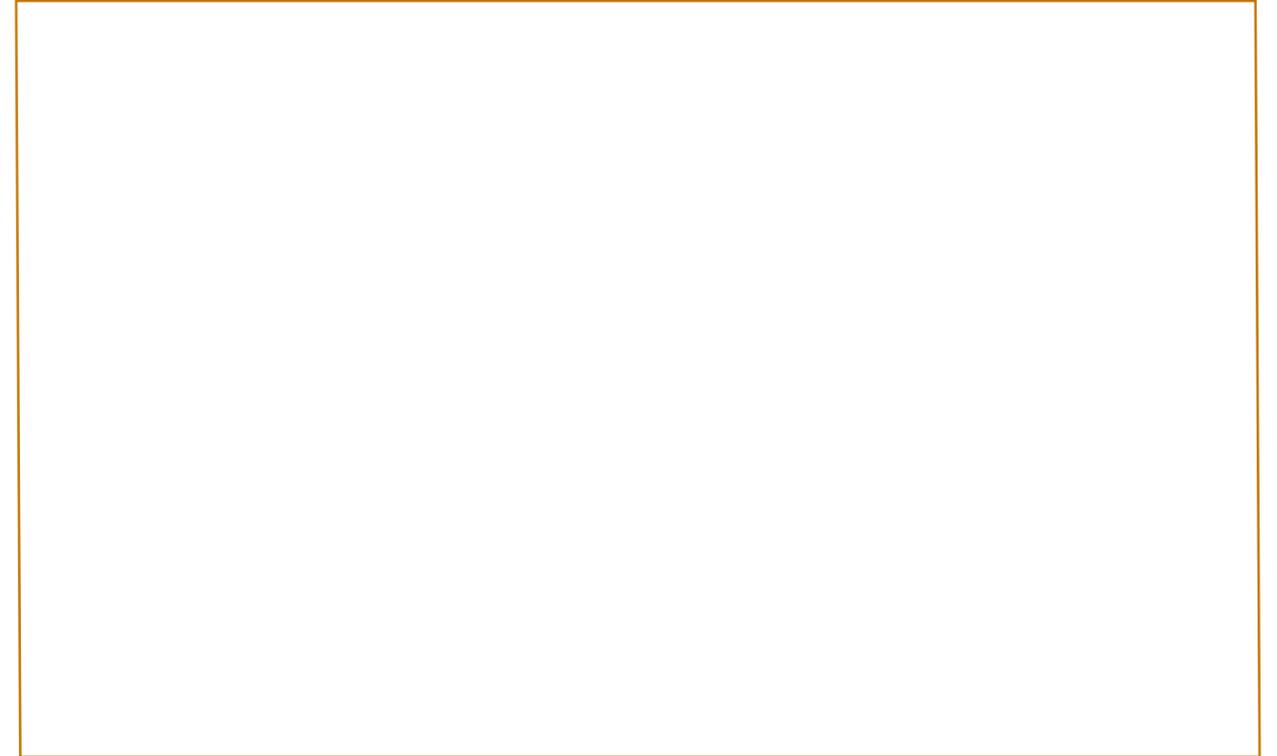
Take Stock

THINK THROUGH THESE QUESTIONS TO GET STARTED.
CLICK IN THE BOXES TO TYPE INTO THE PDF.

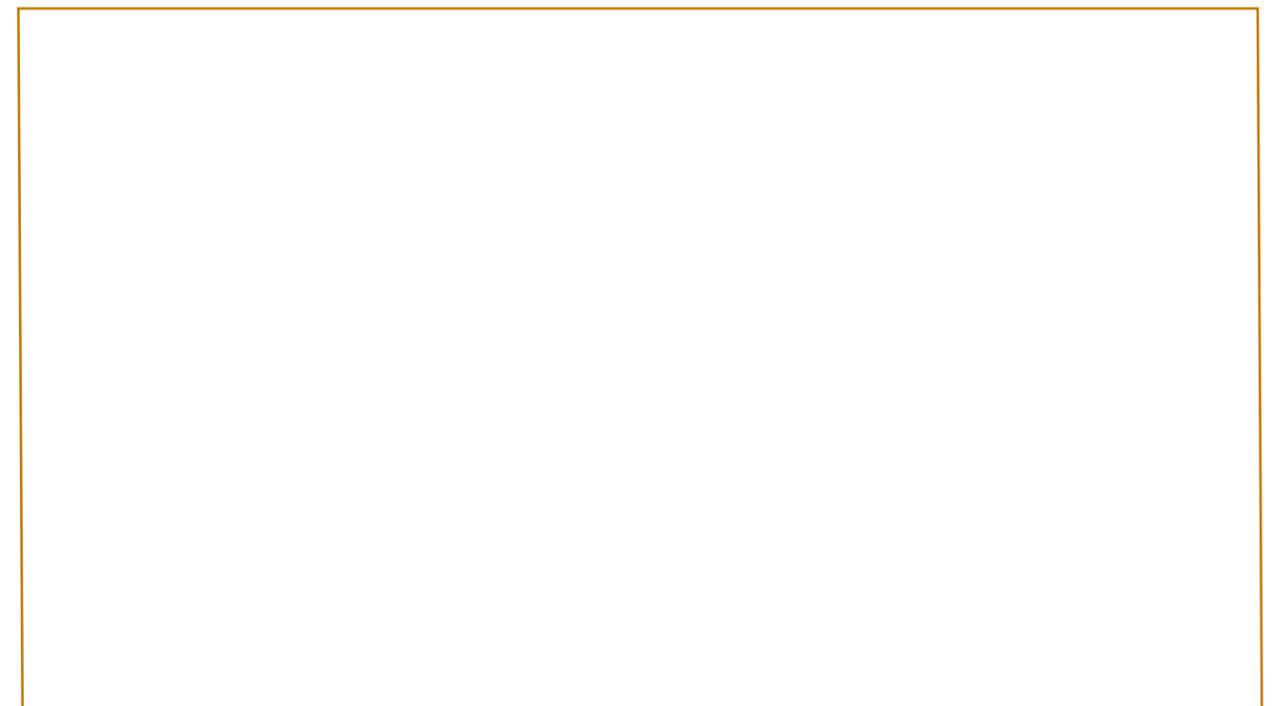
**How would you describe your neurodivergence?
The good, the bad, the meh...**



**How does your neurodivergence interact with
your creativity and creative work?**



**What's your experience been with activism?
And do you feel about that experience?**





Reworking activism

What's the problem with traditional activism?

When you're autistic, ADHD, or otherwise neurodivergent, the things we associate with activism - protests, canvassing, and consciousness-raising - feel like an impossible nightmare.

- Our sensory sensitivities can make crowds untenable.
- Our difficulties with social demands can make planning committees and group discussions painful.
- Our executive function can make knocking on doors and calling people an impossible mountain to climb.

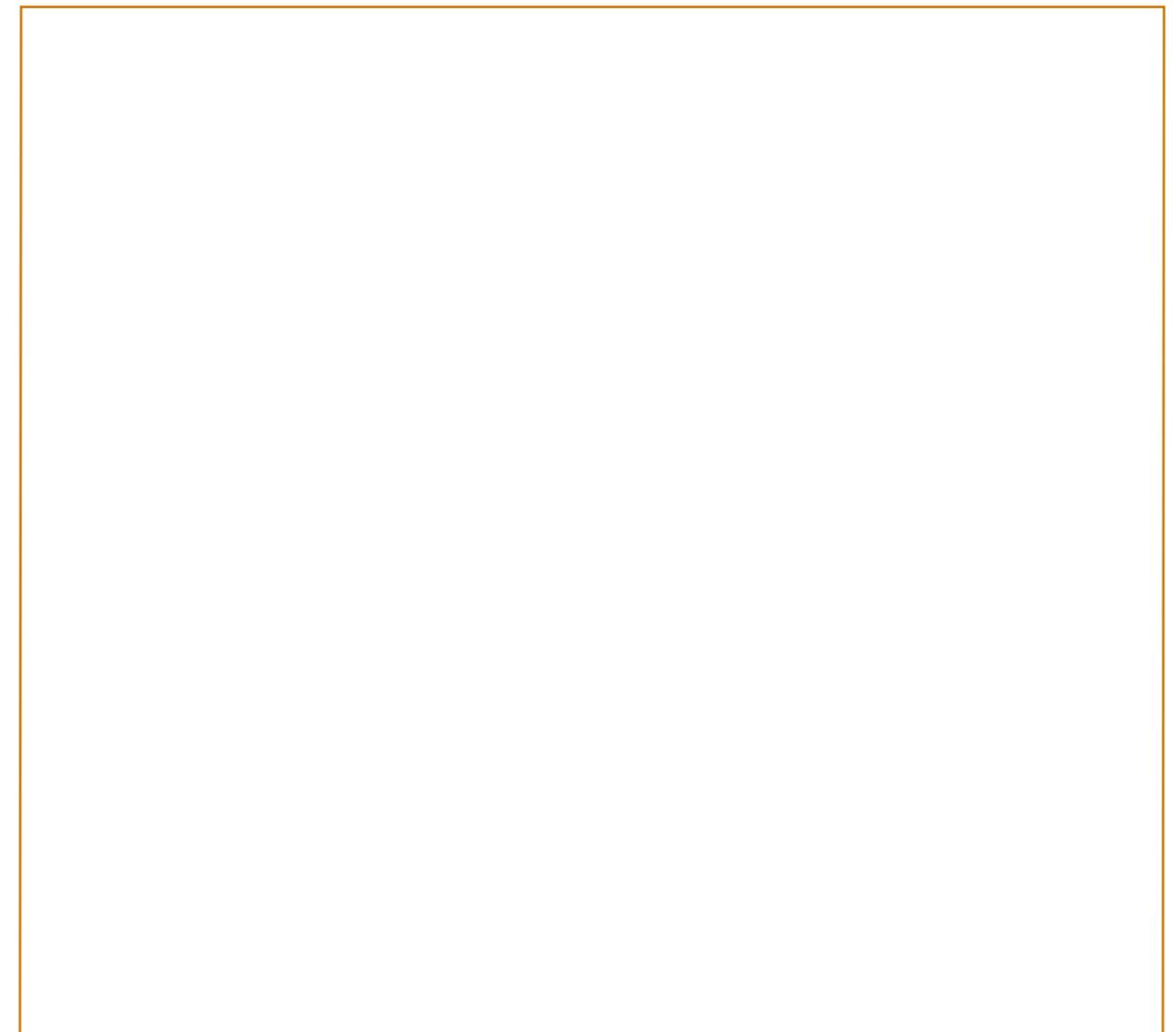
So then why bother?

Because a hallmark of neurodivergence is also a deep intolerance for injustice. We're often hyper-empathetic to the people around us, especially if they're suffering. We spot patterns like nobody's business. So we know when shit's bad, and we can't abide it.

Plus? We need to advocate for ourselves. In an America led by MAHA crackpots who spread lies and want to eradicate autism, we're under attack. And we know the threats are real. In the recent past of this country and others, disabled and neurodivergent people were locked away in institutions for their entire lives. In Nazi Germany, differently-abled were the first targeted by death camps under Aktion T4.

The 'normal' world talks down to us and tries to erase us. So we need to push back.

Let's get personal. Why do you want to resist the status quo?





THE THAW. YOU MIGHT NOT BE READY
TO CREATE AGAIN, BUT YOU'RE FEELING
EXCITED TO TRY.



Our problems...

You've probably seen them on social media:
The charts of autistic traits. The breakdowns of
ADHD mental paths. The diagrams of all the
'problems' our brains have in the 'normal' or neuro-
typical world.

We're told again and again about our issues. We're
reminded again and again about the struggles we
have.

And when we engage in traditional activism, we're
constantly shown how we don't fit.

But what if our problems are actually something
else?

...become our powers.

Our intolerance of injustice? That's drive, baby.

Our obsessive special interests?
That's passion and dedication.

Our inability to sit through meetings, engage in small
talk, and do all the 'normal' people stuff?
We can spot bullshit a mile away.

Our slightly skewed vision of the world?
That's the kind of unique thinking
we need to fix the world.

Our neurodiversity makes us uniquely prepared for
resistance. Because we already know the status quo
needs to go.

Late-diagnosed women?

WE HAVE **TRIPLE** THE SUPERPOWERS.

Those of us raised as women have often been overlooked in discussions and diagnoses for autism, ADHD, and more. We learned to hide, early and often. We learned how to survive in a world not made for girls, or neurodiverse people.

And now, as many of us hit middle age, we've discovered who we are.

And we are fucking angry.

We're angry that for so long, we didn't know why we struggled. We're angry that our bodily changes are making our autistic and ADHD traits so much more potent. We're mad that women are pushed aside, ignored, and made invisible by a culture that prizes youth.

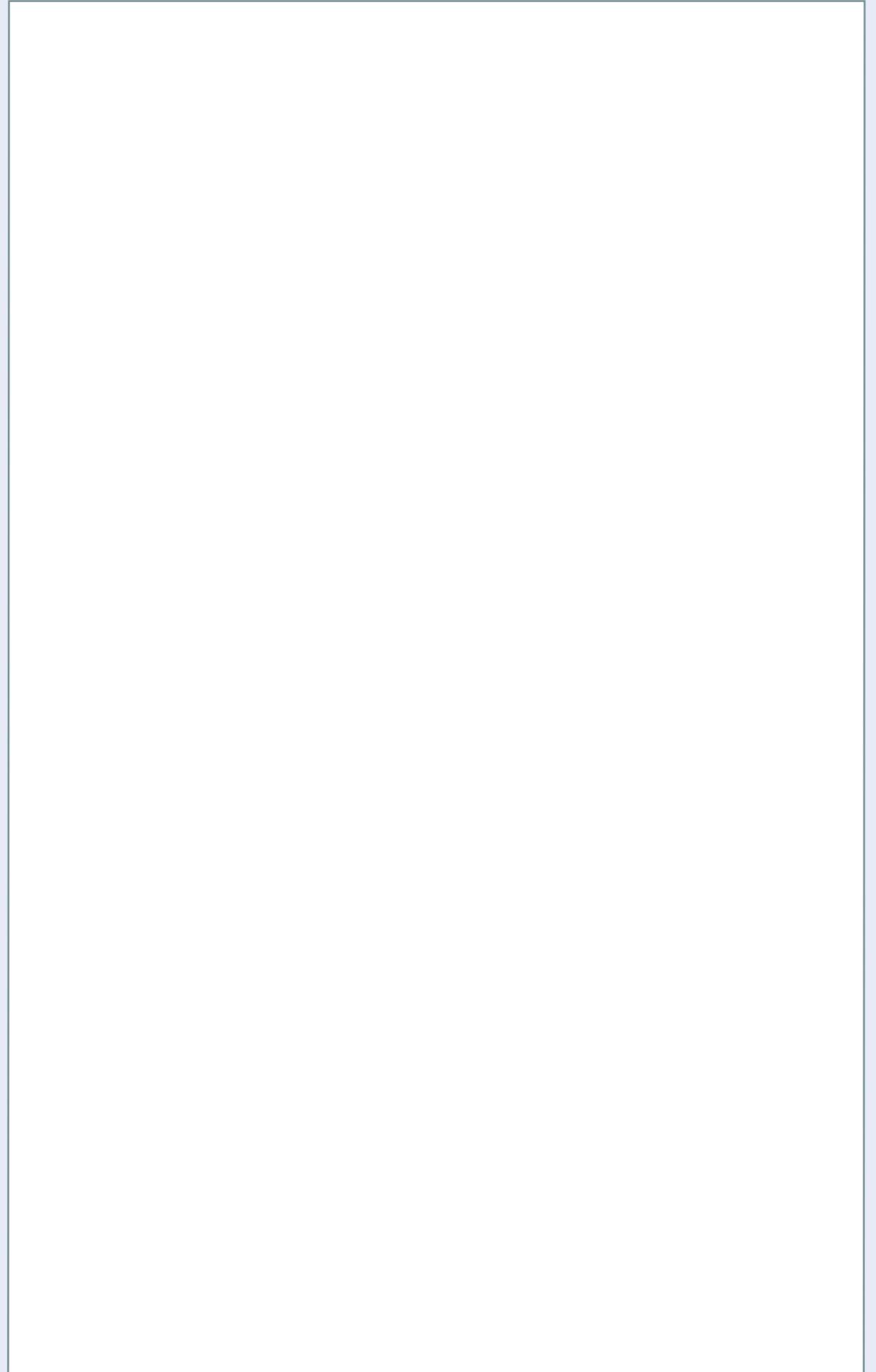
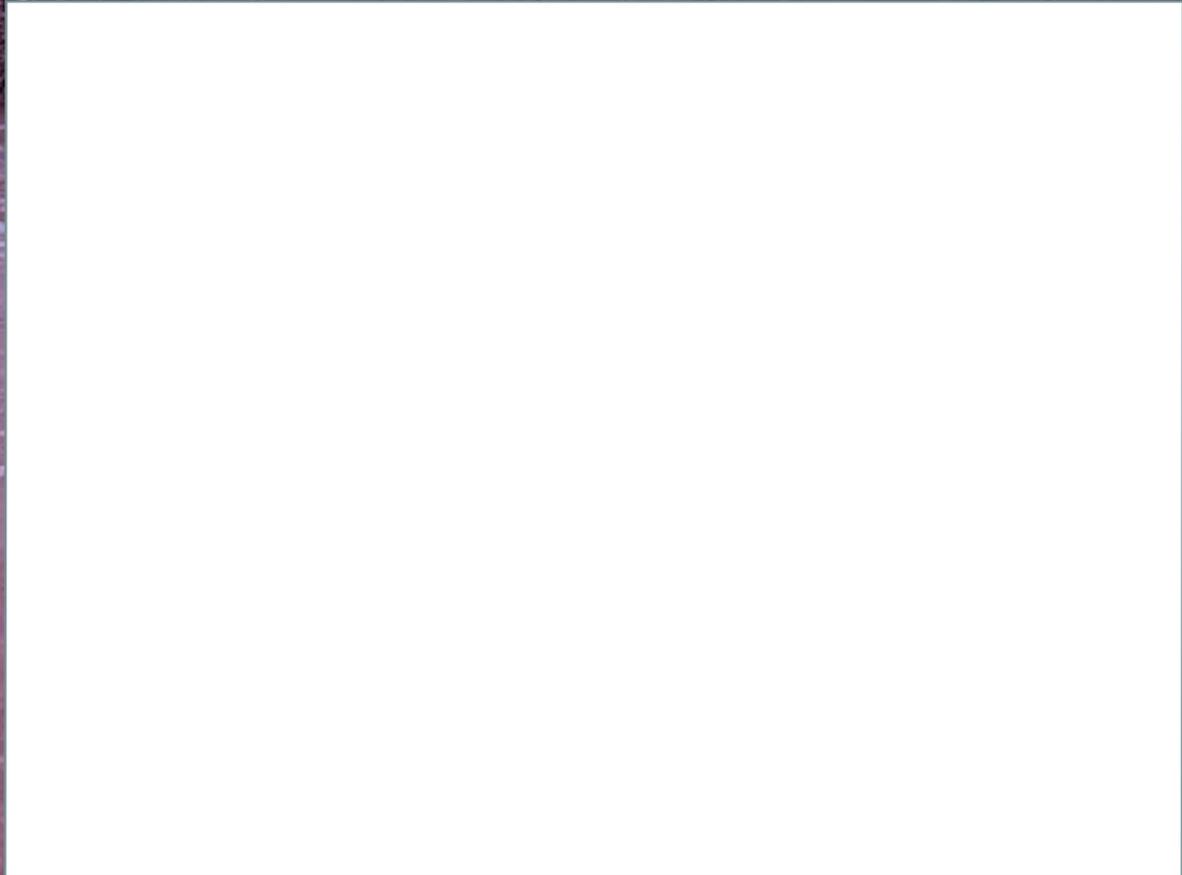
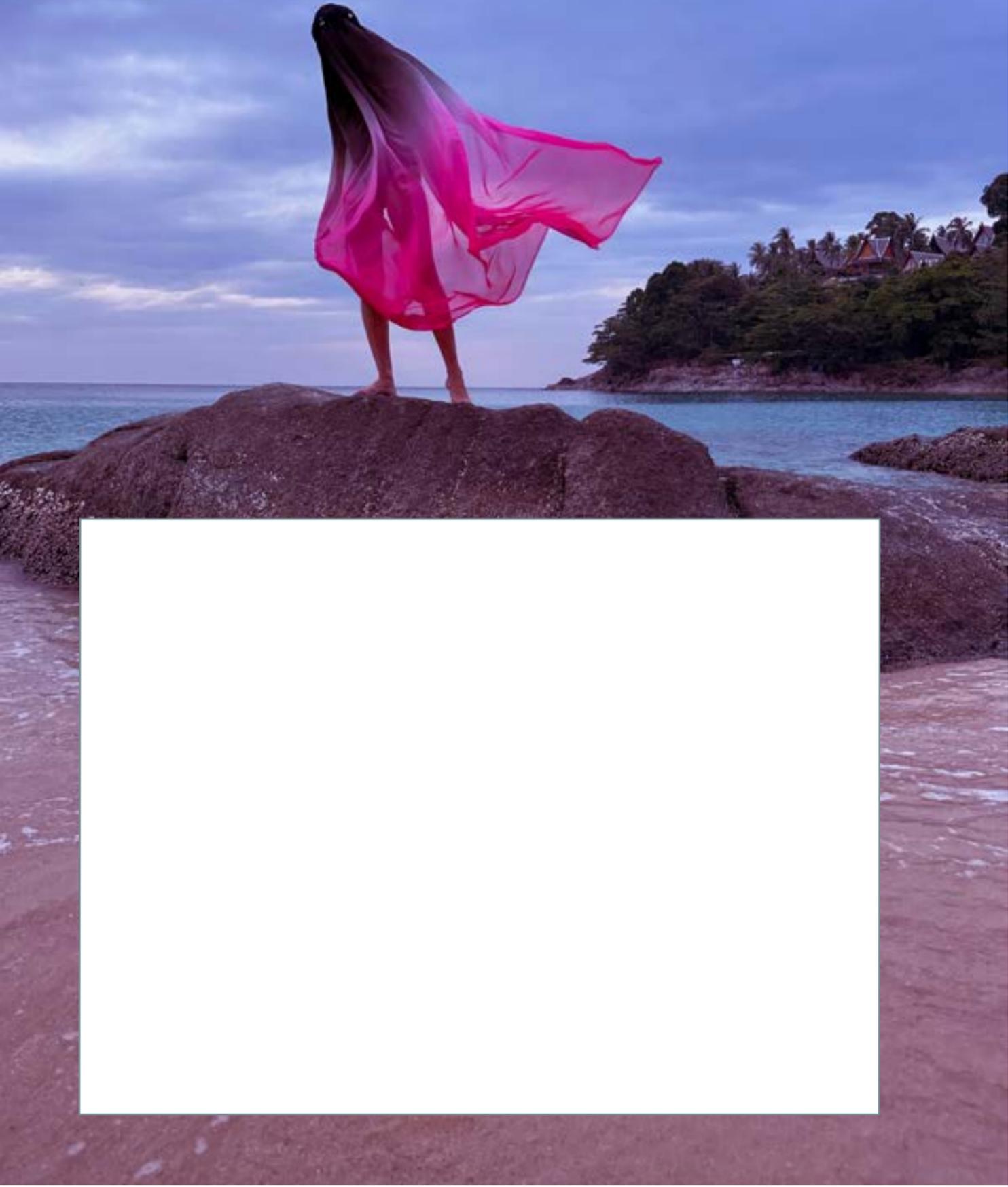
Just as our bodies are exploding in heat and hormones, we've woken up.

So let's harness that.



Let's reframe.

WHAT ARE YOUR NEURODIVERGENT 'PROBLEMS'?
AND HOW CAN YOU REFRAME THEM AS SUPERPOWERS?



**WE SEE THE
WORLD IN A
DIFFERENT
WAY.**



**NEURODIVERGENCE
IS
DIVERGENT THINKING**

When it comes down to it, we think differently.

And isn't that what we need for today's problems?

The status quo has resulted in climate disaster, exponential income inequality, massive misogyny, and American authoritarianism. 'Normal' thinking just gives us more of the same.

We see what others don't. And we can share and express it in unique ways.

What do you see that others don't?

A large empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a user to write their response to the question above.

A powerful route to rebellion?

ONE THAT'S TAILOR-MADE FOR NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE?

ART.

WRITING, MUSIC, DESIGN, PERFORMANCE...ALL OF IT.



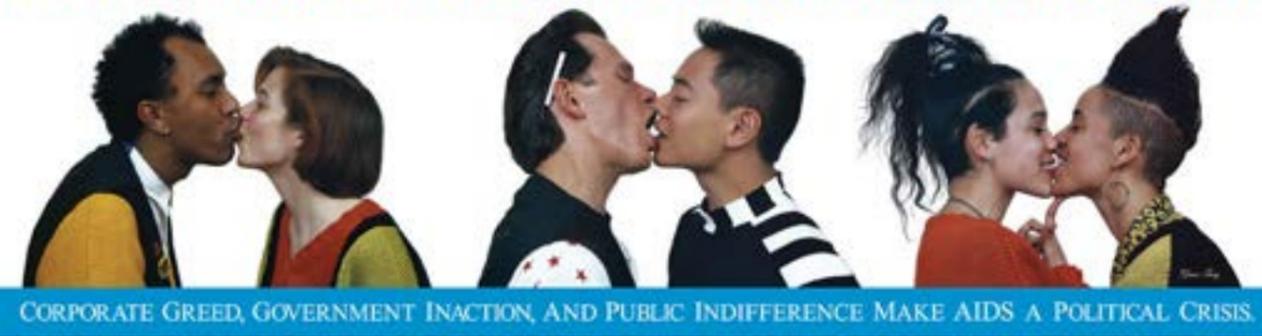
ART HAS POWER. HERE'S PROOF.



In the 1980s, as AIDS was decimating a community and the government did nothing, a group of artists designed a movement. **Gran Fury** created posters, displays, bus ads, and protest art covering New York. With ACT UP, they helped change policy and perception for generations to come.



KISSING DOESN'T KILL: GREED AND INDIFFERENCE DO.



In the 1990s, as a new wave of misogyny marked Gen X kids, a group of women's punk bands encouraged girls across the country to fight back, with music, zines, guerrilla art, and more. As one zine said, **Riot Grrrl** was "a hand to hold, and a fist in his face."

In the 1960s-70s, **Emory Douglas** drew over 400 covers of the Black Panther newspaper, creating an iconography of rebellion and revolutionary art for the entire world.



WANT MORE? THE ART OF RESISTANCE PODCAST TELLS THE STORIES OF WRITERS, MUSICIANS, DESIGNERS, AND OTHERS USING THEIR ART TO RESIST THE STATUS QUO. GET THE FULL STORIES AT THEARTOFRESISTANCEPODCAST.COM

Take Stock

SO HOW DO WE MAKE ART AS RESISTANCE?
HOW CAN WE BE AN ACTIVIST IN THE REAL WORLD?

BY FIRST UNDERSTANDING AND HONORING
HOW OUR CREATIVITY WORKS.

IN THE SECTIONS BELOW, THINK ABOUT YOUR
CREATIVE WORK AND PROCESS.

What are you proud of?

What frustrates you? Disappoints you?

What do you enjoy about creating?

Do you have goals you're working towards? How do you feel about these goals?

When it comes down to it...no one asks us to create things. So why do you do it? What drives you?

REALITY CHECK

IT'S REALLY FUCKING HARD RIGHT NOW.

Empathy is their enemy

As neurodivergent people, we're often hyper-empathetic. And when we create, we practice more empathy. We think deeply and critically about the world and what it means.

But in tyrannical times, those in power actively target empathy. They seek to root it out and crush it.

From ridicule to harassment to detention, the goal: Make people shut their eyes and silence their hearts.

Productivity culture is their buddy

Productivity on the other hand? Grinding away? Slaying all day? That's normal. That's good and right. That's what they tell us, because it helps them.

Our culture of workworkwork ignores rigged systems. It says we alone are responsible for our success or failure. If we just work hard enough, we can find safety and success.

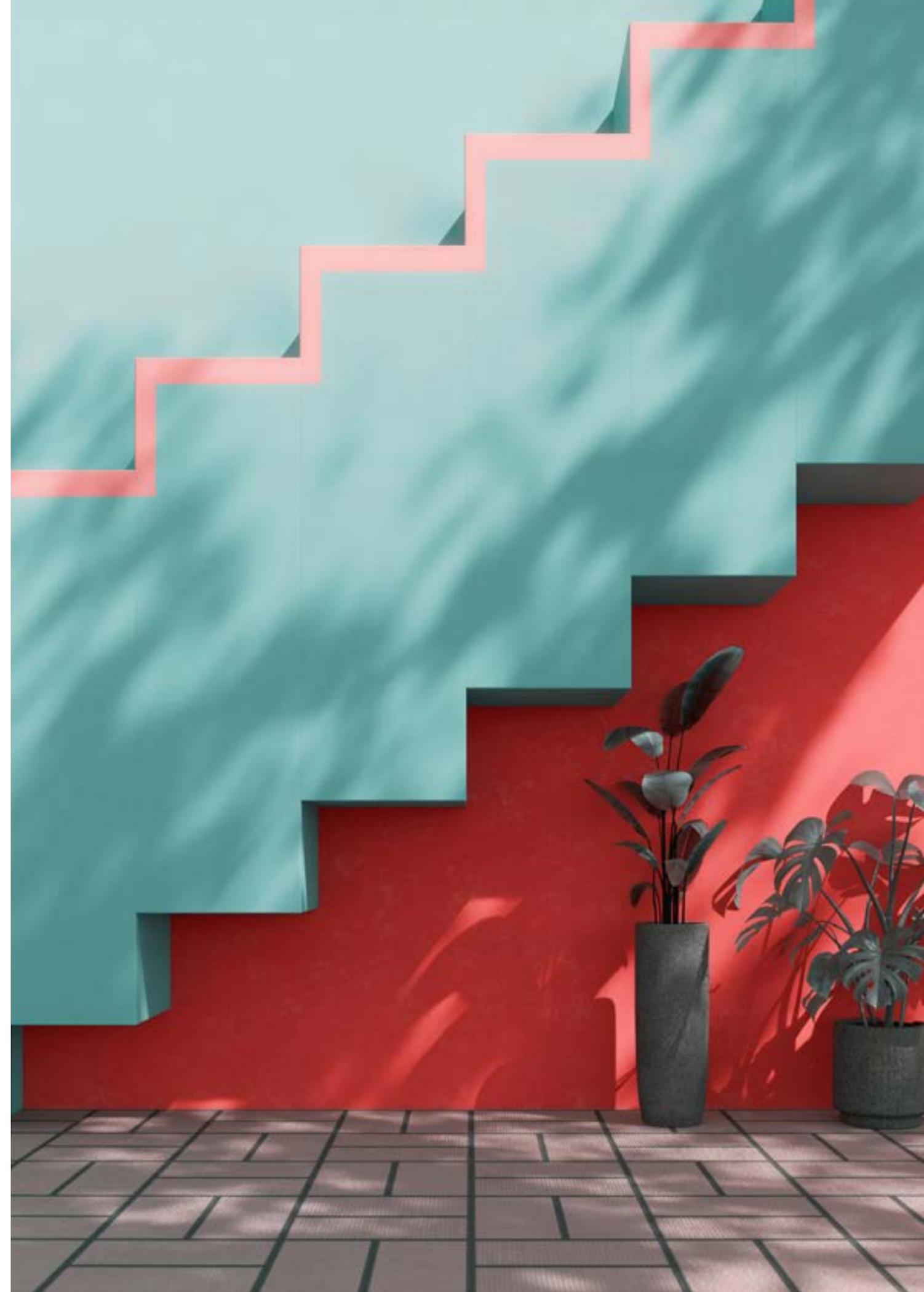
Productivity culture helps those in power avoid responsibility for real change. And it tells you these lies:

 I'm not reaching my goals, so I'm a failure

 I'm struggling to create and/or work right now, so I'm broken

 I'm autistic / have ADHD so I'm TOO MUCH and TOO SENSITIVE

 My body won't let me work as much as others, so I'm useless



CREATIVE PHASES

WHAT PHASE ARE YOU FEELING?

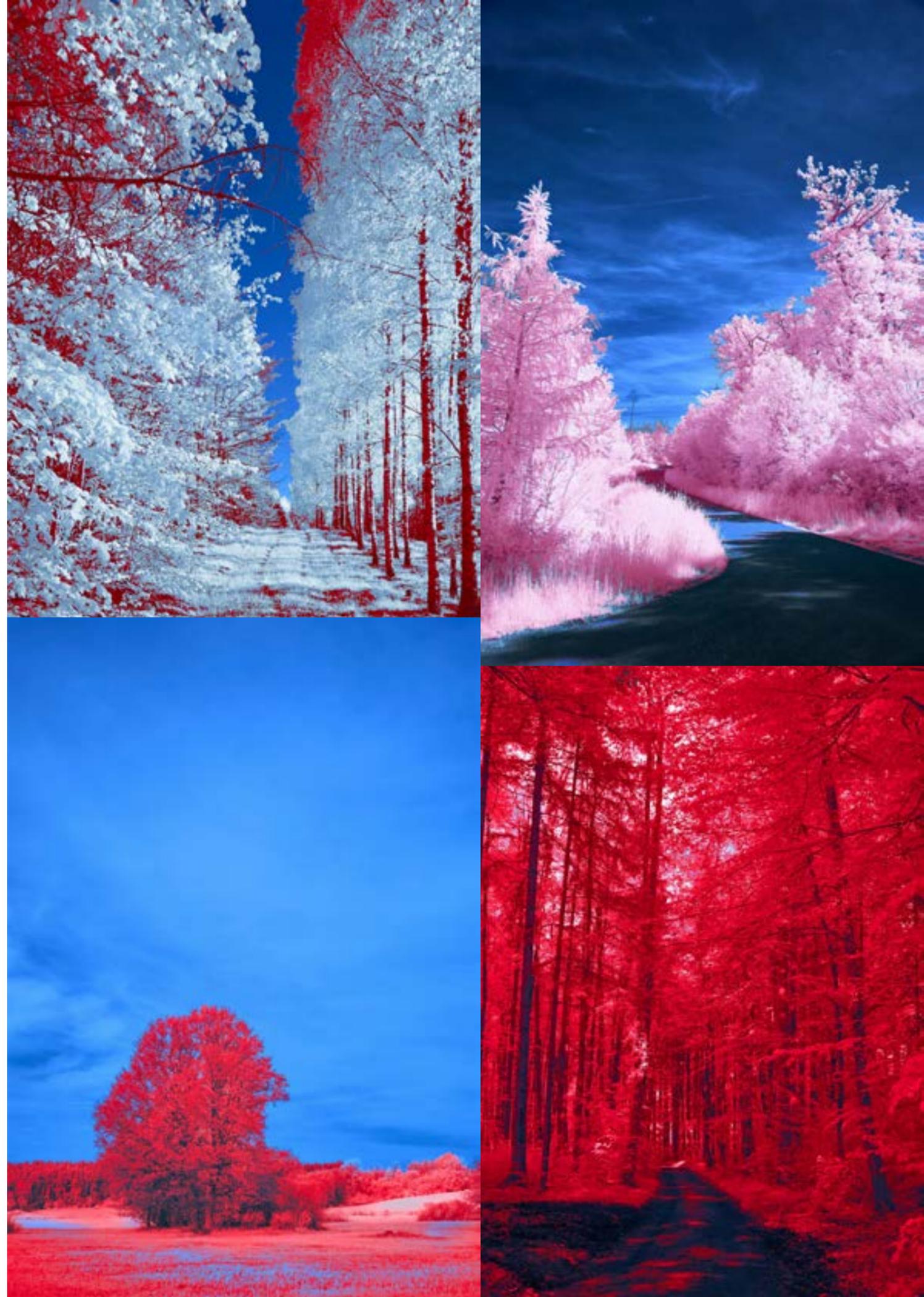
WHILE PRODUCTIVITY CULTURE SAYS WE'RE EITHER PRODUCING OR WE'RE FAILING, CREATIVE REALITY IS ONE OF PHASES.

AND OUR NEURODIVERGENCE WILL OFTEN GUIDE THESE PHASES.

WE MOVE THROUGH EACH PHASE AGAIN AND AGAIN. THERE'S NO RIGHT OR WRONG AMOUNT OF TIME TO SPEND IN A PHASE. AND THERE ARE NO BAD PHASES!

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES, WE'LL EXPLORE EACH PHASE.

COMPLETE THE SECTION THAT MATCHES HOW YOU'RE FEELING NOW!



WINTER

THE TIME OF HIBERNATION AND/OR
AUTISTIC / ADHD BURNOUT.
CREATIVITY IS A STRUGGLE, AND YOU'RE JUST
TRYING TO SURVIVE.

LETTING GO

When creative work feels impossible, it's ok to rest. It's ok to say no to productivity culture. It's ok to honor our limits and let some things go. That could mean taking a break, or setting aside creative projects permanently.

Feels wrong, doesn't it? The sunk cost fallacy is the idea that if we've invested time, energy, emotion, or money into something, we can't stop. But that's just another neurotypical standard, one that doesn't help ANYONE, let alone neurodivergent people.

Setting things aside could be far more beneficial to your time, energy, emotion and money.

What can you let go of? What projects no longer bring joy or serve you?





SPRING

THE THAW. YOU MIGHT NOT BE READY TO CREATE AGAIN, BUT YOU'RE FEELING EXCITED TO TRY.

GET INSPIRED

This phase is a great time to remember the power of art. Return to the artists and creators you love, and remind yourself why you love them.

But also look wider. Explore new artists, from the past or present. Some places to look:

- Podcasts, like [The Art of Resistance](#)
- Used bookstores and libraries
- Substack community
- Indie music homes, like Bandcamp
- Re-curated Instagram feed, with art, artists, and joyful accounts

RETHINK GOALS

During the winter phase, you identify things you can let go. In the spring phase, you look deeper at your creative work and practice.

What's fun? What's drudgery? What do you wish you could change? What do you want to do different?

SUMMER

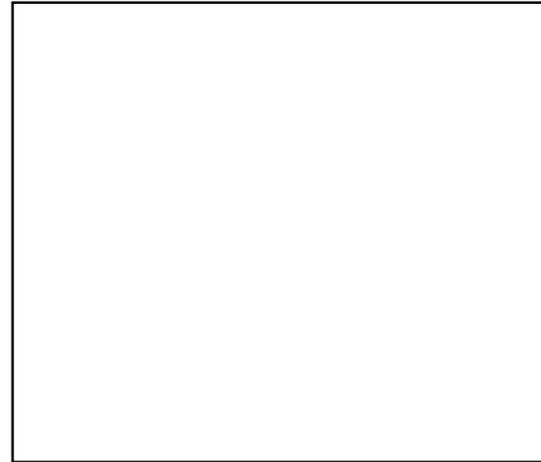
THE HEAT IS ON. THE IDEAS ARE FLOWING,
AND CREATIVE WORK IS FUN. ENJOY IT,
WHILE STILL TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF.

PROCESS

Much is made of the artistic process. But too much is made about the aesthetics of that process.

You don't need a beautifully curated desk and office to write. You don't need whatever TikTok tells you is needed for making art. So don't let the lack of those things stop you!

What *actually* helps you create? What habits and tools will keep you focused and energized during the summer phase?



CARING FOR YOURSELF WHILE CREATING

It's easy to push yourself too hard when you're creating.
What activities keep you feeling strong and secure?
What will support you during the Summer phase?





FALL

CREATIVITY SLOWS. AND EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT 'THE BEST' OF THE YEAR.

COMPARISON

As creatives, we can easily fall into the trap of comparing ourselves to others. We compare up, to writers with more publications, artists with more shows, creators with more followers.

But what if we compared down? Someone is looking at your work as their inspiration. Someone is viewing your accomplishments as success. Someone has felt seen with your work.

Even better: what if we compared to our past? Maybe five years ago your current achievements would have seemed impossible.

What would comparing down look like for you? How about comparing to your past?

Our goals across seasons

When we decide to make things no one asked for, the goals seem pre-determined:

Writing —> **Book from print publisher**
Music —> **Album in Spotify**
Visual art —> **Show in gallery**
Film —> **Movie distributed by studio**
Creator —> **YouTube or TikTok channel with sponsors**

But when we limit ourselves to the traditional, to what has come before, to the status quo...we can end up hobbling ourselves.

GATEKEPT

In the writing world, publishers often won't even accept work without a literary agent. Getting an agent is an often inscrutable and impossible process. It's the same for music, visual art, film, performance, comedy, online content... the list goes on.

COMPROMISED

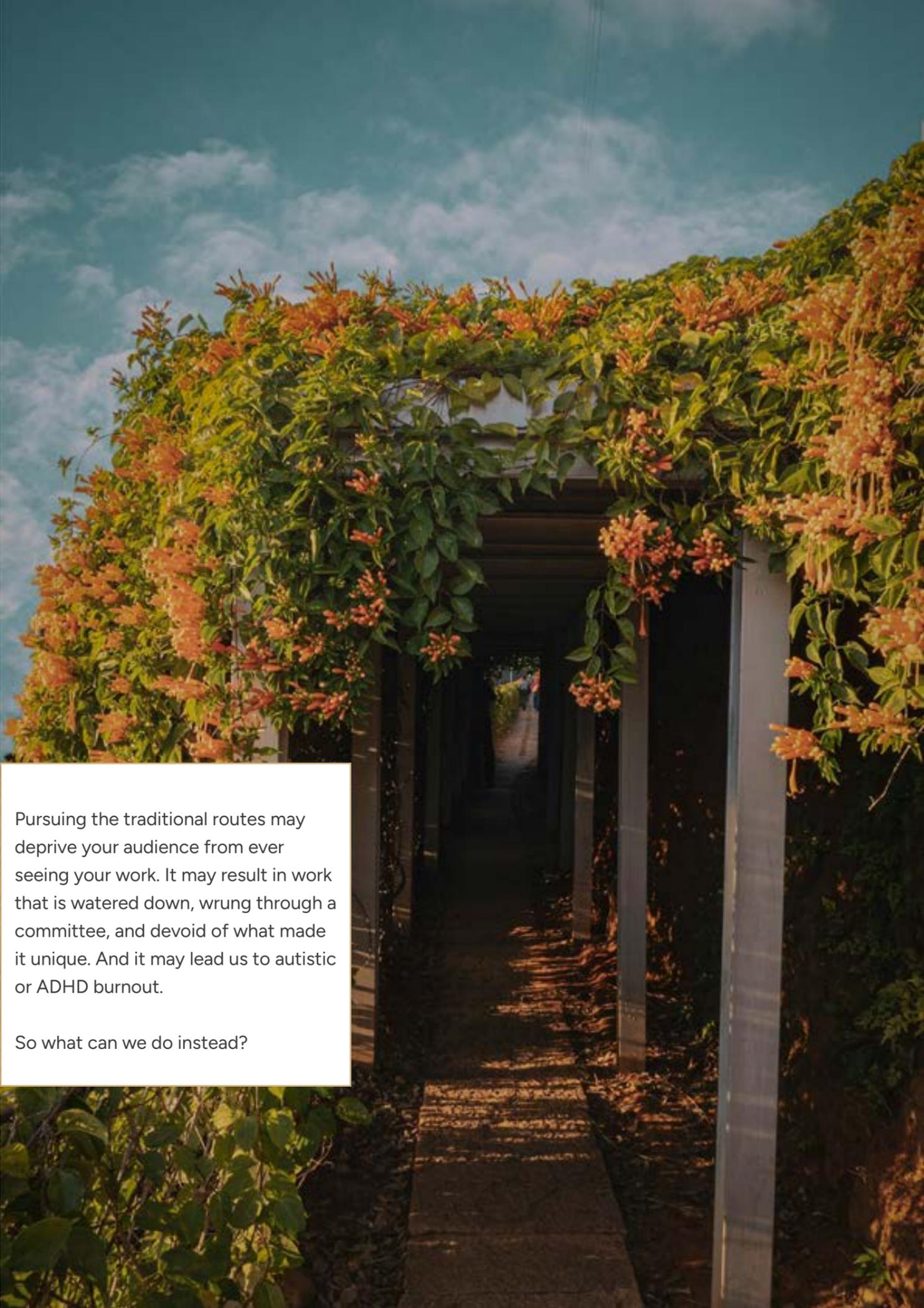
Even if you make it all the way through the gauntlet, and get a book/album/film sold... you may be asked to make compromises on your content. If you get sponsored, you may be asked to soften the edges, and put out your fire.

SLOWED

Getting that agent can take months or years. You may spend more years with that agent finalizing the book/music/etc. That's all before submitting to publishers, which can take more months and years. SO MUCH WASTED TIME.

UNPAID

Authors get tiny royalties from books. They rarely make enough from books for a living. Same for other creators. Money in the traditional paths is rare and limited.



Pursuing the traditional routes may deprive your audience from ever seeing your work. It may result in work that is watered down, wrung through a committee, and devoid of what made it unique. And it may lead us to autistic or ADHD burnout.

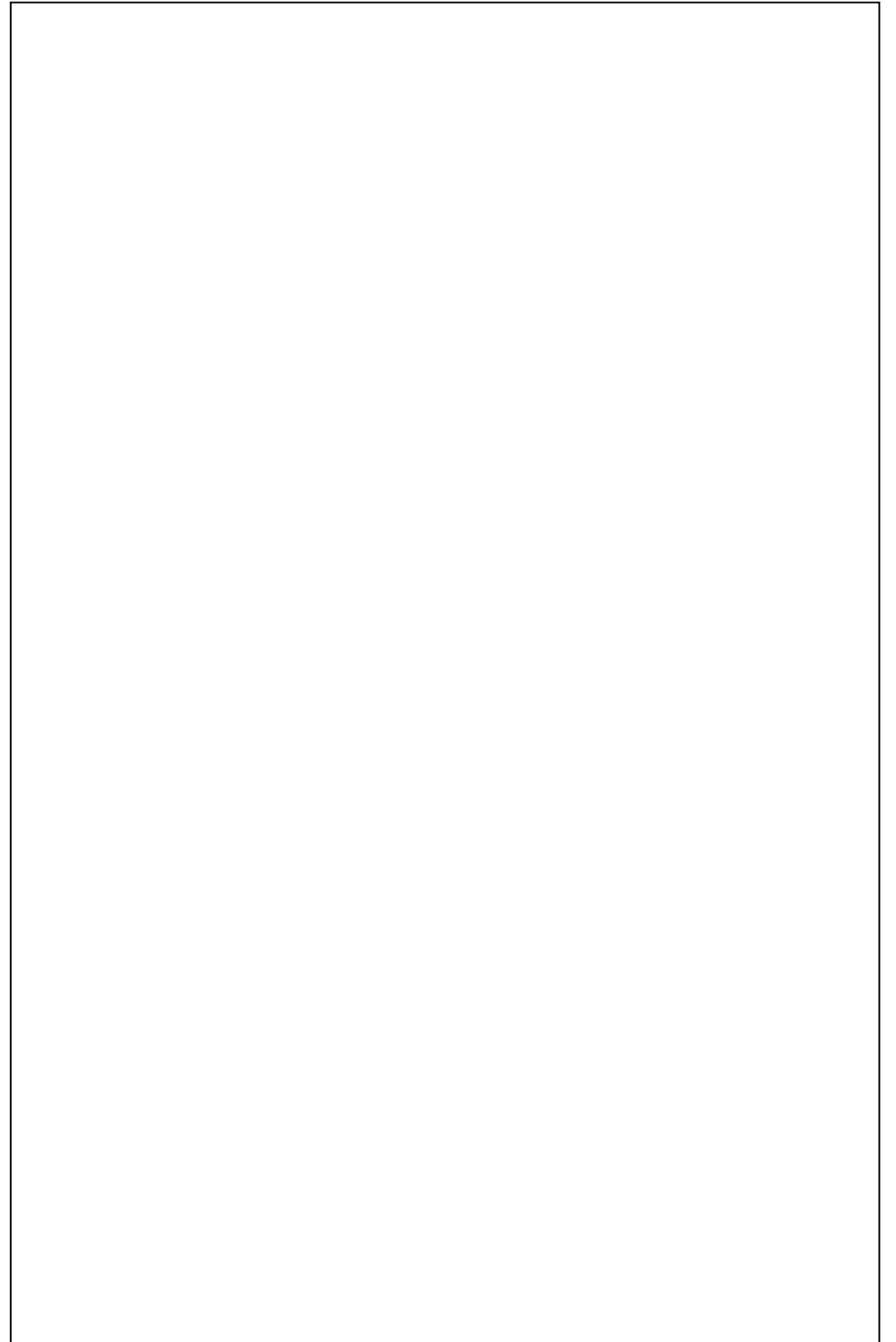
So what can we do instead?



Let's get weird.

NEURODIVERGENCE IS ALREADY SEEN AS WEIRD. SO WHY NOT EMBRACE IT WHEN SETTING GOALS? THINK ABOUT:

- What makes you *you*?
- What won't you compromise?
- What makes your art powerful?
- What are the unique and strange things about your work?
- Who would benefit from seeing that unique and strange work?
- How is your art an act of resistance to the tyranny of today?



Reality Check

YOUR VOICE IS IMPORTANT.

Weird is the word

Someone needs to hear your story. Someone needs to know they are not alone. Someone needs to know they're going to be ok, and your voice and your story will help. Your unique way of seeing the world will help.

Truth is the thing

That thing you've been putting off? The story, song, or art that's too weird, or too loud, or too vulnerable? That's what we need right now. That's what will be powerful for your audience, and for you.

Bigger is not better

Big and splashy means nothing if we don't reach the people who need to hear us. Bigger is not better if we have to compromise ourself to get there.

Honor Yourself

Sometimes the most radical and political thing you can do is honor your body, mind, experiences, and needs.

We don't need to hold our neurodivergent selves to neurotypical standards. And when we don't, we show a path that's better for everyone.

It's traumatic living in this world. It's traumatic to care. It's traumatic to be autistic, ADHD, or otherwise neurodivergent in a world not made for us.

So when we create, when we resist, the most radical thing we can do is honor our body's need for rest and our mind's need for solitude. It's powerful to do that in a world that tells us not to.

Bigger, but smaller

It's time to think bigger, and prize the smaller.



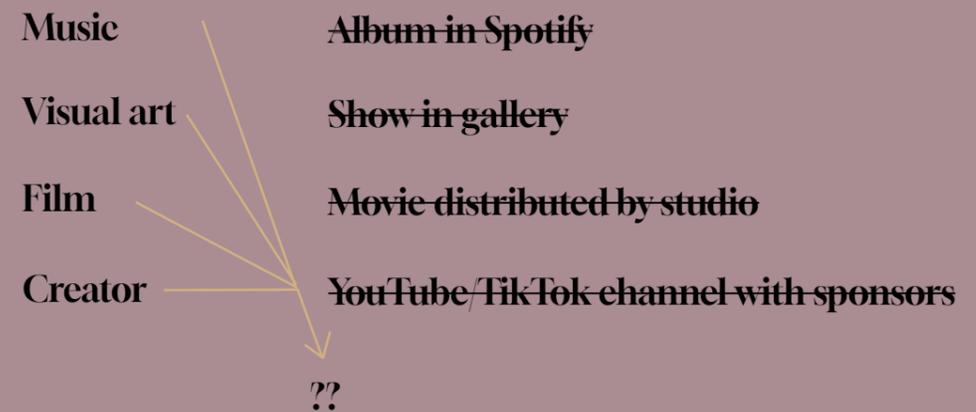
If we rethink our traditional end goals for writing, and prioritize who we are and what we want...what then?

Maybe your end goal becomes:

- Creating an audio fiction podcast instead of a novel.
- Serializing your long work into newsletters on Substack or Beehiv.
- Making small, hand-made zines to leave around your community.
- Creating print-on-demand books

The medium can be just as unique and powerful as the message. The medium could be the way you reach your true audience.

So what could your end goal be?



Just like with writing, the medium for other art can be just as unique and powerful as the message. What could your new end goals be?



Take Stock

LET'S REVISIT THESE QUESTIONS.

WITH ALL THAT WE'VE LEARNED ABOUT CREATIVE SEASONS,
REFRAMED GOALS, AND ACTIVIST PRINCIPLES IN MIND...
RETHINKING THESE QUESTIONS MIGHT POINT TO A NEW PATH
FORWARD.

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Reality Check

THE COME DOWN.

Spending time thinking about the big picture, and recommitting to creative work, can be super empowering.

So it can always feel a bit frustrating when you hit a wall again. Which you will. Because our creative life moves, again and again, through the phases we discussed earlier. And that's ok.

When you start to feel stuck, give yourself permission to:

- Change your mind. Maybe the goals you developed here don't work anymore. Time to rethink and reframe!
- Revisit the ideas for weathering the fall and winter phases
- Rework the exercises in this workbook and see what's changed.
- Get some help --->

Partner Up

When you're an activist, you might need to learn new tools and techniques. You might feel out on a ledge and need support. You might want to celebrate wins and chat with other neurodivergent creators.

REBEL YELL CREATIVE can help.

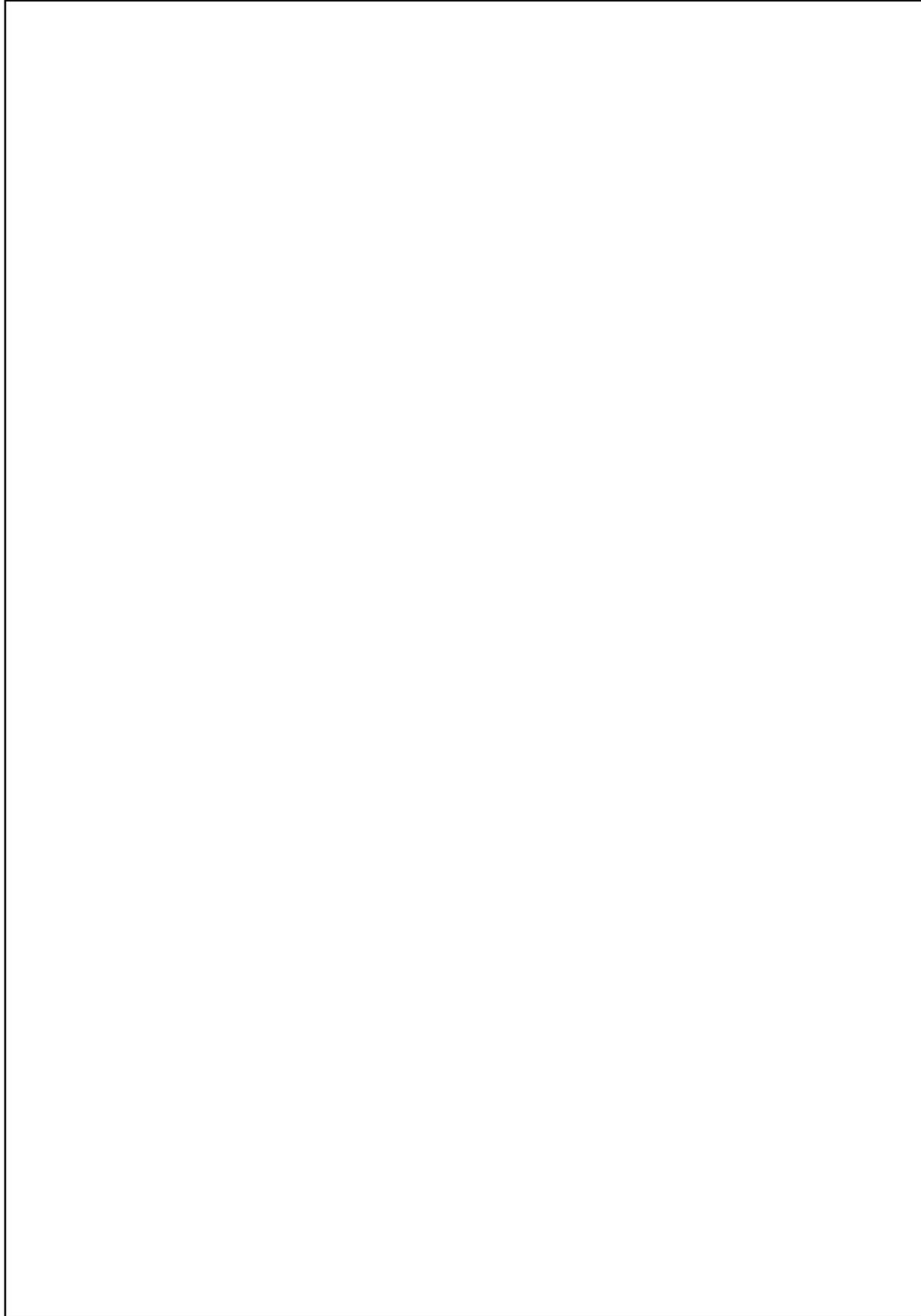
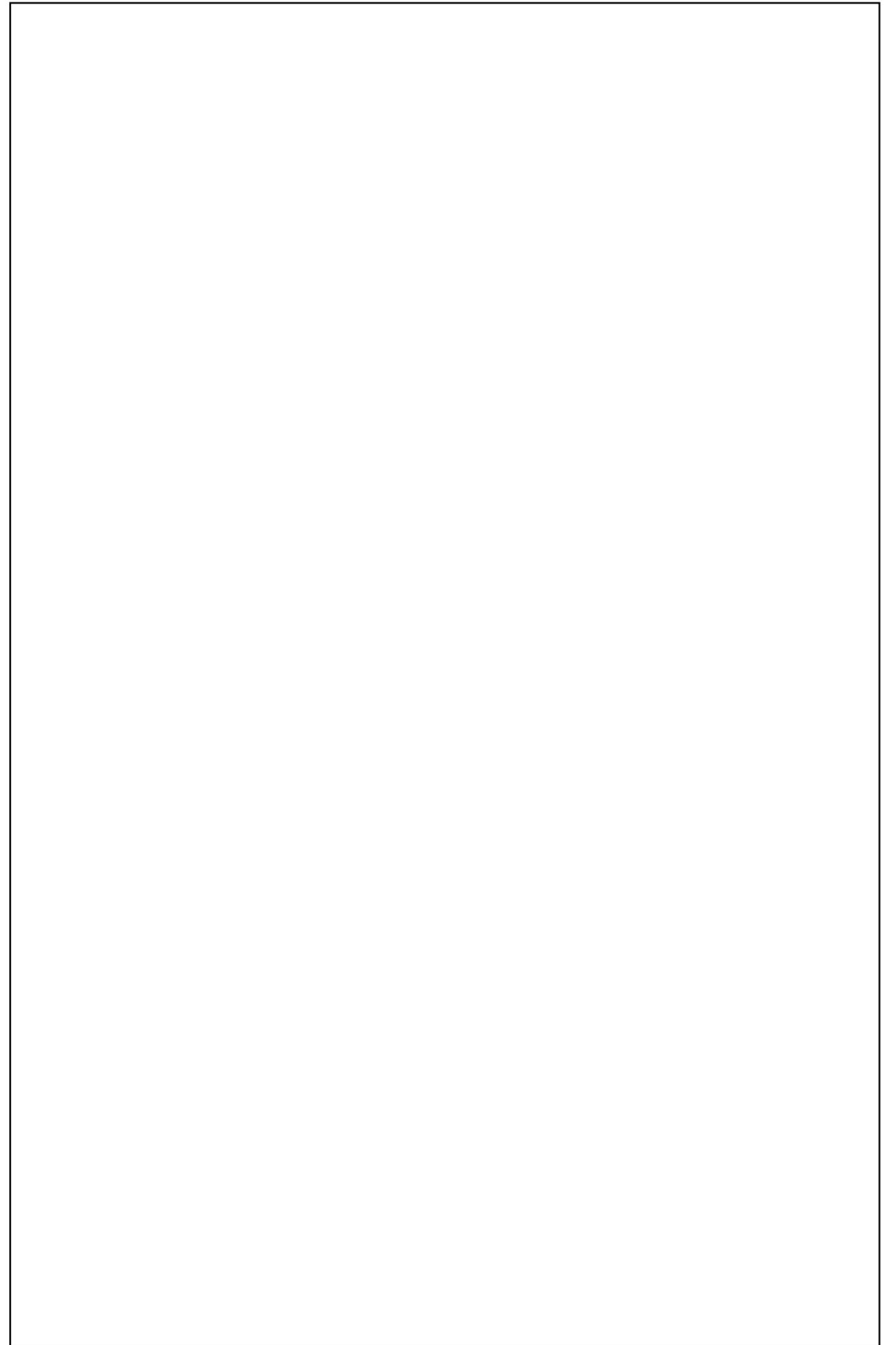
Create: →

Make your podcast. Build your newsletter. Write your serial stories. And make art as resistance with DIY resources and coaching from a fellow neurodiverse weirdo.

Connect: →

Find your people! Join an online community that actually works for neurodiverse people, with co-working, on-demand events, and more.

Here's extra space for your thinking.

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