

In order to heal we have to tell stories. Not just so that we find empathy for others. Not just so that we are connected in some way. But because we need to put words to our experiences in order to move on from them.

*Good Children* is centered on the conflict between speaking out and holding back our voices. In a post-war society where violence and aggression have shaped lives for years, there is danger in telling secrets. For generations, the families in the play have felt the threatening weight of telling the truth. Speaking up is risky. It could land them dead. It could land them disappeared. Leaving the people left behind in a permanent state of suffering.

The characters in the play discover that it's not easy to find the words. This is especially true for children, who haven't yet developed their understanding of the world around them. Overwhelming fear can be stunting and can cause us to lose our capacity for speech. The families in *Good Children* showcase how traumatized people become completely cut off from language. Instead of making sense of the trauma memory, they begin to experience it over and over again. Some even try to tell their story in different ways to try piece together an understanding.

Words allow us to put events into a time sequence and when trauma is not processed, the events are constantly experienced as part of the "now". Without words to make sense of events, the mind starts to think in images and flashbacks that concoct a constant reenactment of the trauma. The pain becomes constant, repetitive, and inescapable. As the mind engraves the trauma, the memory becomes a permanent fixture that can build up and continue to terrorize more if it isn't given an outlet.

The effects of silence can be damaging to the individual, forever shaping the way they interact with the world and the people around them. The impact of silence can spread from the individual and can feed into an even greater societal repression. The telling of stories becomes even more crucial to the healing of the world itself. We also encounter this conflict in our world today in circumstances where victims debate telling their stories out of fear. The terror of being punished, being dismissed, and not being believed jeopardizes individual peace of mind. The fear of taking the risk and it not sparking change can drive victims to question their motive for speaking out in the first place, leaving the larger community faced to live in a suspended state of oppression. Fear becomes infectious, spreading from the individual to the community and vice versa.

The play leaves us with the reminder that it is as dangerous to speak out as it is to stay silent, but the danger in choosing silence is more destructive. Coming forward is its own form of battle. The ammunition of voice is priceless. In a toxic society rooted in fear, taking a step towards voicing the truth is a healing process for the world, but at what cost to the individual?