

Teens Talk: Are You Listening?

Teens Talk: Are You Listening? is a collection of essays designed for both middle school and high school students ages 13 to 19 and the adults striving to understand them, such as parents, educators, and counselors. The book, written by teen author Maria Proulx, discusses a new issue that teens face in every chapter, such as family matters, risk-taking, body image, depression, suicide, stress, social media, self-confidence, LGBTQ identification and more. The purpose of this book is to help teens and adults converse, reflect, and take refuge in shared experiences.

Every chapter is about 1,000 words to cater to a teen's attention span and an adult's busy lifestyle. Each chapter begins with an inspirational quote, followed by an article on the topic, quick fact, tips for teens, and tips for adults. Excerpts from two chapters are shown below.

CHAPTER TITLE:

- a. Teens and Coping with the Death of a Friend
- b. Teens and Political Activism

QUOTE:

- a. Teens and Coping with the Death of a Friend:
Cheryl Strayed, *American Memorist* quotes, *“It is impossible for you to go on as before, so you must go on as you never have.”*
- b. Teens and Political Activism:
Malala Yousafzai, Pakistani Activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner quotes, *“When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.”*

ARTICLE: The author gets to the heart of the matter in the short article contained within each chapter. In *Teens and Coping with the Death of a Friend*, she recalls the death of a teenage boy in her community and how family, friends, and classmates responded.

On a fateful day in December, 14-year-old Conor died. He was quite the character, charming in an eccentric way. He was quirky, proudly wearing bow ties to our school. He was a prankster,

the class clown. Who else would make a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich for the school talent show? No one expects bad things to happen to them. There are over 7 billion people on our planet. What are the odds of anything happening to you? The young feel immortal. We feel invincible. Helmets are optional. Seatbelts an afterthought.

In the chapter on political activism, the author shares her own foray into political activism regarding her support of Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

It seemed only seconds ago that I had boldly dialed the number to reach the U.S. government, yet contrarily whispered, "Please be voicemail. Please be voicemail. Please be voicemail," during each and every one of the prolonged rings. But I knew I must be heard. Words are hollow unless one acts upon them.

QUICK FACT:

- a. Teens and Coping with the Death of a Friend:
1 in 10 kids ages 10 to 18 have dealt with the loss of somebody close to them.
- b. Teens and Political Activism:
4 in 10 young adults have posted on social media about an issue they care about and 2 in 10 have attended a public rally or demonstration.

TIPS FOR TEENS:

- a. Teens and Coping with the Death of a Friend:
Reach out to friends or others affected by the loss. 59% of teens say that connecting with friends was the most beneficial thing they did to recover from the death. If there are other people coping with the loss of your friend, it may be easier to open up to them about issues you're facing rather than to tell adults.
- b. Teens and Political Activism:
Learn how to discuss topics that are controversial. Many teens have a strong and passionate stance over a controversial matter, which is perfectly fine. However, in order to keep our respect for others, we need to be civil and considerate to those who have

different viewpoints than us. Rather than emotional outbursts or name-calling, share your viewpoint with courtesy and maturity.

TIPS FOR ADULTS:

a. Teens and Coping with the Death of a Friend:

Support mourning teens through the silence. Don't perceive a teen's silence as an invitation to leave. Rather, stay with the grieving teen through their pain. Most teens have no experience with death and are unsure of how to ask for help. Supporting them nevertheless shows that you truly care.

b. Teens and Political Activism:

Donate to causes you care about. Though few teens have the means to offer large contributions to the causes they support, adults can provide an example and donate to a worthy cause, helping teens form these habits later in life. To encourage teens to financially support a charity they are passionate about, suggest the possibility of asking for donations in place of a birthday or holiday gift.

The aim of *Teens Talk: Are You Listening?* is to connect teenagers and provide solace to the teen, insight to the parent, conversation starters for the guidance counselor, and writing topics for the educator. This book is an attempt to keep communication lines open between all groups during the difficult adolescent years by conveying true stories using humor and honesty, and evoking all the strong and passionate emotions teens carry.