

## Student Voices from the March for Our Lives (to read out loud)

**1. Cameron Kasky**, 17, a Marjory Stoneman Douglas student and survivor of the mass shooting, said:

On February 14, tragedy struck my hometown and my school Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School ... [17 people were killed.] Many others were injured and thousands of young people were forced to become adults. ....

We must stand beside those we lost and fix the world that betrayed them. ... This doesn't just happen in schools. Americans are being attacked in churches, nightclubs, movie theaters and on the streets, but we the people can fix this. For the first time I feel hope. I see light. ...

**2. Alex King**, 17, a student at North Lawndale College Prep in Chicago who lost his nephew to gun violence on May 28, 2017, said:

We are here joined together in unity fighting for the same goals. ... Our pain makes us family, us hurting together brings us closer together to fight for something better. .... We will support one another ... realizing ... that without the proper grassroots resources, this issue of violence will not be solved and we will not stop until we are properly resourced in our communities. So family, let's continue to fight for what's right.

**3. Edna Chavez**, 17, a student at Manual Arts High in Los Angeles and a social justice advocate, lost her brother Ricardo to gun violence. She was specific about the kind of resources she'd like to see more of in her community:

We need to tackle the root causes of the issues we face and come to an understanding on how to resolve them. .... Enough is enough. .... Policy makers, listen up. ... we should feel empowered and supported in our schools. ... fund mentorship programs, mental health resources, paid internship and job opportunities. .... It's important to work with people that are impacted by these issues. The people you represent. We need to focus on changing the conditions that foster violence and trauma and that's how we will transform our communities and uplift our voices.

**4. Delaney Tarr**, a senior from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, told the New Yorker magazine on the day of the march:

We're seeing all these people coming out under one cause. It's really empowering, it's really incredible to see. It is a lot, but it's a good version of a lot."

## Quotes for Posting Around the Room

### **Bree Newsome, 33, artist and social justice activist:**

As a social justice activist, trauma is an ever-present factor in my work. In fact, witnessing or experiencing a traumatic event is often the spark that ignites people to take action in the first place. It was for me. And as you can imagine, steeping yourself in pain to effect change can get exhausting. To combat this, there's a practice within the activist community known as "step up, step back," which refers to activists and organizers taking turns being on the front lines of an initiative versus playing a more supportive role. This practice is necessary for the sustainability of movements—and for the sake of the people involved. ... Balancing activism with self-care didn't come naturally to me at first. But since committing myself to fighting for social justice a few years ago, it's something I've developed out of necessity.

<https://www.self.com/story/charlottesville-activism-self-care>

### **Sara Ahmed, 48, writer, professor, feminist scholar:**

"Things ... are only really self-care if they assist in reaffirming and strengthening your sense of self. Self-care, for me, is about remembering your sense of humanity. ... We must remember what things we can do — or think, or even buy — that help us to affirm that we are human beings, important, and worthy of living. To me, this is where mental health self-care is paramount. Affirmative mantras, positivity, and self-love are things that are free yet dear, and that we all have the ability to give ourselves in some way. We can easily go over the many stress-relieving benefits of these acts of self-care. .... It's important to remember this in these unsettling times."

<https://mg.co.za/article/2017-06-15-00-oh-lordey-self-care-as-warfare>

**Alicia Garza, 37, Black Lives Matter co-founder and special projects director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance:**

“Spending time with people that I love and that unconditionally love me is my self-care. It is a way for me to practice the importance of community and of collective care that is integral to what makes it possible for me to live to fight another day.”

<https://www.colorlines.com/articles/self-care-multiracial-movement-black-lives>

**Isa Noyola, 39, director of programs for the Transgender Law Center:**

“Sustenance comes in the form of joyous movement, music, and connection. “Queer Cumbia, a monthly dance party in the Bay Area (offers) my favorite self-care moments,” says Noyola, also a national advocate for El/La Para TransLatinas. “Dancing to techno cumbia beats gives me oodles of life!”

<https://www.colorlines.com/articles/self-care-multiracial-movement-black-lives>

**Chris Crass, 44, anti-racist activist and author of *Towards the “Other America”*:** “For me, self-care ... is spiritual warfare to reclaim our hearts, minds, souls, bodies, relationships, and communities from the devastating feelings fostered by supremacy systems, and internalized in many of us, that tell us we are worthless, wrong, and that everything we are doing for justice will fundamentally fail.” In response to those external and internal pressures, Crass’s self-preservation toolkit “includes prayer, playing with my kids, loving my partner and my community, reading or watching superhero movies,” and “most importantly, it is a spiritual practice that affirms my worth, the gorgeousness of our messy movement, and the recognition of our people’s victories throughout history.”

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**Michelle Alexander, 50, civil rights lawyer, advocate, legal scholar and author of *The New Jim Crow*:**

“I can’t pretend that self-care is a strength of mine,” Alexander admits, “but I know that I’d be able to give more if I paused more, relaxed more, slept more, and took time for the things and people that bring me joy. I’m an introvert by nature so the one thing that restores me most is simply having time alone. Running early in the morning, especially in the beautiful natural settings like the woods or near the ocean, is absolutely my favorite thing, along with yoga and journaling – practices that I’m struggling to make routine.”

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**Amani Al-Khatahtbeh, 25, Muslim activist and founder of Muslim Girl:**

“I want our platform, Muslim Girl, to relentlessly elevate the narratives that have been marginalized and silenced both outside of and within the Muslim community. .... In 2014, my first year out of college, I was taking part in a protest in Washington, D.C. A bunch of counter-protesters showed up and targeted me. The things they said were dehumanizing, hurtful, and traumatic. None of the other activists identified what was going on and instead pushed me to work harder. I totally burned out and stopped social justice work for two months. When I met up for coffee with another activist and told her what had happened, she identified that I had been triggered and needed self-care. That moment really showed me the importance of surrounding yourself with a good support system and other women activists with whom you can share the struggle.”

<https://www.self.com/story/activism-fatigue>

**Lucy McBath, 57, activist supporting stricter gun laws:** When my son Jordan was murdered in 2012, I came to understand gun culture in the United States and the laws that allowed tragedies like this to happen. I joined Moms Demand Action, and about four months after that, Shannon Watts, the founder, asked me to become national spokeswoman. I had to take time off after the election. I had been running really, really hard for gun violence prevention, pouring out my heart and soul for the candidate who I really believed was the best. I began to recognize that no matter who won, I was going to have to take some down time for myself spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. .... Survivors fight so hard for gun-violence prevention, but on top of that, we're still affected by the tragedies we have suffered. .... It's important to have a balance. We have to give ourselves permission to say, "Today I don't have to be an activist."

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**Reshma Saujani, 41, activist, founder of Girls Who Code, and an organizer of the Women's March:**

I started Girls Who Code in an effort to help close the gender gap in science and technology. .... When I have activism fatigue, I'm grouchier. I'm not present. I know I'm burned out when I look through my calendar and start canceling things. I don't sleep as well. I try to go to the gym four times a week, but when I am there and suffering, I'm trying to leave 10 minutes early—I'm just done. .... When I'm fatigued, I really try to turn off. I will just put my phone in my bag and not look at it for four hours. I also believe in journaling. I always have one next to my bed so I can release myself from thoughts at the end of the day.

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**Veronica Funness, 20, college activist fighting to end rape culture:**

I am a peer educator, and I intern for Students Promoting Empowerment and Consent (SPEAC) at the University of Arizona. By speaking to my peers, giving them helpful tips, and breaking down topics like consent and alcohol, or even Title IX, I am able to do justice to the causes I care about. Once I got deeply invested in my internship at school, I became a lot more socially aware. I watched what I said much more, and I found fewer things to be funny—even though my peers would still laugh. I never had a name for the run-down feeling of not being able to get people to understand—let alone care—about a cause. .... I talk to my parents whenever I feel any doubt in what I'm doing or just need some moral support. They are my best friends, and they have awesome wisdom that helps me bounce back. I've also found that keeping a journal can help. I write out my bad days and how I'm feeling, but I also write my successes in it, too. I have those pages as tangible reminders that my work is important, my feelings are important, and everything I'm going through is valid.

<https://www.self.com/story/activism-fatigue>

**Molly Costello, 28, artist and activist fighting against white**

**supremacy:** After Mike Brown's death and the uprising in Ferguson, I got involved in the racial justice movement with a focus on ending white supremacy. .... How I stay motivated to keep fighting: I stepped away to focus on myself, went away to Wisconsin for an artist residency, and prioritized my art as a career and an outlet for expression and healing. I say all this knowing that the fatigue I felt was nowhere near the pain and fatigue that many black and brown people live with their whole lives. I have never feared for my life. I have never feared incarceration for walking down the street. I have never feared deportation or the deportation of a family member. The trauma I experienced was mostly the trauma of people around me, and I know I can do my part to spread awareness. This has kept me moving forward.

<https://www.self.com/story/activism-fatigue>

**Jules Larson, 26, transgender artist and activist:**

I advocate for transgender health care and housing, which are some of the most important, immediately dangerous issues for trans people. Being trans without access to affordable health services or shelter could mean death in many ways. At one point, I was suffering through internal strife and not being able to pay my bills while maintaining a high degree of involvement with this work. As a woman, you are often put in the position to care for other people's needs rather than your own, and this created even more additional fatigue. ... [Ultimately] It comes back to asking myself what it will actually take to achieve my goal and being honest about the answer. Sometimes that means identifying the problems in my or my group's way of strategizing. Other times it's about being extra-present with myself—so I don't avoid the next burnout but instead embrace it for the past victories that it represents. <https://www.self.com/story/activism-fatigue>

**Mia Ives-Rublee, 32, advocated at the Women's March for people with disabilities:**

I was involved in the Women's March, and helped make sure they included women and people with disabilities. These events often aren't accessible, so I reached out to see what the organizers were going to do about people with disabilities. When I found out that they didn't have a plan, I stepped into the role. .... I've seen activism take its toll on other people. Some people drop out. It can be really hard, especially for people with disabilities, who are already dealing with medical conditions and external tolls because things aren't accessible. To decompress, I do things I really enjoy and love. I spend time with my service dog. I work out all the time. I love reading and I'm an avid movie lover. For me, activism is a passion and it's not something I can step very far back from, because it's about my right to exist and be here. So I do something I love, then I jump back in when I'm ready.

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**Carmen Perez, 40, activist and director of the Gathering for Justice:**

Since age 19, I've been organizing and advocating on behalf of and alongside marginalized communities. I've dedicated myself to working with youth—and particularly youth who have been impacted by incarceration. I've also been working on police brutality in the past five years. When I came on board as the national organizing director at the Gathering for Justice in 2008, I started to suffer from activism fatigue. I think a lack of direction led to it, and it quickly became overwhelming. I had to ask for guidance and direction and just clarity in my role and tasks. To stay energized and engaged, I drink a lot of water, I practice gratitude by listing three things I'm grateful for in the morning, I work out and eat healthy, watch comedies, send myself positive affirmations, and surround myself with people I love and admire. And when I'm feeling discouraged, I pray—a lot and for everybody.

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