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## Why We Need To Speak Up, And Make Our Voices Heard

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# Why We Need to Speak Up, and Make Our Voices Heard

By Gemma Caruso

We all have voices. Whether we choose to use them or not is our decision. But we need to use our voices. Our voices have power. When we speak, we communicate. We communicate ideas, thoughts, hopes, feelings. We have, as the carriers of powerful voices, an obligation to use them for the people and creatures that can't speak for themselves.

If you were silent, and didn't speak up as someone got bullied, then you are just as guilty as the bully. You had the chance to stop the bully, to get help for the person, but by staying silent, you are saying that it is okay, that it is alright.

If you watched someone steal someone's car, their wallet, their purse, and stayed silent, and didn't tell them that someone was taking their car, their wallet, their purse, then you helped the thief get away.

Now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, my mom started limiting our exposure early. She pulled us out of school on Friday, and tried to get us Independent Study Contracts. Three days after she pulled us from school, the school was closed. She called all my friends' parents, and told them about the steps that needed to be taken. She told everyone that they should

isolate their families, stop seeing their older relatives, etc. She started making us spray rubbing alcohol on our hands, and, instead of going to a feis\* that was in Seattle, and that she and my twin sister had driven for 12 hours to attend, she turned around and went home. Some of my friends later told me that, since Mom had pulled us out, their parents would have pulled them out as well, if school hadn't closed the following Monday. My mom spoke up, and now other people are listening to what the government is saying more closely, because Mom showed them that COVID-19 was not to be trifled with, and appropriate cautions must be taken.

When people speak up, change happens. If you noticed trash covered the beach next to the school, and spoke up, talked to the principal, your teacher, your friends, family, peers, anyone you met, then eventually people will listen. They have to listen. It's like a stone tossed in a clear, still, pond. The ripples get larger. If you talked to ten people, and each of those people told five people in passing, that, "A little kid at the school by the beach wants to clean up the beach," then 50 more people would know. If each of those people told two more people, then 250 people would have been reached, just by you talking to ten. What you say ripples out through the world.

"Rome wasn't built in a day." Change comes slowly. You can talk, and people can laugh at you, tell you that, "You're just a kid, what do you know?" But, someday someone will listen. You don't have to get up on a stage, or on TV in order to get your message across. As long as you keep throwing stones in the pond, your message will still get out.

“Only idiots listen with their eyes. If people don’t hear your words, shout them. If they silence you, then write your message with fire. Demanding respect is never easy, but if something you live is at stake, then I’d say it’s worth the price.\*\*”

If you are saying what you really believe, then people need to hear. If you love the whale, and want to help protect it, don’t just keep your knowledge to yourself, tell people. Explain why you love the whales, and how people can help. Inspire people to make a difference. But if you stay quiet, silent, and let everyone else talk, and never say anything, never speak up for those who can’t speak for themselves, then you might as well go and hunt those whales yourself, for all the good you will do.

The whale can’t speak for himself, so speak for the whale, for the animals who don’t speak in the tongue we understand. Speak, for the people who are downtrodden, and kept in a place where they cannot be heard, are not allowed to be heard. Let people know what is happening, and why it must be stopped.

If no one knows, no one can change anything. Since you can talk, you can shout, you can write your words across the world, you have to say something for those who cannot speak up for themselves. You have an obligation to the world. You have the power to change things. Use it!

\* feis-an Irish Dancing Competition

\*\* The Land of Stories, Worlds Collide, by Chris Colfer

### Works Cited

Colfer, Chris. The Land of Stories, Worlds Collide. New York, New York: Hachette Book Group, Inc, July 2017.