Who listens to you?

*New York Times* contributor Kate Murphy asked people on five continents this question, and the response was typically a long, awkward pause. People struggled to come up with someone, anyone, who truly listened to them without glazing over, glancing down at a phone, or jumping in to offer an opinion. Many admitted that they, themselves, weren’t very good listeners, and most couldn’t even describe what it meant to be a good listener.

Despite living in a world where technology allows constant digital communication and opportunities to connect, it seems no one is really listening or even knows how. And it’s making us lonelier, more isolated, and less tolerant than ever before. A listener by trade, Murphy wanted to know how we got here.

In this illuminating and often humorous deep dive, Murphy explains why we’re not listening, what it’s doing to us, and how we can reverse the trend. She makes accessible the psychology, neuroscience, and sociology of listening while also introducing us to some of the best listeners out there (including a CIA agent, focus-group moderator, bartender, radio producer, and top furniture salesman).

While listening is often regarded as talking’s meek counterpart, Murphy discovered it’s actually the more powerful position in communication. We learn when we listen. It’s how we connect, cooperate, empathize, and fall in love. Listening is something we do or don’t do eve...

Kate Murphy is a Houston, TX-based reporter whose writing has appeared in *The New York Times, The Economist, Agence France-Presse, and Texas Monthly.*
You Can Only Yell at Me for One Thing at a Time
Rules for Couples
Patricia Marx and Roz Chast

The perfect Valentine’s Day and anniversary gift: An illustrated collection of love and relationship advice from New Yorker writer Patricia Marx, with illustrations from New Yorker cartoonist Roz Chast.

Everyone knows the tired, clichéd advice for a healthy relationship: Never go to bed angry. The couple that plays together, stays together. Distance makes the heart grow fonder. Sexual favors in exchange for cleaning up the cat vomit is a good and fair trade.

Okay, maybe not that last one. In You Can Only Yell at Me for One Thing at a Time: Rules for Couples, the authors of Why Don’t You Write My Eulogy Now So I Can Correct It share their fresh, new romance tips that will make you laugh, make you feel seen, and remind you why your relationship is better than everyone else’s.

These nuggets of advice include:

* If you must breathe, don’t breathe so loudly.

* It is easier to stay inside and wait for the snow to melt than to fight about who should shovel.

* Queen-sized beds, king-sized blankets.

And many more. You Can Only Yell at Me for One Thing at a Time is the perfect gift for your significant other, your friendly anti-Valentine’s Day crusader, or anyone in your life who wants to laugh about the absurdity of love.

Author: Patricia Marx has been contributing to The New Yorker since 1989. She is a former writer for “Saturday Night Live” and “Rugrats,” and is the author of several books, including Let’s Be Less Stupid, Him Her Him Again The End of Him, and Starting from Happy. Marx was the first woman elected to the Harvard Lampoon. She has taught screenwriting and humor writing at Princeton, New York University, and Stonybrook University. She was the recipient of a 2015 Guggenheim Fellowship.

Illustrator: Roz Chast has loved to draw cartoons since she was a child growing up in Brooklyn. She attended Rhode Island School of Design, majoring in Painting because it seemed more artistic. However, soon after graduating, she reverted to type and began drawing c...
Saint X
A Novel
Alexis Schaitkin

Hailed as a “marvel of a book” and “brilliant and unflinching,” Alexis Schaitkin’s stunning debut, Saint X, is a haunting portrait of grief, obsession, and the bond between two sisters never truly given the chance to know one another.

Claire is only seven years old when her college-age sister, Alison, disappears on the last night of their family vacation at a resort on the Caribbean island of Saint X. Several days later, Alison’s body is found in a remote spot on a nearby cay, and two local men—employees at the resort—are arrested. But the evidence is slim, the timeline against it, and the men are soon released. The story turns into national tabloid news, a lurid mystery that will go unsolved. For Claire and her parents, there is only the return home to broken lives.

Years later, Claire is living and working in New York City when a brief but fateful encounter brings her together with Clive Richardson, one of the men originally suspected of murdering her sister. It is a moment that sets Claire on an obsessive pursuit of the truth—not only to find out what happened the night of Alison’s death but also to answer the elusive question: Who exactly was her sister? At seven, Claire had been barely old enough to know her: a beautiful, changeable, provocative girl of eighteen at a turbulent moment of identity formation.

As Claire doggedly shadows Clive, hoping to gain his trust, waiting for the slip that will reveal the truth, an unlikely attachment develops between them, two people whose lives were forever marked by the same tragedy.

For readers of Emma Cline’s The Girls and Lauren Groff’s Fates and Furies, Saint X is a flawlessly drawn and de...

Alexis Schaitkin’s short stories and essays have appeared in Ecotone, Southwest Review, The Southern Review, The New York Times, and elsewhere. Her fiction has been anthologized in The Best American Short Stories and The Best American Nonrequired Reading. She received her MFA in fiction from the University of Virginia, where she was a Henry Hoyns Fellow. She lives in Williamstown, Massachusetts, with her husband and son. Saint X is her debut novel.

PRAISE

"'Saint X' is hypnotic. Schaitkin's characters...are so intelligent and distinctive
Good Boy
My Life in Seven Dogs
Jennifer Finney Boylan

From bestselling author of She's Not There, New York Times opinion columnist, and human rights activist Jennifer Finney Boylan, Good Boy: My Life in Seven Dogs, a memoir of the transformative power of loving dogs.

This is a book about dogs: the love we have for them, and the way that love helps us understand the people we have been.

It’s in the love of dogs, and my love for them, that I can best now take the measure of the child I once was, and the bottomless, unfathomable desires that once haunted me.

There are times when it is hard for me to fully remember that love, which was once so fragile, and so fierce. Sometimes it seems to fade before me, like breath on a mirror.

But I remember the dogs.

In her New York Times opinion column, Jennifer Finney Boylan wrote about her relationship with her beloved dog Indigo, and her wise, funny, heartbreaking piece went viral. In Good Boy, Boylan explores what should be the simplest topic in the world, but never is: finding and giving love.

Good Boy is a universal account of a remarkable story: showing how a young boy became a middle-aged woman—accompanied at seven crucial moments of growth and transformation by seven memorable dogs.

“Everything I know about love,” she writes, “I learned from dogs.” Their love enables us pull off what seem like impossible feats: to find our way home when we are lost, to live our lives with humor and courage, and above all, to best become our true selves.

Professor JENNIFER FINNEY BOYLAN, author of fifteen books, is the inaugural Anna Quindlen Writer in Residence at Barnard College of Columbia University. Her column “Men & Women” appears on the op/ed page of the New York Times on alternate Wednesdays. She serves on the Board of Trustees of PEN America. From 2011 to 2018 she served on the Board of Directors of GLAAD and also provided counsel for the TV series Transparent and I Am Cait. Her 2003 memoir, She’s Not There: a Life in Two Genders was the first bestselling work by a transgender American. A novelist, memoirist, and short story writer, she is also a nationally known advocate for human rights. She lives in New York City, and in Belgrade Lakes, Maine, with her wife, Deedie. They have a son, ...
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