

13 Reasons Why Conversation Guide

The media we consume has the power to forge connections and create change by raising awareness about important issues.

13 Reasons Why, a Netflix adaptation of Jay Asher's novel *Thirteen Reasons Why*, has sparked conversations about important social issues including **violence against women and girls, substance abuse, mental health**, and the impact of **suicide** within a community. In the show, viewers experience young adult life from a variety of perspectives as narrated by the protagonist, Hannah, through a series of tapes. These tapes address thirteen reasons why Hannah took her own life. Engaging in conversations about these topics can be difficult, awkward, and uncomfortable; however, starting these conversations can also help to address potentially harmful behavior or empower individuals.



The conversation guide below was created by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) for season one of *13 Reasons Why*. Use some or all of these questions as a starting point for having conversations about this show with your friends and family.

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

- ★ Did you have any pre-conceived notions about *13 Reasons Why* before watching it? Did your actual experience live up to these expectations?
- ★ Did you read the book beforehand? How did the show compare/contrast with the book? Did you notice anything different?
- ★ What do you think is the overall message of *13 Reasons Why*? Do you agree or disagree with it?
- ★ What part of *13 Reasons Why* was the most powerful to you? Why?
- ★ Who was your favorite character in *13 Reasons Why*? Least favorite?
- ★ Were you able to respect or identify with any of the characters in *13 Reasons Why*? Who was it and why?
- ★ Were there any characters or scenes that you found inspiring or thought-provoking?
- ★ What did you find most memorable about *13 Reasons Why*?

- ★ What role do women and people of color play in *13 Reasons Why*? Does the show pass the Bechdel Test¹ the newly-coined DuVernay Test² and/or the Mako Mori Test³?
- ★ How important is it that women have substantial and established roles in entertainment? Does a failure to develop a character contribute to dehumanizing her?

EMPATHY-BASED QUESTIONS:

- ★ Clay goes to Bryce's house to obtain a confession. Explain what motivated Clay to do so. What did this motivation have to do with the overarching themes of *13 Reasons Why*?
- ★ The characters that receive the tapes before Clay keep these a secret. Explain what motivates them to do so. What does this have to do with overarching themes of *13 Reasons Why*? Do their actions accurately represent a culture of silence surrounding sexual assault and mental health?
- ★ One of the things that was most striking about *13 Reasons Why* was the graphic depiction of sexual assault and suicide. What effect did the portrayal have on you?
- ★ What relationships (e.g., friends, lovers, co-workers, family members, etc.) are important to the plot? How did these relationships contribute to or advance the plot?
- ★ Which characters do you think had the most powerful relationship dynamic – positive or negative? Why?
- ★ There are many different relationships between characters in *13 Reasons Why*. Did you notice any healthy or unhealthy behaviors within these relationships? Which ones and why?
- ★ Could you identify any "red flags" for domestic violence, teen dating violence, or unhealthy relationships?
- ★ Did any of the relationship dynamics make you feel uncomfortable? If so, in which scenes? Why did it make you feel this way?
- ★ Was there any scene or circumstance that challenged your views in any way?
- ★ Was there a scene or circumstance that shifted your views on a particular issue?
- ★ *13 Reasons Why* makes a reference to violence in many ways. What effect did it have on the characters?

¹ **To pass the Bechdel Test:** (1) There must be two or more named female characters, (2) who have an on-screen conversation, (3) about something other than a man.

² **To pass the DuVernay Test:** (1) There must be two or more named characters of color, (2) who have an on-screen conversation, (3) about something other than a white person.

³ **To pass the Mako Mori Test:** (1) There must be at least one named female character, (2) who gets her own narrative arc, (3) that is not supporting a man's storyline.

- ★ Subconscious motives are often the most powerful causes of human behavior. Were there any major characters who acted on motives of which they were not aware? How did these motives affect the actions of those characters?

QUESTIONS RELATED TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:

- ★ How did the depiction of violence and sexual assault in *13 Reasons Why* make you feel? Did you think that this representation was necessary? Did it contribute to the story?
- ★ In the final episode of *13 Reasons Why*, how did Mr. Porter's response make you feel about the way administrators respond to and address assault in the United States?
- ★ Consider the phrase "violence against women." In what ways do women experience violence, abuse, or harassment in *13 Reasons Why*?
- ★ How did the characters affected by violence face challenges to addressing it?
- ★ In the case of domestic violence and sexual assault, did the victims face any particular barriers to addressing abuse?
- ★ Do you think *13 Reasons Why* romanticizes violence against women or blames victims for what happens?
- ★ Do you think *13 Reasons Why* provides an adequate and realistic representation of mental health issues, suicide, and violence against women? If not, what needs to be changed?
- ★ How does *13 Reasons Why* make references to violence against women (e.g., domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, technology-facilitated harassment, or other forms of violence)?

PROCESSING QUESTIONS:

- ★ What emotions did you feel while watching *13 Reasons Why*? After the show ended?
- ★ What systems and attitudes did you see in *13 Reasons Why* that need to change in order to end violence against women?
- ★ How can communities work together to end violence?
- ★ What can communities do to raise awareness on mental health and prevent suicide?
- ★ How would you support someone you know experiencing violence, mental health issues, abuse, bullying, or sexual assault like the characters in *13 Reasons Why*? (See [resources](#) below)

RESOURCES:

- ★ **If you are considering suicide** remember that you are not alone and help is available. You can call the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 1-800-273-8255.
- ★ **If you are in danger**, please call 911, a local hotline, or the U.S. [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) at 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224.
- ★ Learn more about domestic violence at [NNEDV.org](#).
- ★ Learn more about technology-facilitated abuse, harassment, and harm from [TechSafety.org](#).
- ★ Learn more about state-specific laws and legal remedies from [WomensLaw.org](#).
- ★ Learn more about teen dating abuse from [Break the Cycle](#)
- ★ Chat online about teen dating abuse at [loveisrespect.org](#) or text loveis to 22522.