

Gen Z Unfiltered

Small Groups

Week 1 is an overview. Weeks 2-4 will cover three challenges your generation faces, how to process these challenges, and actions you can take to move life forward. Keep in mind that everyone is raised differently with a variety of experiences. As a result, you may experience one challenge more than another or some challenges not at all. Self-discovery is part of this process. Community is part of the discovery, so grab a friend of two and talk it out.

Week 1

Characteristics of Gen Z

1. They are more private: Millennials were the first generation to experience social media, and they were the guinea pigs. They fell prey to stalkers, bullies, and even employers who saw their posts before a job interview. In response, Gen Z is more private about their information and profile, and nearly six out of ten are making an effort to spend less time on social media.
2. They are more anxious: This generation suffers from more mental health problems than any other generation of kids in history. While true, they live lives of paradox. Kids' lives are both easier and harder. It's easier to navigate technically but more difficult to navigate psychologically and emotionally.
3. They are more restless: Gen Z's lifestyle and sense of identity are shifting consistently—based on the realities around them. Restless at night, on a screen instead of sleeping. Self-image comes from what they see online.
4. They are more tech savvy: Research shows Gen Z kids can multitask on five screens, not two as Millennials did. Gen Z prefers to learn alone. Many meet their boyfriend or girlfriend online, which results in LMIRL.
5. They are more nurtured: This generation knows more about sex, drugs, and human vices than other generations. The concern is caring adults have become preoccupied with safety, self-esteem, and success of Gen Z. Millennials had helicopter parents. Gen Z have snowplow parents, do things for their child. Moms and dads are consumed with fears of school shootings, terrorism, and whether their kid will get into their top college. As a result teens are motivated by “not wanting to let others down”, which creates the trap of people pleasing.
6. They are more entrepreneurial: Gen Z learned from Millennials, who believed what their parents told them about how going to college would result in a great job—and found that it wasn't true. With a reality check, Gen Z feels empowered to simply bypass climbing the corporate ladder and create their own company or freelance. They want to create something new from home as their expectations have been dashed with two recessions since 2000. Their problems with this paradigm are their struggles with confidence and their risk aversion.
7. They are more redemptive: They are more inclusive and accepting of different races, backgrounds, or gender than any U.S. generation before them. The first African-American president was elected

during their childhood, gay marriage became legal, and the #MeToo movement was launched. They believe they can change the world because they've grown up in a world that is already changing.

Discuss

Of the 7 characteristics, what do you identify with or not identify with? Why?

Technology

Technology has altered human physiology.

1. **Sleeplessness:** Falling asleep with glowing screens that send puzzling internal light cues to their bodies, minds, and sleep-inducing hormones. Screen time at bedtime stimulates the brain when the brain should be slowing down for proper rest. Doctors are not explicitly concerned about sleep patterns in today's teens.
2. **Anxiety and Depression:** Terms have surfaced in our day to describe the increased levels of anxiety and depression we feel: FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and FOBO (Fear of Being Off-line). FOMO is a blend of anxiety, inadequacy, and irritation that can flare up while skimming social media. So just get off your phone, right? Not so fast. Enters FOBO—millions now grow anxious when away from their phones. Many students have withdrawal symptoms (like drug addicts) when their phones are taken away.
3. **Poorer Memories:** We don't need to remember anything anymore. We have Google and Siri. Research shows the younger generation can't remember simple information like their families' birthdates or their own phone number. Some people are unable to navigate their own cities without the help of a GPS.
4. **Diminished Attention Spans:** In the year 2000, the average adolescent attention span was 12 seconds. Today, it has dropped to 8 seconds. One study reported young adults interact with their phones 85 times per day, spending several hours doing so. Those same young adults thought they spent about half that time. With phones beeping and pinging all day, focus is becoming a lost art.
5. **Impulsivity:** Young people have a hard time delaying gratification. We can get whatever we want when we want it. Amazon, Spotify, or cookies delivered to our dorm at 2am. A study found that games like Halo inhibit the ability to rein in impulsive or aggressive behavior in real life.

Discuss

Of the 5 characteristics, what do you identify with or not identify with? Why?

What are some new habits you could practice to help with some of the negative effects?

Parents and Adults

1. Adult's top emotion regarding kids today is CONCERN.
2. When adults are fearful, they tend to try and seize control of their kid's lives.
3. When adults become controlling, kids feel out of control of their futures. Kids hear mom nag them about the application, the quiz, their gym shorts....They begin to both need mom's help and resent it. It's a love/hate relationship.
4. When kids feel this way, they assume an external locus of control. A teen naturally spirals into an assumption that fate or external forces govern her outcomes. She can begin to blame others when

things go wrong and feel entitled to benefits from others because she's come to expect them. She stops "owning" her life.

5. When they experience an external locus of control, anxiety goes up. When you feel your fate is up to another person, doesn't that make you feel just a bit unsettled?
6. What youth need is not for the adult to fear for the child, but to believe in the child. The teen does not need to be controlled but empowered. The standard must be lowered and the youth allowed to fail in order to grow independently.

Discuss

Of the 6 points, what do you identify with or not identify with? Why?

What are some new thinking habits you could practice to help with some of the negative effects?

Week 2

Challenge: Privilege Without Responsibility

As human civilization marches forward, we develop new methods and technologies to make life easier, swifter, and more efficient. We call it progress. The consequences as we improve the ease of our lives, we also start to subconsciously adjust our expectations. And as expectations increase so does our sense of entitlement. We feel entitled to items past generations dreamed about. Indoor plumbing, heating and air conditioning, customer service, high-speed internet and technology, money, jobs, and special benefits. Almost 60 percent of teens in 1979 had a job, compared to just 34 percent in 2015. In 1980, 70 percent had a summer job, which sank to 43 percent in the 2010s.

<u>Our world is full of:</u>	<u>Consequently, Gen Z can assume:</u>
Speed	Slow is bad
Convenience	Hard is bad
Entertainment	Boring is bad
Nurture	Risk is bad
Entitlement	Labor is bad

When adults do things for students that they're able to do themselves, adults help foster an attitude of entitlement:

- When a parent ties their five-year-old's shoes when he could do it himself...
- When a parent rush forgotten gym shorts to school, enabling the kid to forget them again...
- When a parent negotiate with a high school teacher for an easier assignment....
- When we call an admissions counselor, professor, or coach, to speak on behalf of our child...
- When a parent calls BCM looking for an apartment for their college student to live in...

Inverse Relationships

1. Entitlement and Resilience: A tougher life makes one more robust. As life gets more convenient, people get more fragile.
2. Entitlement and Gratitude: Entitled people are not grateful. Gratitude improves emotional and physical health and can strengthen relationships and communities.
3. Entitlement and Happiness: The more entitled I am to resources, benefits, and opportunities, the more I invite misery into my life, as life will not give us all we feel we deserve.

Characteristics of Entitlement:

Conflict occurs when there is a distance between expectations and reality. Conflict expands when that distance expands.

1. Impatience (I want it now.)
2. Laziness (I don't want to work for it.)
3. Comparison (I want it because everyone else has it.)
4. Fragility (I want someone else to fix my problems.)
5. Irresponsibility (I don't want to clean up my messes.)
6. Anger (I am mad that people won't give me what I want.)

7. Disillusionment (I want someone else to make me happy.)

Counter the Challenge

1. Keep a gratitude journal.
2. Travel to a third world country or make friends with an under-resourced family/individual.
3. Look up stats/percentages on world poverty, privilege, college educated and other things that provide "big picture perspective".
4. Write down your negative and positive thoughts throughout the day to see who you can change your thinking.
5. Look up Scripture on gratitude.

Discuss

-Look at the list of "our world is full of...Gen Z can assume". How can we start to become countercultural?

What life skills can we cultivate that will teach us that these things are good, not bad?

-What may have your parents or cultural systems done to increase your entitlement? What did they do (or still do) for you that you could have done for yourself?

-What can we do to change our assumptions regarding the things we just expect to have? (i.e. air conditioning, a vehicle, food...)

-Do you recognize any of the inverse relationships and entitlement characteristics in yourself and/or in Gen Z? Which ones? Why?

Week 3

Challenge: Involvement Without Boundaries

Parents polled in 2017 say it is important to keep children as busy as possible with structured activities. As a result there is very little margin in the day, almost no quiet time or downtime. Noise and clutter prevent any boredom, but they also prevent reflective thinking. In the activities and clutter, you can't let people down, fail, or disappoint anyone. Generation Z is overcommitted and overwhelmed. The greatest concern is our lack of boundaries.

Exposure to content and access to activity is changing our state of mind. Once students know something is out there being enjoyed by others, they feel they need to enjoy it too. 1) Gen Z is exposed to content that knows no parameters, and the sheer volume has overwhelmed us. 2) The exposure has cultivated an appetite for more, more, and more. We have a new master. 3) The appetites have created assumptions and addictions. With a sense of entitlement, we need more to satisfy our cravings. Without boundaries, we all can become addicts. College students say today that they are addicted to... my phone, alcohol, pornography, specific apps, sports, prescription drugs, Instagram, vaping, Netflix, Selfies.

Gen Z is ODing in several ways: 1) Over-diagnosed: for every kind of disease, allergy, or psychological condition. Labels often become a self-fulfilling prophecy for them. 2) On-demand: We no longer have to wait for anything. Everything is easy and instant. 3) Overly-distracted: multitasking. 4) Over-dosed: anxiety, ADHD, panic attacks, OCD, PTSD, bipolar, eating disorders, psychoses, allergies, are now common place. While many people do need medication, too many of us have made it a first resort instead of a last one.

Counter the Challenge

Create Margin

1. Let yourself be bored. Practice doing nothing. Pray.
2. Keep your phone outside your bedroom at night. This will require buying an alarm clock.
3. Determine unplugged times and curfews on social media.
4. Delete social media accounts.
5. Create boundaries or guidelines on extra-curricular activities.
6. Learn to say no. Say no to people. One more extra thing, even something really noble, could ultimately burn you out.
7. Minimize the possessions you own. Determine want vs. need. Think before buying.
8. Realize you are boss of your time. You are in control of your life, own it. No one else can ultimately dictate what you do with your time.

Practice Mindfulness (the ability to be fully present, aware of where you are and what you're doing and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around you)

1. Ovoid multitasking. Put your phone on airplane mode when working on a task.
2. Balance screen time with face time and alone time. Have you looked at your screen time per day? How does it compare to face time with people and time by yourself (without being on a screen)?
3. Consume more magnesium. This crucial mineral is depleted when under duress. Find magnesium in spinach, kale, bananas, cocoa, and almond milk.
4. Sit down and do deep breathing.

5. Take a walk in nature.
6. Commit to a regular technology fast. Get in a routine. 10pm-8am or 8am-12pm or 6pm-bedtime two nights a week. FOMO? The world can wait, we need our sanity.
7. Get 8 hours of sleep every night. You laugh, but it can be done. Anything can be done if you want it bad enough.

Discuss

- Which of the O.D. statements do you observe most often in yourself?

- a. Over-diagnosed
- b. On-demand
- c. Openly divergent
- d. Overly distracted
- e. Over-dosed

-In an attempt to avoid burnout with another activity, how hard is it for you to say "no" to someone? Why or why not?

-Young people with an External Locus of Control see outside forces in control of their lives. Those with an Internal Locus of Control believe their success is up to them. What do you see in yourself? How did you arrive with this view point?

-How have you already addressed anxiety or stress issues within yourself?

-How can you create more margin in the daily schedules? Is boredom a hurdle for you?

-Take a look at your screen time per day. How does it compare with time alone not on a screen and time with others?

- Mindfulness is being fully present in the moment without being overwhelmed or distracted. Is mindfulness easy or difficult for you? Why?

5. Do you multi-tasking or mono-tasking? What are some practical ways you can do more mono-tasking?

Week 4

Challenge: Empowerment Without Wisdom

In 2015 there were eight shark-related deaths, but twelve selfie-related deaths. By 2018, we had progressed to five shark-related deaths—but twenty-five selfie-related deaths. This example seems like a crazy extreme, but it does offer us a picture. Gen Z is empowered with innovation, video content and information whether or not they are psychologically ready for it. Most streaming for kids has no filter and today's top video games are rated E (everyone). You no longer need a publisher to publish a book. You can write it, format it, and self-publish it on Amazon. You can write a song and get attention on YouTube or Sound Cloud. Young people can make independent films, and raise money with GoFundMe.

In such an empowered world, one might think that children and adolescents would mature more quickly. But that's not the case. Maturation is about so much more than cognitive development. Youth are growing up in a culture that empowers them with adult tools but doesn't simultaneously ensure they're emotionally quipped to leverage them well. Youth are over-exposed to information far earlier than they're ready. They are also under-exposed to first-hand experiences far later than they're ready. Parents are preoccupied with safety. And let's be honest, many are also too preoccupied with technology and social media to engage and teach their child. Bottom line, intelligence does not equal maturity. Talent does not equal maturity. Kids are virtually mature through relationships on social media, winning video games, and results on quizzes and exams...but it's artificial maturity. None are wrong or bad, they just aren't the real maturity. Youth are victims of our culture.

- Biologically advanced (Their bodies are reaching puberty earlier)
- Cognitively advanced (They are knowledgeable about many topics)
- Emotionally behind (Their emotional intelligence is underdeveloped)
- Socially behind (They're better on a screen than face to face with others)

Counter the Challenge

1. What are you fearful of? Ask someone to hold you accountable to resist the fear narrative.
2. Allow yourself to make mistakes. Please fail. Again and again. Embrace being a failure, because it will make you stronger when you don't quit.
3. Take steps forward to increase your level of risk. Take more social risks. Tell your group about your experiences. Is there a social risk you could take this week?
4. Plan on new empowering experiences. Feed the homeless, join a BCM serve team, start your own serve team, raise money for a cause, go on a mission trip. Take action, don't wait.
5. Think of ways you can build trust with your parents. Talk to your parents about trust and letting you go learn and do on your own.
6. Be intentional not to depend on the adults around you. What areas of life can you take ownership?

Discuss

- Of this information, what do you identify with or not identify with? Why?
- How has the parent/adult "safety first" paradigm unwittingly diminished teens ability to navigate risk?
- Is artificial maturity a real thing? If so, how?
- What real life experiences have you had that have enabled you to taste adulthood?