

Name: _____

Generational Differences

Five Generations – Worlds Apart on Perspective, Values, Priorities, and Lifestyle

<http://www.dreams-goals.com/resources/workshops/wkshp-generations/>

Our four generation workforce provides challenges



Figure 1: Four generations and how they communicate

For Residents of:
City of Chino Hills
Recreation Department

<https://www.chinohills.org/80/Recreation>



PRESENTED BY

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OVERVIEW

Participants will learn about the current five living adult generations (Matures, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z) and understand how they are very significantly different regarding their perspectives, values, priorities, lifestyles, and use of technology. By recognizing those differences, participants will learn how to appreciate and work with people of different generations, and thus improving their career success, interpersonal, and conflict management skills.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- Identify what factors can influence generational identity
- Identify and describe the four primary adult generations living today
- Identify the generation to which they relate the most.
- Define the differences between the four primary generations' world view
- Describe the differences between the five primary generations' Values
- Describe the differences between the five primary generations' Priorities
- Describe the differences between the five primary generations' Lifestyles
- Identify how generational differences affect career, interpersonal relationships, and conflict management

WORKSHOP PRESENTER

Kathleen E. High, M.Ed.

Kathleen E. High has been working as a college professor, counselor, staff member at community colleges and universities since 1999. She has taught and counseled on academic, career and life success topics for over 20 years.

She also has an independent consulting business where she works with adults facing education and career transition issues and had volunteered for two years as a guest speaker in local American Jobs Centers where she presented special topics of interest to the unemployed. She created and led a faith-based support group for the long-term unemployed during the economic recession. Through her jobs and roles, she works with adults in all generational groups and has developed a talent for relating to and connecting with individuals from other generations and other demographic backgrounds. She has been teaching on generational differences since 2010.

She holds a Master's in Education: College Student Affairs from Azusa Pacific University, and a BS in Communication: Public Relations from Cal Poly Pomona, and an AA from Rio Hondo College. She holds additional credentials in the career development field: Certified Career Services Provider (CCSP), and is a certified instructor for the Facilitating Career Development (FCD) program offered through the National Career Development Association. She is a certified administrator of the Myers-Briggs (MBTI) personality and Strong Interest Inventory assessments.

Why are Generational Differences Important?

Who we are and how we see the world affects our attitude towards others. There are many things that shape our attitudes in life, work, relationships and play. Generational differences is just one of those things that shapes our attitude towards life.

Recognizing Generational Differences can expose biases

All too often most people are not aware of how their generation affects their attitudes and biases towards people from different generations. Not registering how those attitudes affect how we communicate, our choices, and how we treat people can also affect our career success. For example, one time while watching a presentation to prospective faculty on how to interview for full-time jobs, a young candidate volunteered to demonstrate her response to a common interview question. She responded by talking about how much she incorporates technology into her teaching style. She was very proud of the fact that she can use technology in such creative and contemporary ways. However, at the end of her response, she stated with a very smug tone, “Yes, I love to use technology in my teaching. I’m not one of those dinosaurs who just lectures the whole time.” One of the people leading the interview discussion (who happens to be in a management position) immediately responded, “Hey, I’m one of those dinosaurs! You’ve just offended me!” What are the odds that this young woman would have been hired after that simple comment?

To see another example of how those attitudes affect career success, take the time to read the article: “Price of Saying ‘No’ at Work.” <https://www.dreams-goals.com/resources/documents/docs-self-awareness/> . While reading the article, take the time to notice the probable ages and generations of the women discussing the topic. This workshop will reveal that younger generations tend to have very different attitudes than those expressed in this article.

Why Is It Important to Understand Generational Differences?

As mentioned above, it is important to understand and recognize those differences because they affect how we relate to others, and consequently our career and relationship success.

Generational differences also have an impact on trends in society, business, and education. Those trends will also affect [‘Labor Market Trends’](#), which is what is hot and what is not regarding types of jobs available.

The World is Changing - Fast

In order to understand these changes, it is important to first understand that the world is changing very rapidly and why it is changing. The following video, “Did You Know 2021” helps to illustrate these changes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbcMPGyPr8k>

Driven by a few factors:

People may ask why the world is changing so fast? These changes are driven by a few factors that are working simultaneously.

- **Demographic Shifts:** Human populations have been changing drastically over the last 100 years in the United States and the rest of the world. The United States of America was established over 200 years ago by “WASPs” (White Anglo-Saxton Protestants); and therefore the country, its institutions, and values reflect the values and priorities of that

specific group of people. However, population distributions reveal that Caucasians are no longer the largest ethnic group in America.

- **Ethnic Diversity:** America, and other countries, now have people from all over the world living in together. These diverse groups of people are learning how to live with other people whose values and lifestyles may contradict their own.
- **Religious Diversity:** Americans can no longer assume that the world should be based on its Christian heritage and value system because people of many different religious beliefs share the same time and place. Like ethnic diversity, people are learning how to live with other people whose lifestyles and values may contradict their own.
- **Generational Influence Shifts:** Population distribution is not even among different age groups. Baby Boomers are the largest group of individuals, and they changed the world when they were young adults. Now the Millennial generation, which is about as large as the Baby Boomer generation, are doing to Boomers what the Boomers did to their elder generations with the Civil Rights Movement. (This subject will be discussed later.)
- **Advances in Technology:**
Technology used in every-day life and work is being made obsolete at increasingly faster paces.
- **These changes in demographics and technology, affect other areas of life:**
 - **Globalization:** Countries, companies, and individuals working, buying, and selling across national boundaries and around the world, and thus becoming interdependent.
 - **Sociological Changes:** These changes affect how society functions.
 - **Cultural Values Changes:** These changes affect what people and nations value.
 - **Institutional Upheaval:** All of these changes are forcing institutions and their employees to respond accordingly. For example, in 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized gay marriage. Individuals and institutions, who earn their living by providing wedding services, are dealing with the change of assumption that marriage is between a man and woman. That affects how they conduct business.
 - **Fluctuating “Labor Market Trends”:** This ‘institutional upheaval’ means that some jobs, careers, businesses and industries will become more popular and some will become less popular. For example, landline telephone businesses are declining because most people have given up their traditional corded phones for cellular phones.
 - Leading to Shifts in Cultural Values and Norms in what is considered right and wrong, normal and abnormal, etc.

Understanding Generational Differences Can Help You

As was mentioned above, one of those changes in generational influences. The size of a generation and what they value will affect societal trends. Understanding these trends will help you deal with everyone you have contact with.

Understand Yourself, Family, Supervisors, Co-workers and Customers

When you understand generational differences, you will learn to recognize when, why, and how people tend to relate or conflict with each other.

Have Better Job Search Strategies

Understanding generational difference will help you when knowing where jobs may be found, applying for jobs, interviewing since you will likely be hired by someone of another generation.

Manage Employees

If you supervise employees, understanding these differences can help you understand what motivates your employees to do the things they do, and how to manage them accordingly. In other words, should you show someone grace, or stand firm in your policies when they are not honored?

Understand Your Customers/Clients

When you can identify, who are the majority of your customers/clients, what they value and how they behave, you will find them to be a little more predictable, and adjust your business models/philosophies, policies accordingly.

With Long-Range Strategic Planning

By taking the time to understand how the different generations operate and how that impacts your personal and professional life you can use that information to adjust accordingly.

Important Information

As we explore what drives and motivates the generations mentioned and where you fit in these descriptions, it is important to remember a few points.

Research is based on the American culture

There has been a lot of empirical research done to understand the different generations. However, this research and information is intended to primarily reflect the North American culture of the United States. It does not necessarily reflect generational differences of other countries. However, there may still be some common themes between the U.S. and other countries with some topics, such as technology available and the impact of World War II.

May not fit individuals raised in other countries or cultures

Because the research does not reflect other countries and cultures, workshop participants who (or parents') who grew up in other cultures may not entirely relate to the descriptions of their generation. If that case, participants are encouraged to identify what descriptions they do and do not agree with and why they disagree.

Dates given for groups may vary

Dates of births for any given generation are approximate and not necessarily equal. Depending on who identifies a given generation and how they define it, the starting and ending dates may be different. For example, some researchers indicate an end date of the Baby Boomer generation as 1964, whereas others end it in 1959, 1960 or 1965. The typical dates indicated by most researchers reflect major events in American history that changed the American perspectives on life. For example, the reason most researchers use 1964 as the end of the Baby Boomer generation is that it is defined by the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Also, it is possible that individuals who were born near those transition years may relate to the other generation more than the one identified, or even somewhat relate to both.

Several other variables may explain differences:

The descriptions for each generation given are general and not intended to be absolute for each group. The descriptions reflect what the individuals within the groups have in common. However, it is important to realize there are several factors that also affect attitudes that could mean there can be differences with a given group of people. Following are some examples of potential causes for differences.

Age and Development

Attitudes, values, and preferences can often change over a life span. So just because an individual has one attitude at 18, does not necessarily mean he/she will have the same attitude when he is 35. Most generational groups span between 10 to 20 years, so there is room for difference in age. In addition, people mature at different rates as well. For example, one 20-year-old can be far more mature than a 40-year-old.

Personality Differences

Personality is inborn and has a tremendous impact on a person's attitude. So, two people who were born on the same day (i.e. twins) can have very different attitudes due to having different personalities. For example, some personality types are very conservative, responsible, and therefore appear to be 'mature beyond their years', whereas other personality types tend to be more playful and carefree and thus may not take life as seriously as the more responsible person.

Gender Differences

Men and women tend to think differently and society tends to put a lot of expectations on people based on their genders. Those expectations also tend to change or evolve from one generation to the next. For example, most women of the Traditionalist generation were expected to get married, have children and be homemakers. Very few women of that generation worked outside of the home once they had children. However, 85 percent of Millennial women continue to work after having children.

Religion

Whether or not an individual has religious beliefs, were raised with religion, and what values those religious values instilled can also affect attitudes. For example, young adults raised in very conservative religious homes may be more inclined to have attitudes that reflect their parents' generation more than their own generation.

Upbringing

How people are raised will also have an impact on attitudes. Individuals who were given a lot of freedom as children might be inclined to do the same; whereas people raised in a strict home may choose to have strong rules as well.

Personal Life Experiences

Personal life experiences, such as work, education, traumatic events, etc. tend to shape peoples' attitudes as well. For example, someone who grew up very affluent may believe in assuming responsibility for one's personal choices; whereas someone who grew up in poverty may value giving help to those in need.

Education and Work Experiences

The types of work and education experiences an individual has had will also shape their values. For example, someone who has a lot of experience working in business may have a strong value for productivity, efficiency, and cost-benefit analysis towards other areas of life.

Personal Life Responsibilities

Individual's life roles affect attitudes as well. For example, a young person may want to live life pursuing some ideals, but may feel she needs to sacrifice those ideals and chose a life of security because she has children to feed.

Political Orientation

Individuals who have strongly-held political views may find their attitudes reflecting the values associated with their political affiliation. For example, a young person who identifies with conservative values due to upbringing or religion may choose conservative values over the liberal value system that is typically associated with her generation.

Reflection: Which Generations Do You Deal with Most?

Take a few minutes to think about the kinds of people you deal with on a frequent basis. What is their approximate age range?

- Family & Friends: _____
- Social Life (Place of Worship, Hobbies, etc.) _____
- Employees _____
- Students _____
- Supervisors/Employers _____
- Colleagues / Co-workers _____
- Customers _____
- Vendors _____
- Community _____
- Other Stakeholders (*Board of Directors, etc.*) _____

Any age range over represented in the above groups? _____

Five Generations and Their Sizes*

Following are some brief descriptions of the generations discussed in this workshop. For more detailed information, refer to the document "Generational Values. Also, click on the following link to watch a short video that describes these generations.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtIojDWOsgg>

- **Traditional** **17.1%**
 - (Born Before 1946 – WWII)
- **Baby Boomer** **24.7%**
 - (Born Approximately Between 1946 – 1963)
- **Generation X** **16.0%**
 - (Born Approximately Between 1964 – 1980)
- **Millennial** **24.9%**
 - (Born Approximately Between 1981 – 1999)

- **Generation Z** **21.5%**
 - (Born after about 2000 – Just entering adulthood)
(Not much empirical information available yet)

* New Strategist. (2010). *American Generations (7th Ed.)*. Ithaca, NY: New Strategist.

<u>Matures:</u> (Before 1946)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Grew up with:</u> Great Depression, WWII, Big Institutions • <u>Attitudes & Strengths:</u> Value Tradition, Loyalty, Hard Work, Discipline • <u>Weaknesses:</u> Less Comfortable with Technology, Change, and Diversity
<u>Baby Boomers:</u> (1946 – 1964)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Grew up with:</u> Prosperity, Stability, Equal Opportunity • <u>Attitudes & Strengths:</u> Value Goal Achievement • <u>Weaknesses:</u> Workaholics, Not Prepared for Changing World
<u>Generation X:</u> (1965 – 1980)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Grew up with:</u> Uncertainty • <u>Attitudes & Strengths:</u> What’s in It For Me? Want “Work/Life Balance” • <u>Weaknesses:</u> Not Loyal to Employers
<u>Millennials:</u> (1981 – 2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Grew up with:</u> Technology, Diversity, Change, “No Child Left Behind” • <u>Weaknesses:</u> Want a Job on Their Terms • <u>Attitudes & Strengths:</u> Adaptable, Tech Savvy, Tolerant, Idealistic
<u>Generation Z:</u> (After 2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Grew up with:</u> Technology, diversity, change, social media • <u>Weaknesses:</u> Expect Government to Solve Societal Problems • <u>Attitudes & Strengths:</u> Value respect for everyone (inclusion), will defend the oppressed

Which Generation Are You?

After reviewing the generation descriptions, which one describes you best? Consider the year you were born, and the general description of that group. If you were born close to a transition, you may relate to one or the other or both.

My Generation: _____

Formative Years

Why do the different generations have such different attitudes? Primarily because they were born during different times where the country was dealing with different issues that shaped American attitudes and ways of life while they were growing up.

Matures:

(Before 1946)

Many may remember the Black Tuesday, The Great Depression, attack on Pearl Harbor, World War II, the start of the Cold War, and how GI Bill opened doors of opportunity (*education & home ownership, etc.*) for many veterans; and the Korean War. Rural lifestyle was still common. Life often revolved around family, school, and church.

Baby Boomers:

(1946 – 1964)

Most were born during the Cold war, and lived in a media-oriented (TV and radio) world, with economic affluence, access to higher education rock and roll. They saw the advancement of technology and Civil Rights movement, Space Race, Assassinations (Kennedys and MLK), the Vietnam War, Energy crisis, Watergate and the Nixon resignation.

Generation X:

(1965 – 1980)

This generation saw even more increase technological advancement, invention of video games, Challenger Disaster, the Cold War ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall, and music videos, variable economy (*parental affluence to weaker prospects*), Desert Storm, AIDS, Oklahoma City Bombing, Bill Clinton presidency, and the Y2K Scare, and the Dot.com growth and collapse.

Millennials:

(1981 – 2000)

Were born after the start of the Postmodern Era, saw growth PCs and the Internet, September 11 terrorist attacks, MTV, Diversity, school shootings (Columbine) started to become more common.

Generation Z:

(After 2000)

Most racially and ethnically diverse generation. Post-September 11, never known peacetime (20-year war), or life without the internet or cell phones (i.e. digital natives). Entered workforce during political strife and pandemic

What They Value

Because of their differing life experiences, the different generations tend to value different things.

Matures:

(Before 1946)

They grew up to be disciplined, responsible, conservative and loyal, and willing to sacrifice. They value security, history, tradition, and a clearly defined set of rules and hierarchy.

Baby Boomers:

(1946 – 1964)

Growing up with prosperity and opportunity led them to value achievement, accomplishment, hard work, the traditional work ethic, and a democratic work environment where anything is possible given enough effort expended.

Generation X:

(1965 – 1980)

Since they grew up watching their parents devote themselves to their jobs, then to get laid off, they learned to not value loyalty, but instead want to know “What’s in it for me.” They are independent, self-reliant, flexible and technologically confident, informal, quick paced, and often irreverent. They have high performance expectations and want to be rewarded for merit alone. Unwilling to sacrifice life balance for work.

Millennials:

(1981 – 2000)

They were praised and told they could do and be anything they wanted. So they are optimistic and tolerant; they value diversity, challenge, and creativity. Self-confident, technological wizards, multi-taskers, and they value fun, idealism, and team-oriented work environment.

Generation Z:

(After 2000)

Values are similar to the Millennials: Socially progressive, pro-government, value inclusion, diversity is a good thing.

How They Were Educated

Since they grew up in different eras, the different generations were also exposed to different trends in education.

Matures:

(Before 1946)

Primary education emphasized rote learning (repetitious practice) of the basics: RRR (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic). Higher education opportunities were limited to those who had the means to pay and “intelligence” to handle the academic rigor. Education provided “upward mobility”. GI Bill opened up higher education to veterans returning from WWII. Other groups followed. Many state-supported institutions of higher education started.

Baby Boomers:

(1946 – 1964)

Where prior generation saw only the ‘privileged’ go to college, the Civil Rights era opened up access to higher education to under-represented groups (*women, older, ethnic*

minorities, disabled, etc.). People who previously would not have access to education were now able to attend college. State-supported institutions of higher education grow in numbers and popularity. College attendance up 500%.

Generation X:

(1965 – 1980)

New opportunities meant that not all students had the benefit of college-educated parents who knew how to prepare their children for college. A push to see more students graduate from high school meant students began to enter college under-prepared due to grade inflation. Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted, forcing schools to accommodate students with disabilities. Greater access to higher education due to financial aid.

Millennials:

(1981 – 2000)

Higher education is accessible to anyone and even necessary for most high-skilled jobs in the labor market. Educational systems slowly changing from teacher-centered to student learning-centered. Greater understanding that intelligence is not fixed, but can be improved. Attended primary school during “No Child Left Behind” and standardized testing. Collaborative learning was emphasized.

Generation Z:

(After 2000)

Emphasis on accessibility to more diverse groups, inclusiveness, equity-mindedness. Re-emergence on skills-based education. Technology and collaboration were emphasized.

Attitude Toward Authority

With each successive generation, the general public becomes more and more empowered with access to opportunities and protection from oppressive authority figures. Consequently, attitudes towards authority figures changes over time as well.

Matures:

(Before 1946)

Children were taught to be obedient, respectful, and responsible. They grew up trusting authority because society trusted and respected its authority figures. Conformity towards social norms was expected and individualism was discouraged. Life revolved around family, church, work and community.

Baby Boomers:

(1946 – 1964)

Dramatic social change where the public was exposed to abuse of authority (Communism, Viet Nam War, Watergate, Civil Rights violations) led to mistrust of authority and encouraged descent of traditions and institutions that abused their powers. Individualism and consumerism encouraged pursuit of individual goals.

Generation X:

(1965 – 1980)

Grew up with rapid advances in technology and globalization, which lead to large scale job losses for their parents. Watergate encouraged a lack of interest in government and led to being unimpressed with Authority. They are only loyal if they get what they want. Focused on pursuing own interests. Demand life/work balance.

Millennials:

(1981 – 2000)

Received heavy praise and encouragement growing up. Were encouraged to express their opinions and to say ‘no’ when someone made them feel uncomfortable. They were encouraged to see themselves as equal with authority figures, and consequently are not afraid to challenge them over perceived injustices. Want to have their career on their terms. Encouraged to find and pursue their passions, and consequently seek meaning and purpose in their lives.

Generation Z:

(After 2000)

Want to be included in the decision-making process – to ‘have a seat at the table’.

Other Differences: Older vs Younger

The following are differences that may not change along specific generational lines, but are generalizations that can reflect differences between the older generations verses the younger generations.

Truth

Older – Absolute

Older generations were the last generations born and potentially raised in the Modern Era that taught to believe in ‘absolute truth’ and unchanging facts.

Younger – Relative

Generation X and later were born and grew up in the Post-Modern and later Eras which emphasized that truth is relative to the individual.

Self-Disclosure

Self-disclose is the level of comfort a person feels regarding how much personal information they are willing to share with other people – especially publicly or with people not well known.

Older – Private

Older generations tend to prefer minimal amount of self-disclosure about their lives and problems, keeping their lives private.

Younger - Open

Younger generations grew up in eras where it was more socially acceptable to discuss one's problems and challenges with strangers. Millennials and Generation Z grew up with technology that encouraged public sharing of personal information.

Public Behavior

Public behavior in this context refers to the individual's comfort in expressing their individuality, personalities, thoughts, feelings, and interests around mixed company.

Older - Being Appropriate

Older generations were taught to make sure their behavior is always 'proper' and conforming to social norms regarding dress, communication, behavior, manners, respecting elders, and public display of emotion and affection.

Younger - Being Authentic

Younger generations grew up being bombarded with advertising, public relations pitches, and strategies designed to manipulate. They get tired of being 'sold to', and consequently value 'real' or authentic communication – even at the expense of showing vulnerability.

Attitude Towards Life's Adversities

Different generations have different attitudes towards life's challenges and dealing with adversity. For example, how do you deal with a dangerous or dirty job?

Older - Grit/Stamina

Older generations did not grow up with the same opportunities to change their circumstances as did the younger generations. Instead, they grew up with the belief and value that if you work hard and endure whatever problems, challenges and/or adversities that life hands you, you will develop grit and stamina to endure future challenges in life. They tend to think, "Life is tough, so just suck it up and get over it. Life goes on. It is not the end of the world." Often when faced with a problem that appears to be beyond their means, they may be inclined to just deal with it since that is life. For example, this generation may have learned to just get used to that dangerous or dirty job as being part of life.

Younger - Prevention

Younger generations tend to benefit from the advancement of laws, knowledge, human understanding, and technology that provide relief from human suffering. Between their openness, comfortability in challenging authority, growing up sheltered, watching others deal with the consequences of problems, and having been taught to not tolerate abuse, they will be more likely to be quick take action when faced with problems or challenges. In the above example, someone from a younger generation may be more inclined to utilize safety or sanitation options for dealing with the dangerous or dirty job because "it's better to be safe than sorry." Or, that "suck it up and get over it attitude leads to other problems later, such as physical ailments, mental health challenges, etc. So they are more likely to take a 'mental health break' than the older generations would.

How Citizenship is Expressed*

In his book, *The Good Citizen*, author Russell Dalton reveals that the different generations have different ways of expressing their patriotism and being a good citizen of the United States.

Older = Duty Based

According to the author, the Traditionals and earlier generations demonstrated good citizenship by fulfilling formal obligations and doing their duties: Voting, paying taxes, jury duty, obeying the law, etc.

Younger = Engaged

Whereas the younger generations (i.e. Millennials) exercise engaged citizenship by acting independently, assertive and concerned with others. They are more likely to protest and take direct action. For example, many won't hesitate to break the window of a parked vehicle when it is discovered that a baby or animal have been left alone in a hot car.

Change vs. Stability

As mentioned earlier, the world is changing very rapidly for several reasons. Different people are inclined to respond to change differently. Some may want to resist and maintain the status quo; whereas others may want to help that change along because they see it as a good thing.

Older - Maintain Status Quo

Because many people from the older generations grew up believing that conforming to rules, laws, and societal expectations is a good thing, they may be inclined to want to respond to change and conflict by maintaining the status quo – even if they don't like it. Someone wanting to disrupt that status quo may be seen as rebellious and a law breaker – even if the law was unjust or harmful to others.

Younger - Disrupt the Ineffective and Unjust

For all the reasons mentioned above, the younger generations are more likely to want to take action when they see that the status quo is ineffective, inefficient, unjust, and/or harmful to others.

Reflection:

Which Generation is Most Difficult for You to Relate to?

Why?

How Can You Relate to Others?

Now that we have spent time talking about how the generations differ, let's talk about how you can learn to better relate to those with whom you don't have a lot in common. There are several things you can do to improve your relationships with other people from different generations.

Recognize Your Own Generational Biases

Understand and accept the fact that it is human nature to have biases. In themselves they are not bad. The problem comes when we fail to recognize them, and consequently fail to control them when they are not appropriate. Remember the story in the beginning of the prospective teacher who referred to other teachers who were not as tech savvy as she was as ‘dinosaurs’? Her interview was going great – until she made that comment. Just be aware of when those biases surface and control the urge to express or act on them when they are not appropriate.

Don’t Try to Be Something You are Not

Many teachers, leaders, and institutions may try to respond to the awareness of a generation gap by trying to adapt to the attitudes of their younger audience. However, that usually is not received well. Also a younger person who tries to act older than they are won’t be received well either. These actions are often seen as phony and off-putting. If you are substantially older than your population, that is ok. You can still add value to the relationship in other ways. See the other suggestions below.

Find a Friend from that Generation, Listen More Than Talk

Find someone who represents the generation and seek their feedback. Ask them questions. Listen to what they have to say. Don’t try to fix, correct, or change their mind. Your job is to listen to understand their point of view. When you think you do understand, then take the time to paraphrase what you think they are saying. That will give them the opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings.

See Them as Person Rather Than a Stereotype

Even if you see them behaving in ways that are consistent with the general descriptions of their generation, avoid the temptation to stereotype. “All old people are technological dinosaurs.” Realize that there are often many exceptions to the rules of the general description, and that you won’t know whether or not it fits until you get to know them. Also consider that their life experience may not be compatible with that stereotype. For example, I knew of several men from the Matures generation who had no problem keeping up with technology because that was their job. They were quite handy with the latest and greatest technology.

Accept the Differences in a Respectful, Neutral Manner

Just because someone is different from you, doesn’t mean you need to change to be like them, or to accept their values or way of life. For example, as a Baby Boomer educator talking to Millennials, I have no problem making it clear to my students (when justified by the context of the conversation) that I personally strongly dislike tattoos, do not have them, and will not get them. I will also tell them that for my generation, tattoos tend to carry a negative connotation, which I will explain if they ask. However, I understand that for Millennials, tattoos are a form of self-expression and creativity. Occasionally they try to talk me into getting one, but I firmly, make it clear that will not happen. No judgment. No problem.

Acknowledge Their Legitimate Concerns

As you become aware of the differences in attitudes, if you register that another generation has a legitimate concern about you and yours, it will validate how they feel for you to admit to them why it is a problem. For example, perhaps you are of an older generation and you and your older

co-workers fight needed changes that management is trying to implement. Or perhaps you refuse to learn how to use the new technology, and consequently slow up the process of getting the job done. Or perhaps you are younger and don't demonstrate the work ethic that your older co-workers expect. Admit that this is an area that can and should be improved.

Find Value in the Contributions of Each Generation

As you spend time with, and learn more about that generation that tends to get on your nerves, don't just focus on what annoys you. Instead of dwelling on the Millennial's tendency to be addicted to their technology, realize they can be a great resource when you need help with yours. One day I mentioned to one of my students that my cell phone just froze, shut down and would not re-start – for no reason. I was thinking I lost all that data and would need to get a new phone. She simply showed me how to do a 'hard restart.'

Identify What You Can Learn from Them

Take the time to recognize that they bring value to the situation. For example, you are an older worker with old-fashioned workaholic work ethic, and you find yourself resenting your Gen X co-worker who always goes home right on time. Instead of spending your time judging them for being lazy, stop ask yourself how you can learn to have more balance in your life as well.

Find a Source of Connection with Them

Instead of focusing on how you are different, take the time to identify what you have in common with them. For example, in my classes, I tell my students my own story about struggling and having to overcome barriers in learning how to succeed as a college student when I was younger. That creates an instant connection with them since most of my students are new and/or have had problems in the past. I let them know that I know what it is like to be distracted from school by life. By the time we leave on the first day of class, most of my students are thrilled to be there – even though I am over 30 years older than them. They don't care that I am old – they only care that they can relate to me.

Focus on the Connections Rather Than the Differences

Once you have discovered sources of connections, focus on them instead of the differences. With my students, I talk more about my challenges as a student than I do the differences in age or values. Focusing on the connection strengthens the bond, but focusing on the difference deepens the divide. Again, you don't need to deny the differences, just don't focus on them.

Be an Ambassador for Your Generation

If you are fortunate enough to be able to relate to someone who is different from you, use that as an opportunity to build a bridge for others as well. When given the opportunity, help them understand your world and how your generation views things. For example, as mentioned earlier, that I am not afraid to tell my Millennial students that I don't like tattoos. When they ask why, I explain that for my generation they carry a very negative connotation (criminal, drug addict, drunken sailor, etc.) When I explain this to them, I then ask if their parents get upset when they get new tattoos? They usually say yes. I explain to them that their parents are afraid that future employers will also negatively judge them for their tattoos. They usually appreciate my ability to explain their parents' reactions without judgement or raw emotion.

Watch the video “Dear Elders, I’m Sorry” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLmtuhuyhA> as an example of a Millennial talking to her elder generations.

Summary:

The current five living adult generations (Matures, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z) vary significantly regarding their perspectives, values, priorities, lifestyles, and use of technology. By recognizing those differences, participants can learn how to appreciate live and work with people of different generations, and thus improving their relationships, career success, interpersonal, and conflict management skills.

Wrap Up:

What are You Going to Take Away?

How Can You Apply What You Have Learned Today?

Reflection:

Take a minute to write down your thoughts. How is this information speaking to you?

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