

The Disapproval of Gen Z Through Older Eyes

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The generational gap between older generations and younger ones can sometimes be at war. Gen Z, the generation born between 1996 and 2012 is frequently unfairly criticized by older generations. *The Mining Journal* article “Respect each other, the rest will fall in place”, by Alpena News (2024), the author tells us about a personal encounter with an older individual who voiced their negative opinions about Gen Z. The author shares about the frustration of being stereotyped as lazy, unreliable, rude and uneducated. This article pushes back against these generalizations and express an utter frustration over being judged based on age rather than individual character. While I do agree with the articles message and defend Gen Z.

First and foremost, the accusation of being lazy is completely unfair. The author emphasizes that there are definitely some individuals that may fall into this category, but it is wrong to generalize an entire generation based on the actions of a few. I agree with this because Gen Z has different approaches in life as compared to the older generations. Older generations often judge us as lazy because they don’t realize that the economy and the job market have drastically changed. They believe hard work is clocking in early, staying late, never complaining and sticking with one job for decades, but this idea no longer holds true value in today’s world. With generation Z we value, flexibility, mental health, and different ways of earning money. Another thing is that in today’s workforce, many of us younger adults, find ourselves surrounded by older coworkers who dismiss our ideas, question our work ethic and show little respect simply because they are older. Nowadays, there are so many different ways to make money. You can start a business and boost it through social media, you can work from home. The list is endless of different ways to make money because times have changed. As says in *The Newsweek* article “Gen Z Says It’s the laziest Generation” by Suzanne Blake (2024); “Generational views on work have evolved, Boomers and Gen X

often emphasize loyalty and long hours, while millennials and Gen Z are more likely to challenge the status quo, seeking flexibility and purpose in their careers.” What many older generations fail to realize is Gen Z has had to adjust to many newer things. For example, with the rise of technology and the global pandemic, young adults have navigated challenges that older generations have never had to face. While we adapted and learned new skills to be able to succeed in today’s world, older generations haven’t. Gen Z simply gets characterized for our ability to handle difficult situations and finding alternative solutions from where we no longer vision ourselves at.

In addition, the notion that Gen Z is uneducated is equally misinterpreted. Alpena News (2024) makes a very crucial point “I’ve said it before, and I’ll continue to argue that we hold a world of knowledge at our fingertips with our phones in hand.” The claim that we do not do research or take our time to critically think about occurring issues is contradicting the fact we have an overwhelming amount of information we can access. Gen Z is perhaps the most informed generation in history. Which is due to us being able to learn from an abundance of online resources, databases, and platforms that were not available to previous generations. Yes, the high volume of information can be overwhelming and there is a lot of misinformation out there. However, this does not equal to a lack of effort in researching topics and the time we take to deep dive online for our information. For example, I remember when COVID-19 first hit within days people my age were already deep diving into articles about this disease. I remember looking up tips all over the Internet about safety precautions and even fact checking government statements and many different platforms. Another time, my friends and I had heard about a school shooting which led us to having a very challenging discussion about gun laws. Instead of us just arguing we were pulling up articles about gun laws and breaking down as much information on this as we could so that we could understand

the different perspectives regarding gun usage. So yes, there is a lot of information out there and it can get overwhelming to sort through it all, but it doesn't mean that we are lazy. It just shows that it depends on the person's willingness and motivation to get the information they need. If anything, the constant bombardment of information has led us to develop a heightened sense of discernment, learning how to separate credible sources from false information. This is a skill that older generations may not be able to do.

Furthermore, the label of "unreliable" is a harsh stereotype that is often leveled against younger generations. One of the main reasons why this can be unfair is that previous generations have not had to face all of the challenges and differences that younger generations have gone through and are still going through. Gen Z is navigating a world that is far more complex with high student debts, the housing market rising, cost of living, and technological advancements, which has completely changed the world. While new opportunities are created, new pressure is also built for the younger generations. Gen Z is expected to be adaptable, constantly learning new skills to keep up with all these changes. We have to learn how to manage a constantly evolving digital world while trying to build successful careers and lives in an uncertain environment. Gen Z contributes to society in many different unique ways. While working part-time jobs, we balance our studies, internships, and even volunteer work, demonstrating a strong work ethic and reliability in our personal and professional lives. For instance, I have a friend who goes to school full-time, is a mother and works part time at a restaurant. I always see her juggling many responsibilities, especially with managing her schedule but she still shows up on time to school and puts in the effort. She is a part of Gen Z, but she is not someone who's unreliable. She is determined to make it work even under high-pressure. Stories like hers are common among Gen Z, but they are often overlooked by people who don't get to know us and see us through outdated stereotypes. Older generations fail to

understand the different ways in which Gen Z engage with the world. We should be supported and encouraged as we work to navigate through our own life experiences.

One of the biggest challenges, Gen Z faces is the lack of respect from older generations, particularly when it comes to communication. I've spoken to many friends who agree with me on how respect should not just be given, it has to be earned. They've gotten into arguments with older people who think that because they are older, they can speak to younger adults however they want, often in a condescending or dismissive tone, which is not okay. I think this happens, especially in workplace settings because I have had encounters with coworkers of mine who are older and thought they were able to speak to me in a rude manner and not get confronted about it. I've had to make my boundaries very clear and let it be known that I will not tolerate disrespect. But the moment I made my boundaries very clear I was considered snotty or rude. Gen Z sets the boundaries not to be difficult but to protect our dignity. Being talked down to or dismissed, can be humiliating, especially in front of others. When we speak up, we are not trying to start problems. We're trying to stand up for ourselves and environments that expect us to stay quiet. We should not get labeled as rude or snotty for simply not allowing people to walk all over us. I think that this has happened to a couple of us where we have to draw a line with older people due to their lack of respect towards us because of our age. While it is true that respect should be earned and not given blindly, sometimes it can be smarter to be the bigger person and avoid arguments. However, this doesn't mean we shouldn't stand up for ourselves in situations that are making us feel small, unheard and disrespected. It ties down with the article by Alpena News (2024) which says, "I should've spoken up for myself and for my generation that day, or maybe we can all learn to understand one another for who they are". While we may sometimes feel bad or good for speaking up for ourselves, Gen Z could benefit from just taking a step back before sharing

opinions and learn to be the “bigger person”. By recognizing the power of our words and practicing greater mindfulness, we could cultivate a more constructive and empathetic approach to communication. In the end, it’s not about staying silent or being passive. It’s about finding the balance between standing up for ourselves, choosing when and how to respond in a proper manner that earns respect not just demands it, which goes for both older generations and younger generations.

In conclusion, the criticism that Gen Z is lazy, uneducated and unreliable is unfair and shortsighted. We are a generation that has faced many different challenges, and in response, we have developed resilience, resourcefulness and critical thinking skills that are necessary for navigating the complexities of the modern-day world. From setting boundaries in the workplace to doing deep research and juggling our lives, we continue to prove that stereotypes about us are outdated and unfair. Personally, I’ve learned that standing up for myself, especially in situations where I have felt disrespected because of my age has been both challenging and empowering. It is not always easy to be seen as confident rather than confrontational but setting those boundaries has taught me self-respect. Rather than being criticized, Gen Z should be recognized for the ability to adapt, innovate and bring fresh perspectives to the table. It is time for older generations to move beyond stereotyping and begin to understand the strength and intelligence that Gen Z possesses.

References

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