

Simon Sinek on The Millennial Generation with Tom Bilyeu

Simon expressed that he has yet to give a speech or start a meeting where someone asks him about The Millennial Question.

Tom: **What is the Millennial Question?**

Simon: Apparently the millennials are a generation of young people born in the 1984's period (and after). They are **tough to manage** and they **accused of being entitled and narcissistic, self-interested, unfocused, lazy**.

But **entitled is the big one**. And because **they confound leadership** so much, what is happening is that leaders are asking the millennials, "What do you want?"

The millennials are saying they want to work in a place with **purpose**. "Love that." We want to **make an impact**. "You know, whatever that means?" We want **free food and bean bags**. So somebody articulates some sort of purpose. There's lots of free food and bean bags. And yet for some reason, they are still not happy. And that's because there's **a missing piece**.

What he has learned, is that he could break it down into 4 pieces (4 characteristics):

1. Parenting
2. Technology
3. Impatience
4. Environment

The generation that we call The Millennials, too many of them grew up subjected to **failed parenting strategies** (not his words). For example; where they were told that they were special all the time. **They were told that they could have anything they want in life, just because they want it**. Some of them got into honors classes, not because they deserved it but because their parents complained. Some of them got "A"s not because they earned them but because the teachers didn't want to deal with the parents. Some kids got participation medals. They got a medal for coming in last. Which the science we know is very clear; which is it devalues the medal and the reward for those who actually worked hard; and that actually makes the person who came in last, feel embarrassed. Because they know they didn't deserve it and that makes them feel worse. **So you take this group of people; they graduate school and they get a job and they are thrust into the real world. And in an instant they find that they are not special. Their moms can't get them a promotion. That you get nothing for coming in last. And you can't have it just because you want it. And in an instant, their entire self-image is shattered. And so you have an entire**

generation who is growing up with lower self-esteem than previous generations.

The other problem to compound it is; we are growing up in a **Facebook-Instagram world**. In other words, we are good at **putting filters on things**. We're good at **showing people that life is amazing even though I am depressed**. And so everybody sounds tough; and everybody sounds like they all got it figured out. And the **reality is that there is very little toughness and most people don't have it figured out**. And so when the more senior people say: "Well, what should we do?" They sound like: "This is what you gotta do!" And they have no clue. And so you have an entire generation growing up with lower self-esteem than previous generations. BUT "Through no fault of their own!" "They were dealt a bad hand."

And now, let's add in **Technology**. We know that **engagement with social media and our cell phones releases a chemical called dopamine**. That's why when you get a text, you feel good. So we have all had it. When we are feeling a little down, or a little lonely, so you send ten texts to ten friends: "hi. Hi. Hi. Hi. Hi." Because it feels good when you get a response. That's why we count the likes, that's why we go back ten times to check the likes and see if my Instagram is going slower: **"Did I do something wrong?"; "Do they not like me anymore?"** The **trauma for young kids to be unfriended**. Because we know when you get it, you get hit by dopamine which feels good. That's why we like it; that's why we keep going back. **Dopamine is the exact same chemical that makes us feel good when we smoke, when we drink, and when we gamble. In other words, it's highly highly addictive.** We have age restrictions on smoking, gambling and alcohol. And **we have no age restrictions on social media and cell phones**. Which is the equivalent of opening up the liquor cabinet and saying to our teenagers "Hey, by the way, this adolescence thing, if it gets you down..." But that's basically what is happening. That's basically what happened. **You have an entire generation that has access to an addictive numbing chemical called dopamine through social media and cell phones as they are going through the high stress of adolescence.** "Why is this important?" Almost every alcoholic discovered alcohol when they were teenagers. When we were very very young, the only approval we needed is the approval of our parents. And as we go through adolescence, we make this transition where we now need the approval of our peers. Very frustrating for our parents and very important for us. That allows **us to acculturate outside of our immediate families into the broader tribe. It's a highly highly stressful and anxious period of our lives.** And we are supposed to learn to rely on our friends. Some people, quite by accident, discover alcohol and numbing effects of dopamine to help them cope with the stresses and anxieties of adolescence. And unfortunately that becomes hardwired in their brains and for the rest of their lives, when they suffer significant stress, they will not turn to a person, they will turn to the bottle. **Social stress, financial stress, career stress.** That's pretty much the primary reason for why an alcoholic drinks. What's happening is because, **we are allowing unfettered access to these dopamine-producing devices and media; basically it's becoming hardwired and what we are seeing is as they grow older, too many kids don't know how to form deep meaningful relationships.**

“Their words, not mine.” They will admit that many of their friendships are superficial. They will admit that their friends: They don’t count on their friends, they don’t rely on their friends, they have fun with their friends. But they also know that their friends will cancel out on them when something better comes along. **Deep meaningful relationships are not there. Because they never practice the skill set. And worse, they don’t have the coping mechanisms to deal with stress.** So when significant stress starts to show up in their lives, they are not turning to a person, they are turning to a device, they are turning to social media. They are turning to **these things which offer temporary relief.** We know, the science is clear, we know that people who spend more time on facebook suffer higher rates of depression than people who spend less time on facebook. These things balance. Alcohol is not bad, too much alcohol is bad. Gambling is fun, too much gambling is dangerous. There’s nothing wrong with social media and cell phones. It’s the **imbalance!** If you are sitting at dinner with your friends, and you’re texting somebody who is not there, that’s a problem! That’s **an addiction!** If you are sitting in a meeting with people you are supposed to be listening to and speaking to, and you put your phone on the table, face up or face down, “I don’t care”; that sends **a subconscious message** to the room that: you’re just not that important to me right now. That’s what happens! And the fact that you cannot put it away is because you are addicted. If you wake up and you check your phone before you say good morning to your girlfriend, boyfriend or spouse; you have an addiction. **And like all addiction, in time, it’ll destroy relationships, it’ll cost time, and it’ll cost money, and it’ll make your life worse.**

So you have a generation growing up with lower self-esteem, that **doesn’t have the coping mechanisms to deal with stress.**

Now you add in **the sense of impatience.** They’ve grown up in **a world of instant gratification.** You want to buy something? You go on Amazon, it arrives the next day. You want to watch a movie? You log on and watch your movie. You don’t check movie times. You want to watch your TV show? Binge. You don’t even have to wait week to week to week. I know people who skip seasons so they can binge at the end of the season. Instant Gratification. You want to go on a date? You don’t even have to learn to be like “Hey,...” You don’t have to even learn or practice that skill. You don’t have to be the uncomfortable one which says yes when you mean no and says no when you mean yes. You don’t have to. Just swipe right. “Bang, I’m a stud!” **You don’t have to learn the social coping mechanisms. Everything you want, you can have instantaneously. Everything you want, instant gratification. Except job satisfaction and strength of relationships, there ain’t no app for that.** They are slow, meandering, uncomfortable, messy processes. “And so I keep meeting these wonderful, fantastic, idealistic, hard-working smart kids. They’ve just graduated school. They’re in their entry-level job. I sit down with them and go “How’s it going?” They go, “I think I’m gonna quit.” “I’m like: Why?” They’re like “I’m not making an impact.” “I’m like: You have been here 8 months.” It’s as if they are standing at the foot of the mountain and they have this abstract concept called impact that they want to have in the world, which is the summit. What they don’t see is the mountain. “I don’t care if you go up the mountain quickly or slowly. But there’s still a mountain.” And so what this young generation needs to learn is patience.

That somethings that really really matter like love, or job fulfillment, joy, love of life, self-confidence, a skill set; any of these things. All of these things take time. Sometimes you can expediate pieces of it, but the overall journey, is arduous and long and difficult. And if you don't ask for help and learn that skill set, you'll fall off the mountain. Or you will, the worst case scenario (and we are already seeing it); we're seeing an **increase in suicide rates**. We're seeing an increase in this generation; an increase in **accidental deaths** due to drug overdoses. We're seeing more and more kids **drop out of school** or take leaves of absence due to **depression**. "Unheard of" "This is really bad" The best case scenario is you'll have an entire population growing up and **going through life and just never really finding joy**. They'll never really find deep fulfillment in work or in life. They'll just walk through life and it'll just be like; "It's fine."

"How's your job?"

"It's fine. Just the same as yesterday."

"How's your relationship?"

"It's fine."

Like that is the best case scenario.

Which leads to the fourth point, which is **environment**.

Which is we are taking this amazing group of young fantastic kids who were just dealt a bad hand; it's no fault of their own. And **we put them in corporate environments that care more about the numbers than they do about the kids**. They care more about the short-term gains than the long-term life of this young human being. We care more about the year than the lifetime. And so **we are putting them into corporate environments that aren't helping them build their confidence**. That aren't helping them learn the skills of cooperation. That aren't helping them overcome the challenges of a digital world and finding more balance. That isn't helping them overcome the need to have instant gratification and teach them the joys and impact and the fulfillment you get from working hard over on something for a long time that cannot be done in a month or even a year. And so we are thrusting them into the corporate environments. And the worst part of it is that they think it's them. They blame themselves. They think it's them who can't deal. And so it makes it all worse. It's not! "I'm here to tell them, it's not them." It's the corporations. It's the corporate environments. It's **the total lack of good leadership in our world today**. That is making them feel the way they do. They were dealt with a bad hand. "And I hate to say it" But it's the company's responsibility. "Sucks to be you like we have no choice" This is what we got and I wish that society and parents did a better job, but they didn't. "So we are getting them into our companies and we now have to pick up the slack." **We have to work extra hard to figure out the ways that we build their confidence**. We have to work extra hard to find ways to teach them social skills that they are missing out.

There should be **no cell phones in conference rooms**. None. Zero. And I don't mean like the kind of sitting outside, waiting to text. When you are sitting waiting for a meeting to start, nobody should be occupied with their phones waiting. Then, meeting's starting; "Ok, we start the meeting."

That's not how relationships are formed. Remember, we talked about the little things. Relationships are formed this way:

We're waiting for a meeting to start...

We go "How's your dad? I heard he was in the hospital"
"Oh, he's really good. Thanks for asking. He's actually at home now."
"Oh I'm really glad. It was really amazing."
"I know, I was really scared"

That's how you form relationships.

"Hey, did you ever get that report done?"
"Oh my god, no, I didn't"
"I can help you out, tell me how I can help you out with that?"
"Really?"

That's how trust forms. Trust doesn't form at an event, in a day. Even bad times doesn't form trust immediately. It's the slow, steady, consistency. And we have to create mechanisms where we allow for those little innocuous interactions to happen.

But when we allow cell phones in conference rooms, we just...

Ok, we had the meeting

And my favorite is like the cell phone is there and you keep sneaking peaks at your cell phone.

It rings

And you go "I'm not going to answer that"

I go like "Mr Magnanimous"

When you are out for dinner with your friends...

Simon: I do this with my friends. When we are going out together for dinner, and we're leaving together, we'll leave our cell phones at home. Maybe one of us will bring ONE cell phone. In case we need to call an uber or take photos of our meals.

Tom: You guys are insane. Come on

Simon: I... uh.. I mean I'm not. I'm an idealist. But I'm not insane. We'll take one phone. So it's like an alcoholic. The reason you take the alcohol out of the house is because we cannot trust our willpower. We're just not strong enough. But when you remove the temptation, it actually makes it a lot easier. And so when

you just say you don't check your phone, some people will go to the restroom; "and what's the first thing we do?" Because I don't want to look around the restaurant for a minute and a half.

But if you don't have the phone, you just kind of enjoy the world. And that's where ideas happen. The constant, constant, constant engagement is not where you have innovation and ideas. Ideas happen when our minds wander and we go and we see something; "I bet we could do that" That's called innovation. We're taking away those little moments.

None of us should charge our handphones by our beds. We should charge them in our living room. **Remove the temptation.** When you wake up in the middle of the night because you can't sleep, you won't check your phone. But if it's in the living room, it's relaxed, it's fine.

"But it's **my alarm clock**"

"Buy an alarm clock. They cost \$8. I'll buy you one."

But the point is we now in the industry, whether we like it or not, we don't get a choice. **We now have a responsibility to make up the shortfall and to help this amazing, idealistic, fantastic generation build their confidence, learn patience, learn the social skills, find a better balance between life and technology. Because quite frankly, it's the right thing to do.**

MAKE SURE YOU ARE HAPPY IN REAL LIFE
NOT JUST ON SOCIAL MEDIA