

# Who are our learners and how do they learn?

Dietetics Education Day

October 22 2020

# Plans for today

- Who are our learners? What makes Millennial and Generation Z Learners different? Or are they?
- Learning Styles – What are some key traits of these generations related to their learning styles? What does this mean for us as preceptors / teachers?
- Lots of discussion and feedback!

# Who are our learners?



## Millennials

1980 – 1995

Generation Size: 74M



## Generation Z

1996 – Present

Generation Size:  
TBD, 69M+

- Generation Y, or Millennial (born 1980–1995).

- Generation Z or “post-Millennials” (born 1996 onward).

## WHO THEY ARE TO YOU

### MILLENNIALS

Tech Savvy: 2 screens at once  
Communicate with text  
Curators and Sharers  
Now focused  
Optimists  
Want to be discovered



### GEN Z

Tech Innate: 5 screens at once  
Communicate with images  
Creators and Collaborators  
Future focused  
Realists  
Want to work for success

- Generation Y and Z have been shaped by an expansion of information technology, enhanced social networking, and a connected global culture.

# Each generation has it's characteristics!

*“Millennials ... have been characterized as entitled, indulged, and sheltered and see their physician role as a job and not their identity. In contrast, Baby Boomers\* are often characterized, at least within medicine, as competitive workaholics, while the GenXers\* are considered cynical, skeptical, and pessimistic”*

Lindheim et al, 2016

(\*Baby boomers: born 1946 – 1964; GenX: born 1965-1980)

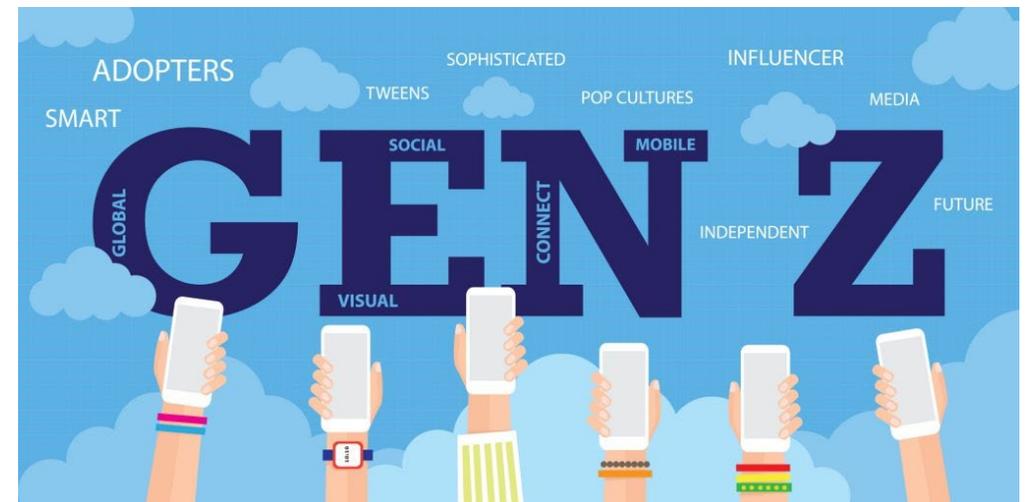
# Who are our learners?

- Generation Y, Millennial (born 1982–1995)
- Characteristics:
  - Optimistic and assertive
  - Surrounded by technology
  - Multitaskers
  - Self-directed learners
  - Visual learners
  - Group workers
  - Users of a variety of learning resources
  - Expect accessibility, and fast responses
  - Racially and ethnically diverse
  - Need frequent feedback
  - Prefer close relationships with open communication



# Who are our learners?

- Generation Z or “post-Millennials” (born 1996 onward)
- Characteristics:
  - Raised in the era of smartphones
  - “Always on” technological environment (smart phones)
  - More accepting and open-minded of differences
  - Exposed to media more than any other activity
  - Learn by observation and practice
  - Have shorter attention span
  - Bore easily
  - Communicate with images
  - Communicate in bite sizes





*“I can almost simultaneously create a document, edit it, post a photo on Instagram and talk on the phone, all from the user-friendly interface of my iPhone.”*

*“Generation Z takes in information instantaneously and loses interest just as fast.”*

Hannah Payne, an 18-year-old U.C.L.A. student and lifestyle blogger  
from New York Times

# Common traits ....

- Use Internet as the main learning resource
- Prefer 'doing' rather than theory
- Like frequent / immediate feedback
- Easily bored
- Self-directed learners
- Are goal orientated
- Have short attention span
- Are multi-taskers
- Like discovery learning
- Visual learners

- Do you see these traits in your learners?
- How do these traits present?

# What has been educators experiences?

- The motivational needs and interactional style of students is changing.
- Students are driven by different priorities.
- Students may communicate differently.



## **Actual emails** a professor at a UK University received from students explaining why they missed class:

- *“My dad came back from holiday on Saturday so I need to see him and I thought it was Tuesday but when I just looked at my phone it’s Thursday! You must think I’m really dozy!!”*
- *“OMG I literally just woke up 20 minutes ago and it takes me 30 mins to get ready and another 15 to walk in to uni so shall we just give it a miss this week???!?”*
- *Hiya ! “Sorry I’m not there!! I was in bed with my boyf and he got some hand cream in his eye so I took him to hospital but the car broke down and we had to wait for the green flag man and got chatting with him before we went to a’n’e but we’re here now and boyf is fine lol!!!”*
- *“Im sorry but I don’t think I’ll be able to make it to this mornings lecture as my car has seized up. Im going to sit and play with it to try and get the old girl started but im not holding out hope as she hates cold weather.”*



*From: The Guardian Higher Education Network Feb 5, 2016*

# Flat vs Pyramidal Infrastructure.

## **Students:**

- Embrace collaboration and cognitive diversity.
- Do not necessarily embrace the siloed communication.

## **Mentors and educators:**

- Might be accustomed to hierarchical communication channels.

# As Needed vs Scheduled Engagement.

## **Students:**

- Expect accessibility, fast responses, and frequent short meetings.

## **Mentors & educators:**

- Often have greater structure and less ad hoc availability.

# Purpose vs Process

## **Students:**

- Purpose is paramount.
- The performance appraisal process should concentrate on outcomes.

## **Mentors and educators:**

- May focus on timesheet and documenting effort and process, not just the outcome.



Conflict and  
misunderstanding?!

*“Society is , in fact, constantly changing. The differences we see between ourselves and our students are, in part, reflections of that societal change.”*

*“If medicine is to stay responsive to societal needs, it must evolve with the broader culture in which it is embedded.”*

Regehr, 2020

# Suggested teaching strategies and learning techniques:

Diverse, interactive and visual teaching strategies are essential.

- Flipped classrooms (i.e. learners read about a topic before meeting as a group)
- Use of case studies, narratives and storytelling
- Interactive activities
- Gamification (i.e. the use of game design elements in nongame context)
- Increase visual approaches to teaching
- Provide information in shorter segments

Continue...

Suggested teaching strategies and learning techniques:

- Encourage teamwork and collaboration
- Intragenerational teaching (i.e. senior students teaching junior students)
- Encourage students to either find or make a YouTube video about the subject
- Encourage students to create a social network page for sharing information



# Suggested strategies to engage students while mentoring:

Since students appreciate structure and direction, the role of mentoring is essential for them.

- **Micro-mentoring**
  - More frequent, but more rapid meetings
  - Provide short answers on narrow topics
- **Reverse Mentoring**
  - Offer upending mentorship paradigms to create flat leadership structure.
- **Mentorship Teams**
  - Provide diverse mentorship through collaboration of a variety of mentors.

# Suggested approaches in evaluation:

Timely and meaningful feedback is essential for students learning .

- Be direct and straight forward about expectation
  - Provide them with a list of tasks to accomplish
- Continuous performance evaluation
  - Students expect frequent feedback
- Explicit feedback
  - Students expect to understand why decisions are made
  - Tell them what went wrong and discuss how can we improve

# Case Studies:

## CASE #1: Sally Smith

- It's your first day with a new student. The day starts off busy so you don't have much time to discuss goals and expectations until the end of the day. You are already noticing that Sally seems to be constantly be on their iPhone. When you do sit down to talk about the rotation, you feel you need to discuss expectations around technology.
  - Why might Sally be on her phone so much?
  - How would you determine what parameters to set around phone use (i.e., what use might you consider appropriate vs. inappropriate)?
  - How would you initiate the conversation with Sally (try and think of the exact words you would use), and how would you explain the rationale for your parameters?

# Case Studies:

## CASE #2: Gurdeep Gill

- Gurdeep Gill has been with you for a week of their rotation. You are feeling frustrated, as Gurdeep seems disengaged and uninterested in your area of practice. You are passionate about what you do and feel discouraged that Gurdeep doesn't seem to have the same level of enthusiasm. Gurdeep doesn't ask many questions, leaves quickly at the end of the day, and hasn't really engaged with the other team members.
  - How would you broach your concerns with the student? (Again, try and think of the actual words you would use – this is the hard part!).
  - What other reasons might there be for Gurdeep's behavior other than disinterest in the clinical area?
  - If Gurdeep expressed interest in the practice area but also expressed feeling overwhelmed and unsure of their clinical knowledge, what strategies might you suggest or put in place?
  - If Gurdeep agreed that this practice area was not their area of interest, and hinted that they were just completing it "because they had to", what strategies will you use to deal with your own feelings of frustration and disappointment?

# Final thoughts:

- The transmission of core values is a critical aspect of education. Rather than challenging uncomfortable behaviour, educators need to explore what values are being violated.
- Do not assume that digital means impersonal.
- New technology is never a replacement for engaged teachers.
- Face-to-face teaching and learning approaches are usually preferred.
- Investing in faculty development to more effectively use technology is much more important than investing in new technology.

**THANK YOU!**

**QUESTIONS?**



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