



## **“Nose Rings and Bellybutton Things - Counseling the Next Generation”**

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# Nose Rings and Bellybutton Things - Counseling the Next Generation

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## **Course Description:**

Generational differences do exist. Whether you are an older professional working with younger clients, or vice versa, the information in this course can help you build better client relationships and create more effective interventions. Bridging the generational gap helps lead to lasting change.

## **Course Objectives:**

At the conclusion of this course, the professional will be able to:

- 1) Identify current cultural and generational differences
- 2) Understand the impact of generational differences on therapeutic relationships
- 3) Devise targeted intervention strategies to build therapeutic trust and increase client compliance
- 4) Identify and apply client strengths to overcome deficits

## **Purpose of this course:**

The purpose of the course is to assist professionals in working effectively with clients who may be a generation or two older, or younger.

## **Course Outline:**

Part 1: Course organization, Documentation and Introduction.

Part 2: Reading of the course materials (this document)

Part 3: Administration and Completion of the Evaluation of Learning Quiz

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**6.0 Clock Hours = 6 CE Credit Hours**

If you ever have any questions concerning this course, please do not hesitate to contact **PeachTree at (800) 390-9536**.



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# Nose Rings & Belly Button Things

## Inter-Generational Counseling

### By Richard Nongard

## AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Perhaps my broad professional experiences have spawned my deep interest in the subject of cross-generational counseling. Or, possibly it stems from my profound awareness of the vast generational differences between my personal family experiences and those of my Mother and Grandmother, concerning their most impressionable years.

For many, counseling is a second profession, begun in the middle or later years of life. It was my first. Consequently, after Graduate school I began my career as an eager young counselor working with older clients. Over the years the situation has evolved of course, and I'm now an older counselor working with younger clients.

Naturally, my personal values, attitudes, experiences, strengths, and even my problems have been shaped, in part, by my life long cross-generational experiences. I was raised in a family laden with traditional nuclear family values, passed on from the Builders (my grandparents) to the Boomers (my parents). As a typical X-Generation child, I experienced the modern adjustments of divorce, a dual-career blended family, and being responsible for a latchkey to let myself in the house after school.

Whatever the instigating factors, by exploring my interests I've uncovered valuable information and gleaned powerful insight that has truly made interactions with my clients far more productive and meaningful, and I'd like to share them with you.

I believe this material is essential reading for all practicing professionals. While the context will focus more on older counselors working with younger clients, as we talk about intergenerational counseling skills and strategies for impacting clients whose generational experiences are different than ours, we need to recognize that these ideas cut both ways. Whether you are an older counselor working with younger clients, or a younger counselor working with older clients, you should find this text not only interesting and entertaining, but also practical and useful.

~ Richard K. Nongard, LMFT/CCH

# CHAPTER 1

## GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES DO EXIST

Demographers define the five current living generations as:

- The GI Generation                      1901-1924
- The Builder Generation                1925-1942
- The Baby Boomer Generation        1943-1962
- The Generation X'ers                 1963-1981
- The Millennial Generation            1982-2001

**What's the difference between a Builder and an X'er?**

*It's all a matter of perspective...*

If there is anyone I know who most closely resembles the story of the man who “walked nine miles to school in the snow, barefoot, uphill, in the winter”, it would be my neighbor down the street, Ned. Ned was born in 1928 and is, in my opinion, the quintessential Builder. Born just shortly before the Great Depression, he grew up on the family farm in Northern Wisconsin. When he was five, his mother passed away during childbirth. His father, who did odd jobs and owned a tavern, died when Ned was in his late teens. From this point on, his oldest sister, Aunt Leona, raised the five siblings on the family farm.

Like so many members of his generation, Ned joined the military when he turned 18. He served his country proudly and attended college on the GI Bill. He also tended bar through college at his father's tavern, to help pay for his education.

Because of his generational experiences, Ned acts in certain ways that I feel epitomize The Builder. Let's say it's a Friday night, and Ned is going out for a big time on the town with his wife. Before he leaves the house, he will go through each and every room turning off all the lights and electrical appliances, making sure that no electricity is wasted while he is gone. He'll turn off the TV set. He'll turn off the radio. He'll check and double check to make sure nothing unnecessary is turned on or plugged in, and that the windows and drapes are tightly closed. And then, after re-checking the locks on every window and door (because alarm systems use too much electricity), he will leave for the evening.

Ned is so compulsive about electricity that to this day, if his granddaughter comes to visit and goes into a room without turning off the light in the room she just left, he will yell down the hall for her to go back and flip the switch.

Ned's granddaughter and I think Ned's behavior is odd.

But is Ned eccentric or even obsessive-compulsive? No. This is simply the only way he has ever known. As a child growing up through the Great Depression, his family economic experiences were typical of that generation. He was raised with core survival values of thrift and conservation. Back then, every penny *did* count.

My life experiences are obviously quite different from Ned's. I think Ned's behavior is odd not because I'm opposed to thrift or against conservation, but because from my perspective, there are more important things in life to worry about than a few watts of electricity, especially on a Friday night when you're headed out on the town.

When I'm headed out for the evening, I walk around the house and turn *on* the TV's, and I turn the volume up. I'll turn on the clock radio that sits next to my bed. I'll turn a couple lights on in the kitchen. I make sure that my son's bedroom, which has a window at the front of the house, has a light on. Sometimes I'll even take one of the kid's bicycles from the garage and put on the front porch.

When I was growing up, if we ever left our bicycles on the lawn or in the driveway we got in a lot of trouble, because someone might steal our valuable bicycle. But today, when I leave home for the weekend or even just for the evening, I leave a bicycle or a scooter in the front yard.

Ned, by the way, thinks my behavior is odd.

The truth is that neither of our behaviors are overly strange. Our conduct, though opposite in nature, comes from each of our generational experiences.

Unlike Ned's Depression era childhood, I grew up in a family with financial security at a time of national economic prosperity – and crime. Although I can appreciate thrift and conservation, safety over frugality is one of my most important values.

The reason I leave my lights on, turn the volume up and drag a bike into my front yard is simple: I don't want my house to look as if no one is home when I'm not there.

I think Ned's behavior of turning everything off is asking for trouble. If I were a bandit driving around the neighborhood looking for an empty house to rob, I would identify his house immediately. But if I were a bad guy driving through my neighborhood, and I saw a kid's bicycle in the front yard, and the front bedroom light on, and heard the TV set through the door, I would probably bypass a house like mine and aim for an easier target.

## ADD/ADHD – A Prime Example of the Generation Gap

Our generational experiences often dictate our values and attitudes, which translate into specific behaviors. Parents and anyone in a counseling setting knows that these specific behaviors can sometimes be remarkably disruptive or traumatic.

As a consultant for Education Service Centers and numerous school districts in the Southwest, at least five times a year I'm asked to speak on the topic of ADD and ADHD (Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). At these conferences, the questions I hear most frequently are:

- “What causes the behaviors that we label ADD/ADHD?”
- “Is there a Ritalin deficiency in the children of today, that didn't exist in years gone by?”
- “How come America has an 8 times greater rate of Attention Deficit Disorder than the European countries? Are our children biologically different than the children of England or France or Spain?”

Although I do think the psychiatric condition we have labeled ADD/ADHD can be influenced by biological factors, I do not believe ADD is caused by a Ritalin deficiency. I also believe that there are a hundred different causes for the behaviors we have labeled ADD or ADHD.

While it is likely true that some children – a thin minority in my opinion – manifest behaviors we have labeled ADD because their brain chemistry is slightly different from the majority of other children, with the rampant diagnosis of ADD and ADHD in our country, it becomes evident that there must be causes or factors beyond human biology influencing the behaviors that we see.

Sometimes when I meet a child with ADD and I get to know the family system, I discover that there truly is an Attention Deficit Disorder – no one is paying attention to the child. The child's behaviors are simply a way of acting out and drawing attention to their personal needs – emotional, physical, spiritual or psychological – that are not being met by their parents or teachers.

I also see many cultural or generational factors influencing the behaviors that we have called ADD or ADHD. Think about this for a minute: Today's school-age generation is pre-programmed for a commercial every 11-½ minutes. While perhaps annoying to older generations, it is logically reasonable that a generation expecting a commercial five times an hour is going to have a difficult time functioning in a classroom that is structured in 50 minute increments.

Consider the irrational rationale of how many schools respond to ADD: A child that can't sit still for 50 minutes in a classroom is placed in “In-School Suspension” for 8 hours. And if they can't sit still for 8 hours in In-School Suspension, we send them to

an “Alternative School” where they must sit in the same classroom all day long, five days a week, for the entire school year.

### COMMERCIALS: ONE CURE FOR A.D.D.

What do I mean by saying that today’s younger generation is programmed for a commercial every 11-½ minutes? Not too long ago, my then eleven-year-old son and I were driving down the street to return some DVDs at the Blockbuster video store.

He said, “Dad, when you were a kid, how many DVDs did you own?”

It was at that very moment that I felt old. I grinned at my son and replied, “Well, when I was a kid, they hadn’t yet invented the VCR. You remember, that’s what plays those boxy VHS tapes.” I didn’t even bother to explain to him what Beta-Max was.

He was clearly shocked and appalled by this news. “Wow, you didn’t have a VCR?”

I said, “No.”

“How many TV channels did you have?”

Proudly, I replied, “I grew up in the big city of *Chicago*. That means I had *three* television stations: WFLT, WGN and WLS. Many other cities only had two stations back then. And I remember when we got our fourth channel, the Public Broadcasting Service, PBS.”

Needless to say, my son was truly amazed. I think he almost felt sorry for me. “Wow, dad you only had three channels growing up? We have, like, 999.”

Of course not all 999 channels are functional, but the digital dial does go from 0 to 999, and there probably at least 100 active channels I’ve never watched, not even once.

I’ll never forget my Sunday afternoon ritual when I was a child. I would make myself a snack and get settled in front of the mammoth television cabinet, which held that magical 13-inch screen. Vise-grips in hand, I would gently (click-pause-click) turn the dial around to Channel 9. Then, ever so carefully, I would adjust the coat hanger at least 37 times to make sure the reception was as good as possible. Once satisfied, I would lay on the floor, elbows propped on a pillow, intently watching the test pattern until 4:00pm.

At 4:00pm sharp, my favorite show, “Family Classics” with Frazier Thomas finally came on the air. During the movie’s commercial breaks, Frazier Thomas would usually read excerpts from a classic book like *Robinson Caruso*, *A Christmas Carol* or *Boys Town*.

If I didn't like the movie they were playing, well, it didn't matter. This was the only television show available on Sunday afternoons. And like every other child in America, I couldn't wait for 6:00pm on Sunday when Tinkerbell would fly around the Magic Kingdom, announcing the beloved Walt Disney show.

When Disney was over, as a family we would of course tune in to Marlin Perkins and watch *Animal Kingdom*. It didn't matter if Marlin or Jim were chasing an interesting animal or not. We watched it attentively anyway, because this is what we did on Sunday evenings.

As I thought about my experiences growing up compared to those of my son, I realized that from a cultural and behavioral perspective, we have been trained to act and respond to certain situations in different ways. If I didn't like what was on the television, I waited patiently until it was over and then watched something else. However, if my son doesn't like what's on TV, he grabs the Nickelodeon remote control, preprogrammed for 57 kid channels, and zaps from one to the next until he finds something interesting.

I was watching a test pattern on Sunday afternoons until Frazier Thomas came on the air. My son has no idea what a test pattern is or looks like, because in the era of satellite and cable television, all programming is continuous 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – television stations never 'sign off'.

(Today, if you want to see a kid totally freak out, let someone down the road cut the cable line - then put in your ear plugs.)

When Frazier Thomas showed a particularly long movie, sometimes instead of commercials the station would run only a brief word from the sponsor once an hour. Today, our children watch television programs that are pre-designed to include the maximum number of commercial messages allowed by law (which are of course carefully created to make children drive parents crazy by inducing spontaneous begging to go to the store to buy the stuff advertised in the commercial. My eight-year-old even keeps a pen and paper handy to write down the 'Order Now' 1-800 numbers.)

Plain and simple, my childhood experiences are different from my children's. My experiences taught me patience and perseverance. My experiences taught me that even if something is uninteresting at the moment, it might still be valuable to see.

But children in today's world are primed to seek excitement every 11-½ minutes, during that next commercial break. My children's brief experiences have taught them that if you don't like what you see, zap through the channels till you get you want.

I'm not so shallow or judgmental to believe that changes in television are solely responsible for the behavior we have labeled ADD/ADHD. I do, however believe it is important for parents, teachers and counselors to recognize and consider that the average American child spends more time in front of the television set than they do in a school classroom. When we understand the 11-½ minute concept as a functional reality, it allows us to make changes and adapt to the specific needs of today's younger generations.

When I do training for school districts, I tell the teachers that if they want to gain and maintain their student's attention, they must create a 'classroom commercial' every 10-15 minutes.

How? It's really not that difficult - any change in the flow of things will work. Stop the lecture and interject an interactive activity like student-to-student questioning, role-playing, or by changing the teaching method for a brief period of time and then returning back to the 'already in progress' educational format.

A while back I was speaking at a large community college in South Texas. During the first break, one of the campus professors walked up to me and said, "Richard, I just wanted to let you know that I think you're a jerk."

Smiling, I said, "Well, thank you for the warm welcome to your school. Why is it you think I'm a jerk?"

He replied, "I've been teaching for 40 years, and these kids need to understand that *I* am the authority. Even if they think what I teach is boring, it's essential information that they need to know. It's not my responsibility to change my teaching methods in order to meet their so-called point of need. It's their responsibility to adapt to the methods of education that I choose to use, in order to communicate the necessary information they will need in their vocational choices."

I said to the professor, "I agree with you, wholeheartedly. Today's student *should* do it your way. They *should*, whether they are interested or not, sit through your lectures. They *should* learn from the teaching methods that you choose to utilize in your classroom. The reality, however, is that even though they *should* do it that way, they *won't*. And because they are *not* going to do it our way, in large part because of their cultural and generational experiences, it is up to *us*, the teachers and helpers, to adapt and change. If we are to continue being effective in the work that we do, we *must* find a way to meet the student at their particular point of need."

He didn't like my answer, but he knew that I was right.

In trainings presented to school districts, I tell the teachers that one of the things they must do for this generation is to create a commercial in their classroom every 11½ minutes. But how do you do that?

- Through an interactive activity
- Questioning
- Role-playing
- By changing the teaching method for a brief period of time and then returning to the lecture or previous educational format.

Whether we like it or not, and whether we are parenting, teaching, counseling or supervising people whose generational experiences are different from our own, it is our responsibility to understand the person's experiences which have lead them to engage in the behaviors we consider difficult or problematic. It is also our responsibility to create the necessary interventions that will meet their needs.

Think about it: As professionals, we must modify our methods in order to reach our target. No one would argue the ineffectiveness of using only English in the classroom for teaching a child who speaks only Chinese. The first step would be to teach the child English. Likewise, with inter-generational counseling, we must also develop a common language that can be understood by all parties involved.

Generational differences are real, and must be explored from a cross-cultural perspective. As you study the material contained in this course, I want you to think about your own generational experiences. How they have shaped your values, attitudes and the behaviors that you engage in?

Consider the difference 40-plus years can make:

### Surfing the Waves of Change: Understanding the Post-Y2K world

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#### ***40 years ago, "When you were young":***

- Houses were built with large front yards and open porches, to welcome the world
- Movies cost 50¢, a new pair of jeans \$8, a Coke 10¢ and a new car less than \$300
- The song, *How Much is That Doggy in the Window* was at the top of the charts
- Big business and government were the 2 largest employers of young people leaving school

- Businesses worked well without photocopiers, fax machines, electric typewriters [- or personal computers]
- People walked out of *Gone With The Wind* at the words, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn"
- All the world's computers put together had less computing power than you have in today's digital watch
- A graduate degree guaranteed you good employment
- There were no calculators
- **25% of the English language used today - had not been invented yet**
- People had careers (one line of work for a lifetime)
- A "crack salesman" was someone really good at selling
- Weather forecasting was a joke (well, at least some things never change...)

Today, we are facing a very different world that is constantly changing at an increasing rate. We need to assist today's young people (and ourselves) to survive the onslaught of these changes and be alert to the influences in the modern world.

(Source: <http://tomorrowtoday.biz/generations/>)

## CHAPTER 2

# FIVE GENERATIONS

The five current living generations:

- The GI Generation 1901-1924
- The Builder Generation 1925-1942
- The Baby Boomer Generation 1943-1962
- The Generation X'ers 1963-1981
- The Millennial Generation 1982-2001

For longer than we want to know, demographic information on each of these generations has been particularly useful to those conducting marketing research. Contrarily, only within the past ten years have the social science fields begun to acquire an interest in generational issues. Slowly but surely, they are discovering that the information is relevant and helpful for understanding individual and group behaviors, developing problem-solving strategies, and creating interventions that will effectively meet the client's needs, based on their specific generational experiences.

Each generation carries its own set of unique characteristics and experiences. One generation may have been more influenced by politicians, while another had the attention of movie stars. One generation was working daily by age 12, while another may not know a full-time job until they're out of college. One generation had crew cuts, war tattoos and wore clip-on earrings. Another had long hair, a couple anti-war tattoos and dangle earrings after age 18. Yet another had funky hair, a few more tattoos, and even the boys had triple pierced ears at 15. Still another is indifferent about their hair, covered in tattoos, and both genders have anything and everything pierced that you can pierce.

And we've not even touched on skirt lengths, or sexual and musical differences.

## The GI Generation

The GI Generation was born from about 1901 to 1924, and is characterized by the military experiences they were forced to endure while pursuing the preservation of national and individual freedom. The oldest members perhaps fought in WWI, and the younger members certainly fought in WWII.

As we will discuss later on, specific events characterize each generation. The wartime experiences of this generation have colored their perspectives, their attitudes, their values and their behaviors more so than anything else. The four successive generations owe a particular debt of gratitude to this generation, because without their sacrifices throughout WWI and WWII, freedom as we know it would not exist.

## The Builder Generation

The Builders were born from about 1925 to 1942. The oldest members perhaps fought in WWII, and many fought in the Korean War.

This generation took the freedom procured by the prior generation and built an industrialized America. They essentially connected the dots across the country, for until this generation grew up, the Interstate Highway system didn't exist.

Although at first glance such a contribution seems relatively simple: this generation created enormous wealth by truly uniting America.

A few years ago I was headed from Tulsa, Oklahoma to Fayetteville, Arkansas, and I stopped by Ned's house to see if he had a map, because I had never been from Tulsa to Fayetteville before.

I said, "Hey, Ned, I have to go to Fayetteville tomorrow. How do I get there?"

He said, "Well, you just take Highway 412 at the Turnpike, and it's a straight shot. You drive for about an hour and a half, and at Highway 71 you turn right. You'll be in Fayetteville in no time."

He sounded like he knew what he was talking about, but I wanted to make sure. "Even though that sounds like a simple course, have you got a map?"

Ned said, "Sure," and dug out an atlas.

I opened to "O" for Oklahoma. I located Tulsa with my finger, and just East of Oklahoma on the Arkansas border I found a tiny dot that represented Fayetteville, upon which I placed another finger.

As I looked back and forth at Tulsa and Fayetteville, I said, “I thought you said there was a road here, a Highway 412 or something, that’s supposed to be a straight shot?”

He said, “Yes, there is.”

A bit exasperated, I replied, “Well, Ned, it’s not on this map.”

He leaned over my shoulder and glanced at the map. With a slight grunt, he took a pencil from his pocket, placed it on the Tulsa dot, and drew a line to the Fayetteville dot. “There it is,” he said.

Not sure whether to smile or frown, I ventured to ask, “Ned, how old is this map?”

“I don’t know, probably 15 or 20 years or so.”

As soon as Ned drew the line on his map, my mind immediately thought again of thrift and conservation. It’s cheaper to draw your own roads than it is to buy a new map.

Out of curiosity, I opened the atlas to Texas and found myself in shock. There was Austin, Dallas, San Antonio and Houston. However, the triangle you see on most maps of the interstate road system was printed in dotted lines, representing essentially where the completed highways *would* be, someday.

It occurred to me that this generation connected the dots.

I travel often, and people ask me, “How do you like Lubbock, or how do you like Wichita, or how do you like Little Rock or Baton Rouge?” My answer to anyone who asks me about traveling is always: Every city is the same.

It doesn’t matter if it’s Tulsa or Houston, it doesn’t matter if it’s a big city or a little city. I stay at the Holiday Inn, I eat at the Outback Steak House, I have breakfast at Denny’s and read a newspaper that opens with wire stories delivered via satellite or the Internet to all major newspapers.

When I look around our country, although there are some minor political or architectural or topographical differences, most of our nation’s cities are pretty much identical. They all have McDonald’s and a Ramada or Holiday Inn. They all have a Wal-Mart and a national or large regional chain grocery store. And, they are all connected by the interstate highway system, built, of course, by the Builders.

With the development of the interstate highway system, (originally envisioned for military purposes), travel and commerce were able to expand across our country in a way which few had dared imagine. The highway allowed wealth and prosperity to

be distributed on a larger scale across our entire nation. The ability of families and businesses to visit and move at whim allowed the vast regional and cultural differences of one city to influence the next one – being newly built, just down the road a few days. These changes created suburbia, and modernized our agricultural and rural areas.

From both clinical and social perspectives, one of the most significant contributions of this generation was the creation of adolescence, which until this point in our history, didn't really exist. The Baby Boomers, the Builder's enormous troop of children, were the first generation to fully experience this new phenomenon.

Think about your grandparents and your great-grandparents. How old were they when they started working, and when they got married? Back then, men went from boyhood to manhood when they hit puberty and were able to lift a heavy load. Girls became women when they menstruated. They were ready for marriage and often gave birth to their first children at 15, 16 or 17 years of age - without disgrace. Judgment and disgrace was reserved for those who dared to seek a divorce.

Adolescence did exist in some forms, particularly among the most well-to-do, but it took the tremendous wealth created by the Builders – and their compassion to give their children a break – for it to become a full-blown cultural development.

When we watch the news and see a report about a 10, 12 or 14 year old 'soldier' in Afghanistan shooting at American service men, we are appalled that children would carry weapons and be conscripted into the armed services. Although we have exported the American creation of adolescence to many industrialized countries, we must remember that in several other parts of the world, it still doesn't exist, and boys still become men when they can carry a flour sack, or a rifle.

## **The Baby Boomers**

The Baby Boom generation was born from about 1943 to 1962. Not only were they the first generation to truly experience the phenomenon we call adolescence, they were also the first generation to experience earning a college education as the norm, rather than the exception.

Huge social changes and upheaval during the most formative years of the Boomers are important factors to this generation, and to successive ones as well. From a clinical perspective, the Boomers altered the landscape of the American family situation.

In 1967, Dick Van Dyke, Debbie Reynolds and Jason Robards made a Norman Lear movie called *Divorce American Style*. However dark, the movie was a comedy,

with the plot revolving around the chaos – at times comical, at times devastating – of ‘modern’ divorce and custody.

Something becomes a comedy because it’s an exception in our society, and people who are becoming familiar with a new idea or a new concept look at the absurdity and oddity of that concept and find humor in it. In the movie, the characters swap kids on Fridays and Sundays; on Wednesday, Freda was Jimmy’s kid, and on Tuesday and Thursday Joey was Bob’s kid, and so on. The circle of visitation and custody and divorce was ‘humorized’ in this movie.

I’m convinced that if *Divorce American Style* were written today, it would be a documentary rather than a comedy. Forty-five-plus years later, the topic isn’t so funny anymore. When the movie was made, these family-swapping situations were odd and absurd. Today however, sad as it is, divorce and house-hopping is the norm for many - if not most - youth in our society.

The acceptance of divorce in this generation has produced two profound changes. First, the most important family relationship is no longer the parent-child relationship. In the counseling work that I do, I find that the most important relationship that a child has is now the sibling relationship. The reason why is simple: Parents come and go, but siblings last forever.

## **BLINK 182**

### **□ *Stay Together For The Kids***

It's hard to wake up  
 when the shades have been pulled shut  
 this house is haunted  
 it's so pathetic  
 it makes no sense at all  
 I'm ripe with things to say  
 the words rot and fall away  
 what stupid poem could fix this home  
 I'd read it every day

So here's your holiday  
 hope you enjoy it this time  
 you gave it all away  
 it was mine  
 so when you're dead and gone  
 will you remember this night  
 twenty years now lost  
 it's not right

Their anger hurts my ears  
 been running strong for seven years  
 rather than fix the problems  
 they never solve them  
 it makes no sense at all  
 I see them everyday  
 we get along, so why can't they?  
 if this is what he wants  
 and this is what she wants  
 then why is there so much pain?

So here's your holiday  
 hope you enjoy it this time  
 you gave it all away  
 it was mine  
 so when you're dead and gone  
 will you remember this night  
 twenty years now lost  
 it's not right

So here's your holiday  
 hope you enjoy it this time  
 you gave it all away  
 it was mine  
 so when you're dead and gone  
 will you remember this night  
 twenty years now lost

it's not right  
 it's not right  
 it's not right  
 it's not right

## **PINK**

### ***Family Portrait***

Mama please stop cryin', I can't stand the sound  
 Your pain is painful and its tearin' me down  
 I hear glasses breakin' as I sit up in my bed  
 I told Dad you didn't mean those nasty things you said

You fight about money, about me and my brother  
 And this I come home to, this is my shelter  
 It ain't easy, growing up in World War Three,  
 Never knowing what love could be, you'll see  
 I don't want love to destroy me like it has done my family.

Can we work it out? Can we be a family?  
 I promise I'll be better, Mommy I'll do anything  
 Can we work it out? Can we be a family?  
 I promise I'll be better, Daddy please don't leave.

Daddy please stop yelling, I can't stand the sound  
 Make Mama stop crying, coz I need you around.  
 My mama loves you, no matter what she says is true  
 I know that she hurts you, but remember I love you too.

I ran away today, ran from the noise, ran away  
 Don't wanna go back to that place, but don't have a choice no way  
 It ain't easy growing up in World War Three,  
 Never knowing what love could be, well I've seen  
 I don't want love to destroy like it did my family

Can we work it out? Can we be a family?  
 I promise I'll be better, Mommy I'll do anything  
 Can we work it out? Can we be a family?  
 I promise I'll be better, Daddy please don't leave.

In our family portrait we look pretty happy  
 Lets play pretend and act like it comes naturally  
 I don't wanna have to split the holidays  
 I don't want two addresses  
 I don't want a stepbrother anyways  
 And I don't want my mom to have to change her last name!

In our family portrait we look pretty happy  
 We look pretty normal - let's go back to that  
 In our family portrait we look pretty happy  
 Lets play pretend, act like it comes naturally

In our family portrait we look pretty happy  
 We look pretty normal - let's go back to that  
 In our family portrait we look pretty happy  
 Lets play pretend, act like it comes naturally

In our family portrait we look pretty happy  
 We look pretty normal - let's go back to that

I promise I'll be better, Daddy please don't leave  
 Daddy don't leave, Daddy don't leave  
 Daddy don't leave, turn around please  
 Remember that night you left you took my shining star?

Daddy don't leave, Daddy don't leave  
 Daddy don't leave, don't leave us here alone

Mum will be nicer  
 I'll be so much better, I'll tell my brother  
 Oh, I won't spill the milk at dinner  
 I'll be so much better, I'll do everything right,  
 I'll be your little girl forever  
 I'll go to sleep at night.

The second change resulting from the Baby Boom generation is the acceptance of alternative family structures as a mainstream manner of living. Whether you agree or disagree that this is good for our country is irrelevant. This course will not explore whether it is good or bad for divorce to occur, it will simply recognize that the Baby Boom generation normalized divorce in American families, and as a result, the successive generations we work with experience a family structure much different than prior generations.

In 1981, my grandfather "Poppacita" died. He was preceded in death by my grandmother, who we called "Gin-Gin". At Papacita's funeral, one of my oldest relatives came up to me and said, "Richard, I must tell you something."

His tone sounded serious, and a bit worried. I nodded and asked what he wanted to tell me.

He drew a great breath, glanced left and right, and murmured, "It's with great pain that I must tell you this, but I'll be gone someday soon also, and it's important for you to know the truth about the family history."

Surprised and greatly interested, I urged him on.

After another deep breath, he looked me square in the eye and whispered, "In the 1920's, before your grandfather and your grandmother married each other," he paused and glanced around again, "they were both married to other people."

Hmmm. This was interesting news, but so far not earth shattering to me. I said, "Okay, and this means...?"

Quickly he replied, "No, they didn't have any children. The marriages were brief. But I promised your grandmother and your grandfather that I would never let anyone know until after their deaths. And now, as the oldest male in the family who is still in good health, I felt you needed to know this about the family history."

Trying to return the same amount of seriousness that he obviously gave the matter, I said, "Thank you very much for telling me, and trusting me with the information."

He patted me on the back and walked away.

I have reflected often on this conversation. To be honest, when my elder was telling me the truth about the family history, I was thinking to myself, 'What's the big deal?' My parents had been divorced. During most of my childhood I had a latchkey in hand when I came home from school, and I waited with my siblings for my mother to return from work. Many of my friends parents were divorced and had experienced the 'humorous chaos' depicted in *Divorce American Style*.

That my relative was so secretive and cryptic about my grandparents' divorces puzzled me at the time, but I now recognize that our lifestyles and customs have changed dramatically since the 1920's. The acceptance of divorce and the subsequent changes in structure of American families is one of the most important generational transitions in the last hundred years.

## Generation X

The Generation X'ers, born between about 1963-1981, are the first generation to grow up in a world filled with technology, modern conveniences, broken homes, and fearing the future. But there are a lot of things which are very positive about this group. In the field of counseling we almost always dwell on what's wrong with a generation or a group of people; rarely do we focus on what is right. Personally, I think Generation X has gotten a bum rap.

Until 1991 when Douglas Coupland published his book, "*Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*," demographers called this group the "Baby Busters." The 'Generation X' label didn't become mainstreame until about 1994 when a popular magazine slashed a large red "X" across the cover as their picture for the lead story. The X represented nothingness; a generation devoid of values and ambition - slackers.

As I recall, the highly critical article began with a quote from a Nirvana song, Smells Like Team Spirit: "Here we are now, entertain us". According to the article, this statement represented the ideals of the then coming-of-age generation. The popularity of the piece by members from all generations led to the acceptance of the Generation X label.

They were previously labeled Baby Busters because from a demographic perspective, their numbers were minute compared to the Baby Boom generation. There are about 72 million Baby Boomers, but even when you stretch the dates as far as you can, there are only about 19 million Generation X'ers.

Their small number presents some interesting challenges for this particular generation. The popularity of Ross Perot as an Independent political candidate for President in the 1990 election was in large part a result of his appeal to the issues relevant to the Generation X'ers. His loss can also be partly blamed on the fact that

he was appealing to a smaller group of people than his opponents were. Ross Perot offered specific solutions – for the long-term future. He was the only candidate looking at the economic realities of the then coming-of-age generation from a multigenerational perspective. In their campaigns, both Bob Dole and Bill Clinton were talking about social security and a ten-year bail-out to the problems at hand.

Ross Perot said, “Wait a minute, we don’t need a 10 year bailout, we need a 50 year solution.”

Ross Perot recognized what the X’ers had known since they were in grade school: The looming problem with social security and other entitlement programs is the mathematical impossibility for 19 million Generation X’ers to adequately support 72 million retiring Baby Boomers.

Many of the fears and anxieties the X’ers have are probably legitimate. Some of the emotional intensity that often characterizes them comes from the change in the family structure and the isolation they experienced while coming of age and entering the work force. Whether from an economic, social or cultural perspective, how this generation will be able to resolve these issues is in large part yet to be seen.

Just a few years later, *Time* magazine published another article on Generation X that said essentially, What we thought before was wrong. Although they may look funny, the Generation X’ers have many wonderful attributes.



*Time* Cover, 06-06-1997

These strengths can probably be used to help them solve the problems that they will face in the future.

One of the chief strengths of this generation is its incredible autonomy. Many from this generation have taken the financial reality of current economic situations and solved some of those problems with skills learned from carrying a latchkey. When they graduated from college, they often had a hard time finding a job. Why? Because there were so many Baby Boomers who hadn’t adequately prepared for retirement

and weren't leaving the work force, thus decreasing the prospects for upward mobility and career advancement for many Generation X'ers.

So what did they do? Just like when let themselves in after school and often cooked their own dinner, they mastered autonomy and the ability to function independently. They created their own jobs. They developed new technologies, implemented new ideas, and made their own way. They have become one of the most entrepreneurial generations since the Builders.

The strengths of each generation offer clues to the problem-solving process in counseling, parenting, and supervision.

## **The Millennial Generation**

The Millennial Generation was born from about 1981 to about the year 2001. The Millennial Generation has also been referred to in literature as Generation Y, Generation 2000, the Net Generation, Generation NeXt, the Digital Generation and the Littleton Generation.

When the Littleton Generation title surfaced, it was because this generation was coming of age in a time of relative peace and prosperity, and a time of easy wars (as evidenced by Gulf War I – the first Video War). Life was relatively innocent until the shock and threat of several major influential life events, such as the Littleton school shooting and its numerous copy-cats.

While internationally there was a period of reasonable world peace, the streets in America became unsafe due to gang affiliations and the popularity of rock cocaine. 'Family' became a much different social organism than in prior generations. And then, as many from this generation began to graduate, on September 16, 1999, a gunman dressed in black walked into a sanctuary full of one hundred and fifty young people attending a rally at the Ft. Worth, Texas Wedgwood Baptist Church and began firing, killing eight, including himself.

Shortly after this tragedy, I heard the mayor of Ft. Worth interviewed on the radio. In despair he stated: This is a generation who is not safe in their schools. This is generation who is not safe in their streets. This generation is now not safe in their churches.

Interestingly enough, the mayor of Ft. Worth said these things prior to September 11<sup>th</sup> - prior to anthrax attacks, prior to the Beltway Sniper terrorizing America and the Smiley Face shooter leaving his mark throughout the Midwest.

We believed this generation would be secure; that they would be the beneficiaries of wealth and would have things that no other generation has had. The next national battle wasn't supposed to be about the price of oil, or about domination of a particular political system, but rather like the GI generation, this generation's battles were thought to be about the very preservation of freedom itself.

Prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>, I assumed that our battle for the preservation of freedom might be with China, but it seems clear that the battle this generation will fight will be against an extremist Islamic system that seeks not a particular territory to rule, but rather an entire world. American values, American experiences, and American ideals are threatened at the current time, and as this generation grows up, they will be the ones to preserve our freedom for the successive generations - or - they will be the ones to abdicate our freedom to those who seek totalitarianism.

These are the clients we are now treating in our offices. Their generational backdrop and experiences are quite different from those any prior generation has ever had to face.

Every year Beloit College puts together the "Mindset List" to help understand the experiences and perspectives of the new generation entering college as freshmen. I have included two years of lists, just so you can see how things may change - or stay the same.

#### **BELOIT COLLEGE RELEASES THE CLASS OF 2006 "MINDSET LIST"**

Beloit, **Wis.**—In the coming weeks, a new generation of students will arrive on campuses throughout the country to mark the start of their first year of college. Most of these students were born in 1984. It was a different time, with computers becoming part of our daily lives, videotape changing the way we looked at television, and the explosion of the digital age—from watches to telephones.

For the fifth year, Beloit College, the liberal arts college in Beloit, Wisconsin, is distributing the *Mindset List* to its faculty and staff as an indicator of the many ways in which entering 17 and 18 year-olds see the world differently from their professors, coaches and mentors. The list is a reminder that the worldview of today's new college students is significantly different from the intellectual framework of those students who entered only a few years earlier. Beloit College Prof. Tom McBride, one of the list's creators, says "It is an alert for those of us who may be suffering from hardening of the references."

This year's entering students have grown up in a country where the Presidents have all been Southerners, and in a world with AIDS and without apartheid. Saturn's have always been on the street, the Fox Network has always been on television, and prom dresses have always come in basic black. The evil empire is

not earth-bound, the drug "ecstasy" has always been available, and with the breakup of AT&T, nobody has been able to comprehend a phone bill.

Over the past five years, thousands have read and requested copies of the Beloit College Mindset List. Educators, clergy, parents, and business people have all used it to improve their communications or marketing approach with a younger generation of adults, and in training those whose work is focused on a different generation. This year at Beloit College, the theme for the semester-long First Year Initiatives (FYI) program, a rigorous academic program for entering students described as a "safety net and a trampoline," is "Too Soon to Tell." It was prompted by a commencement address delivered in 1987 by journalist and humorist Calvin Trillin. (He will return to the campus in September to re-examine those views offered first when the class of 2006 was in its "terrible two's.")

In researching the Mindset List for this year, it became clear that age does not carry with it the wisdom to recognize when it is perhaps "Too Soon to Tell." In 1984, perceptive and thoughtful individuals were suggesting that there was no market for briefcase-sized computers and that George Lucas needed to get a life since interest in *Star Wars* was clearly on the wane.

It is critical that we recognize the talents of each new generation, notes Prof. McBride who heads the College's First Year Initiatives program. "While they are learning from us, we need to make ourselves understood or we run the risk of failing to convey the base of ideas that will allow us to share the road to wisdom."

#### **BELOIT COLLEGE "MINDSET LIST" FOR THE CLASS OF 2006**

**Most students entering college this fall were born in 1984.**

1. A Southerner has always been President of the United States.
2. Richard Burton, Ricky Nelson and Truman Capote have always been dead.
3. South Africa's official policy of apartheid has not existed during their lifetime.
4. Cars have always had eye-level rear stoplights, CD players, and air bags.

5. We have always been able to choose our long distance carriers.
6. Weather reports have always been available 24-hours a day on television.
7. The "evil empire" has moved from Moscow to a setting in some distant galaxy.
8. "Big Brother" is merely a television show.
9. Cyberspace has always existed.
10. Bruce Springsteen's new hit, *Born in the USA*, could have been played to celebrate their birth.
11. Barbie has always had a job.
12. Telephone bills have always been totally incomprehensible.
13. Prom dresses have always come in basic black.
14. A "Hair Band" is some sort of fashion accessory.
15. George Foreman has always been a barbecue grill salesman
16. Afghanistan has always been a front-page story.
17. There has always been an heir to the heir to the British throne.
18. They have no recollection of Connie Chung or Geraldo Rivera as serious journalists.
19. Peter Jennings, Dan Rather, and Tom Brokaw have always anchored the evening news.
20. China has always been a market-based reforming regime.
21. The United States has always been trying to put nuclear waste in Nevada.
22. The U.S. and the Soviets have always been partners in space.

23. Mrs. Fields' cookies and Swatch watches have always been favorites.
24. Nicholas Cage, Daryll Hannah, Eddie Murphy, and John Malkovich made their first major film impressions the year they were born.
25. The GM Saturn has always been on the road.
26. The "Fab Four" are not a male rock group, but four women enjoying "Sex and the City."
27. Fox has always been a television network choice.
28. Males do not carry a handkerchief in a back pocket.
29. This generation has never wanted to "be a Pepper too."
30. Ozzy's lifestyle has nothing to do with the Nelson family.
31. Women have always had tattoos.
32. Vanessa Williams and Madonna are aging singers.
33. Perrier has always come in flavors.
34. Cherry Coke has always come in cans.
35. A "hotline" is a consumer service rather than a phone used to avoid accidental nuclear war.
36. The drug "ecstasy" has always been around.
37. Genetic testing and DNA screening have always been available.
38. Electronic filing of federal income taxes has always been an option.
39. Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) has always been available to doctors.
40. *Trivial Pursuit* may have been played by their parents the night before they were born.
41. The U.S. has always maintained that it has a "clear right to use force against terrorism."

42. The drinking age has always been 21 throughout the country.
43. Women have always been members of the Jaycees.
44. The center of chic has shifted from Studio 54 to Liza's living room, live!
45. Julian Lennon had his only hit the year they were born.
46. Sylvan Learning Centers have always been an after-school option.
47. Hip-hop and rap have always been popular musical forms.
48. They grew up in minivans.
49. Scientists have always recognized the impact of acid rain.
50. The Coen Brothers have always been making films.

**And in 1984, perhaps it was "Too Soon to Tell"...**

- Technology analysts questioned the need for briefcase-sized computers.
- The National Children and Youth Fitness Study announced that children were overweight and underactive.
- A CPA organization heralded that computerized audit systems were being used to avoid errors and they were doing much better at spotting mistakes and providing internal audit controls.
- Film critics declared that George Lucas was looking for new directions because *Star Wars* interest was waning.
- Videotape technology was said to be killing the film industry and slowing cable network development.
- Analysts stated there was no market for Direct Broadcast Satellite systems.

- The U.S. Supreme Court declared sleeping to be a form of free speech.

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### **BELOIT COLLEGE RELEASES THE MINDSET LIST FOR THE CLASS OF 2007**

**Beloit, Wis.**—Across the nation, students are entering colleges and universities with their own perspectives on the times in which they live. Most of them were born in 1985.

For the sixth year, Beloit College has developed and distributed to the faculty and staff the "Beloit College Mindset List." According to co-editor Tom McBride, Keefer Professor of the Humanities at the Wisconsin liberal arts college, the list helps to slow the rapid onset of "hardening of the references," in the classroom.

McBride notes that, "These entering students were born into a world that had developed a screening test for AIDS and where managed healthcare was gaining its first foothold. The Middle East had replaced the USSR and Eastern Europe as our greatest challenge to security. It is a generation which believes in technological innovations and solutions and where digital devices, PIN numbers and calling cards are an integral part of their lives. Despite the fears associated with AIDS and divorce, we should remember that this is a generation that has grown up in a largely successful, prosperous society . . . I believe they are fascinated and vexed by the results of the world they have made," says Prof. McBride.

"The Mindset List, among other things, is a reminder of that world—a world that makes education a tougher yet more fascinating job than ever. In saying hello to the new generation, which they labor mightily to understand, but with mixed results, they are saying good-bye to themselves. There is something of wicked and addictive interest in that. I myself am part of that very generation. There is, for me, a bittersweet pleasure in knowing that Cherry Cokes didn't always come in cans and there are millions of first-year students who will never know how delicious it was when it didn't."

In April of the year the class of 2007 was born, Joseph Lelyveld complained in *The New York Times* that, "conversations with some young people around the country about the war in Vietnam will find their impressions of it to be remarkably dim." High school

juniors and seniors could not identify Ho Chi Minh, Robert McNamara or the Chicago Seven.

In *The New Yorker* that year, it was noted that, "Each generation brings a clean slate into the world. But the world itself is not a clean slate, and what happened before needs to be learned and remembered."

With the help of hundreds of people who have made contributions and after months of preparation, Beloit College is now pleased to present the Mindset List for the entering class.

**THE BELOIT COLLEGE MINDSET LIST FOR THE CLASS OF 2007®**

**Most students entering college this fall were born in 1985:**

1. Ricky Nelson, Richard Burton, Samantha Smith, Laura Ashley, Orson Welles, Karen Ann Quinlin, Benigno Aquino, and the U.S. Football League have always been dead.
2. They are not familiar with the source of that "Giant Sucking Sound."
3. Iraq has always been a problem.
4. "Ctrl + Alt + Del" is as basic as "ABC."
5. Paul Newman has always made salad dressing.
6. Pete Rose has always been a gambler.
7. Bert and Ernie are old enough to be their parents.
8. An automatic is a weapon, not a transmission.
9. Russian leaders have always looked like leaders everyplace else.
10. The snail darter has never been endangered.
11. There has always been a screening test for AIDS.
12. Gas has always been unleaded.
13. They never heard Howard Cosell call a game on ABC.
14. The United States has always had a Poet Laureate.
15. Garrison Keillor has always been live on public radio and Lawrence Welk has always been dead on public television.
16. Their families drove SUVs without "being fuelish."

17. There has always been some association between fried eggs and your brain.
18. They would never leave their calling card on someone's desk.
19. They have never been able to find the "return" key.
20. Computers have always fit in their backpacks.
21. Datsuns have never been made.
22. They have never gotten excited over a telegram, a long distance call, or a fax.
23. The Osmonds are just talk show hosts.
24. Undergraduate college athletes have always been a part of the NBA and NFL draft.
25. They have always "grazed" for food.
26. Three-point shots from "downtown" have always been a part of basketball.
27. Test tube babies are now having their own babies.
28. Stores have always had scanners at the checkout.
29. The Army has always driven Humvees.
30. Adam and PC Junior computers had vanished from the market before this generation went online.
31. The Statue of Liberty has always had a gleaming torch.
32. They have always had a PIN number.
33. Banana Republic has always been a store, not a puppet government in Latin America.
34. Car detailing has always been available.
35. Directory assistance has never been free.
36. The Jaycees have always welcomed women as members.
37. There has always been Lean Cuisine.
38. They have always been able to fly Virgin Atlantic.
39. There have never been dress codes in restaurants.
40. Doctors have always had to deal with "reasonable and customary fees" and patients have always had

controls placed on the number of days they could stay in a hospital.

41. They have always been able to make photocopies at home.
42. Michael Eisner has always been in charge of Disney.
43. They have always been able to make phone calls from planes.
44. Yuppies are almost as old as hippies.
45. Rupert Murdoch has always been an American citizen.
46. Strawberry Fields has always been in New York.
47. Rock and Roll has always been a force for social good.
48. Killer bees have always been swarming in the U.S.
49. They have never seen a First Lady in a fur coat.
50. Don Imus has always been offending someone in his national audience.

In all fairness, it should be understood that students entering college this fall do have a few items on their own lists that will separate them from many of their mentors:

1. For many of them today, it's all about the "bling, bling."
2. They know who the "Heroes in a half shell" are.
3. Peeps are not a candy, they are your friends.
4. They have been "dissing" and "burning" things all their lives.
5. They can expect to get a ticket for "ricing out their wheels."
6. They knew how to pop a Popple and trade a Pog.
7. They can still sing the rap chorus to the *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* and the theme song from *Duck Tales*.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS THAT INFLUENCE A GENERATION**

When I teach classes on the subject of intergenerational counseling, I like to break the room up into groups of 5 or 6 participants and have them brainstorm about their own generational experiences, and make perceptual observations about other generations.

In the following charts you will see columns for each of the currently living generations, except the G.I. Generation. The G.I. Generation is left off the chart not because they are not important to us or because their influence is not currently present in our lives, but because from a professional practice perspective, the members of this generation have long since retired.

Personally, the 2 most influential people in my life have been my grandmother and my grandfather, who are both still living happy and productive lives. My

grandfather was born in 1910, and my grandmother was born in 1913. I have learned a tremendous amount from them over the years, and I value the time I currently spend with them. But, unless we are working with a geriatric population, they are not the typical clients we see in marriage counseling, individual counseling, or criminal justice work.

The first chart identifies the people most influential, either by title or role, for each of the four generations. The second chart identifies the events that were most influential to each generation's experiences. The third chart identifies the values that are most typically associated with or represented by each generation.

The answers given in the charts are taken from the responses I typically receive at workshops. Whether I'm in Houston or Wichita, or in Little Rock or Lincoln, Nebraska, the answers are almost always the same.

I think the information on these charts can help us understand not just specifically what is different about each generation, but how these differences have affected the successive generations, and how the various experiences have impacted the behaviors and scenarios that we witness in the lives of today's generations.

### Chart 1: Influential People

<b>Builders</b>	<b>Baby Boomers</b>	<b>Gen X</b>	<b>Millennial Gen</b>
Franklin Roosevelt	Elvis Presley	Bill Gates	Dylan Klebold
Dwight Eisenhower	Marilyn Monroe	Bill Clinton	Eric Harris
Winston Churchill	Janis Joplin	Madonna	Osama Bin Laden
Adolph Hitler	Pete Seger	Michael Jackson	Mohammed Atta
Mussolini	John F. Kennedy	Beavis and Butthead	George Bush
Joseph Stalin	Robert F. Kennedy	Bart Simpson	Michael Jordan
Clark Kent	Martin Luther King	MTV	Emmit Smith
Superman	Lyndon Banes Johnson	<i>Beverly Hills 90210</i>	Michael Ervin
Frank Sinatra	Richard Nixon	<i>Friends</i>	Marilyn Manson
Tommy Dorsey	Spiro Agnew	Kurt Cobain and Nirvana	Dennis Rodman
Count Basie	The Grateful Dead	<i>Hello! Kitty</i>	Paris Hilton
Parents	The Beatles	Grandparents	Steve Case & AOL
Teachers	Walter Cronkite	Teachers	Eminem
Clergy	Friends		Siblings

## The Builders

At the top of the list of influential people, we almost always have political heroes such as Franklin Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower and Winston Churchill. And of course, the list almost always includes the anti-heroes of the time: Adolf Hitler, Mussolini, and Joseph Stalin.

Each generation has certainly been influenced by the current pop culture and media of the time. Often we will see Clark Kent and Superman, or entertainment personalities like Frank Sinatra, Tommy Dorsey and Count Basie.

It's interesting that parents will often note the influence that cultural media has on their children or the current 10-20-something generation. But this is not new; it's been like this since the invention of media in any form.

For the Builders, not only do we have larger-than-life heroes and anti-heroes like Churchill, Eisenhower and Truman, Hitler and Mussolini, but we also see parents, teachers and religious leaders listed. These specific 'persons of influence' rarely show up when we discuss the influences of Baby Boomers, Generation X'ers, or the Millennial Generation.

Jimmy Carter, born in 1924, is one of the youngest GI Generation members, or perhaps demographically he fits at the very beginning of the Builder generation. His book, *Living Faith*, tells about his experiences as a child growing up in Plains, Georgia. Our Former President talks about going to Annapolis when he was 18, and taking with him the profound influences of his teachers, parents and local clergy. Although Carter was aware of the heroes and anti-heroes of this generation, the most influential people to him were those specific every-day figures. This response appears to typify many of the experiences of the Builder generation.

## The Baby Boomers

The list of people most influential to Baby Boomers almost always starts out with "Elvis the Pelvis," who we know revolutionized the music industry and Hollywood itself. Other media or entertainment figures almost always include Marilyn Monroe, Janis Joplin and Pete Seeger. But we also have what I call the initial generation: JFK, RFK, MLK, LBJ; as well as Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew.

When I look at the Boomer's list of heroes, I notice something dramatically different from the prior generation. These heroes, whether through their own actions, like Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew, or at the hand of another's gun like Bobby Kennedy or Martin Luther King, were reduced to our own level of mortality. In the prior generations, both the heroes and the anti-heroes were considered 'invincible' or

‘larger-than-life’. The only thing that could beat Superman was Kryptonite. This new sense of mortality was truly a profound experience for the Boomers. For the first time, those who were viewed as untouchable were suddenly brought down to the same level of humanness as the rest of America. A powerless and weak person like Lee Harvey Oswald or Sirhan Sirhan could take anyone out on a whim.

The election of Bill Clinton as President typifies these tragedies and epitomized the 1960’s generation. Forget about your politics for a minute. Bill Clinton was, regardless of your voter registration card, an ‘everyday guy’. He was Bubba. He didn’t need fancy dinners; he ate at McDonald’s. Unlike George Bush, Sr., he knew what a scanner was at the grocery store. He drove a Ford Mustang and lived in Arkansas. The voters perceived Bill Clinton as ‘just a regular guy’, somebody just like you and me.

I believe that until our heroes were reduced to our own level of humanness, it would have been impossible for Bubba to be elected president. During Clinton’s impeachment proceedings, it seemed as if the only people taking the allegations seriously were the members of Congress conducting the hearings. The rest of America, according to the polls, was not outraged by his immoral conduct, they just thought he shouldn’t have lied about it. I believe this is because America knew they had elected just another regular guy as President, rather than a person of heroic stature elected in previous years.

## Generation X

Bill Gates, Bill Clinton, Madonna, Michael Jackson, Beavis and Butthead and Bart Simpson almost always top the list of people most influential to Generation Xer’s. For real life people, we have the grandparents. When the Baby Boomers gave the Generation Xer’s a latchkey to get in their house, the semi-retired Builders often came over to spend time with the family of their divorced or dual-career children.

This situational experience has specifically led to one of the difficulties that the Generation Xer’s encountered early on. They had values imparted from the Builders in the time that they spent with them, but they lacked the skills that parents would normally teach, which are necessary to implement their values in a problem-solving manner. As we talk about presenting problems with the Generation Xer’s, this dichotomy will be one of the chief issues that we must deal with in finding solutions and interventions in the problem-solving process.

An interesting thing about this list compared to the previous generation’s is that the media people from the Boomer’s era - Elvis or Janis Joplin, Pete Seger or Marilyn Monroe - were who they were on stage or off, whether they were performing or not. But those considered most influential to Generation X are people who are inconsistent or unreal. We now know that ‘Madonna the mother’ is very different from the Madonna of video and sex book fame. Bart Simpson and Beavis and Butthead are cartoons, not even real people. And of course, Bill Clinton’s public life and Bill

Clinton's private life were two entirely different things, until discovered by Matt Drudge, the first true Internet news reporter.

## The Millennial Generation

Dillon Klebold and Eric Harris, Osama Bin Laden, Mohammed Atta, George Bush, Michael Jordan; these are the names who many identify as being most important to the Millennial Generation. It is interesting to notice the seriousness of the names on this list, as contrasted with the list for the Baby Boom generation and the Generation Xer's.

Klebold and Harris shot up Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Osama Bin Laden masterminded many of the terror attacks in our country and around the world. And although much of the history of this generation is yet to be written, so far it seems to be characterized by the anti-hero rather than the hero. Sports figures such as Michael Jordan, Emmitt Smith and his former Dallas Cowboy's teammate Michael Ervin are also the list. What's interesting to note is that unlike sports heroes of the past who were above reproach in their personal lives during their prime (Mark Spence, Babe Ruth or Jackie Robinson), today's icons have current public criminal histories, and are still accepted as heroes in mainstream culture.

It is a profound cultural change when a person's moral or personal conduct is no longer viewed as relevant to whether or not they are perceived as a hero. For this generation, the attitude has often been that deviant behavior is a norm, rather than an exception. For this generation, cross-dressing rock musician Marilyn Manson and cross-dressing basketball player Dennis Rodman almost always top the list of influential people.

## Chart 2: Influential Events or Experiences

Builders	Baby Boomers	Gen X	Millennial Gen
WW II	Man on the Moon	Waco Disaster and OKC Bombing	Columbine, et al
Radios	Assassination of JFK, RKF, MLK	Gulf War I, Bosnia	September 11th
The Great Depression	Korean and Viet Nam Wars	Shooting of Ronald Regan	Gulf War II and War on Terrorism
Pearl Harbor Day	War on Poverty	Personal Computers	The Internet
Industrialization of America	Television	The Fall of the Berlin Wall	Cell Phones
Creation of Suburbs	Summer of Love and Woodstock	Color Television and Cable TV	Compact Discs and DVDs

<b>Builders</b>	<b>Baby Boomers</b>	<b>Gen X</b>	<b>Millennial Gen</b>
Phonograph and Records	Birth Control & Roe v. Wade	Cordless Phones	Hand-held games, movies on demand
Prohibition	Rights	VCRs and VHS	Metal Detectors
No Sex	8-Track Tapes	Cassette Tapes	Self-Sex
Franchises	45's Records	ATM's	
Nuclear Bomb	Liquor by the Drink	Safe Sex	
	Drive-Thru's		
	Free Sex		

The events that have shaped each generation can be defined as either specific incidents – Pearl Harbor on Dec 7<sup>th</sup> and the World Trade Center attack on Sept 11<sup>th</sup> – or trends within each of the different generations. For example, the Builder Generation might be characterized as the “No Sex” generation, the Baby Boomer’s a “Free Sex” generation, and the Generation X’ers are certainly a “Safe Sex” generation. The Millennial Generation’s views on sex are yet to be seen, although so far they seem to have fairly conservative values.

Consider the wartime experiences of each generation: WWII for the Builders was clearly about the preservation of freedom itself. For the Boomers, the Korean and Viet Nam wars were about different things, depending on your political perspective of the situation. The Generation X’ers wartime experience was characterized by invasion of Grenada, Bosnia, and the Gulf War. The Millennial Generation has now witnessed Gulf War II and Afghanistan, on the big screen at home.

The first Gulf War was our nation’s first video war. On our way home from work we heard on the news that the U.S. had attacked Iraq to pursue the liberation of Kuwait. So, we all went home with a six-pack of Coke (or beer) and a bucket of popcorn, turned on CNN, and watched Bernard Shaw and Peter Arnett lurking atop the Al-Rashid hotel in Baghdad, reporting what was happening. This was quite different from years past, watching Dan Rather traipse around rice paddies in Viet Nam, or the movie theater news reels the Builders watched as small children, of our activities in the Pacific.

Five days later, we watched on TV as the Gulf War concluded, and we went to put out the fires that Saddam Hussein had started in the Oil fields.

Each successive generation learns from the prior generations wartime experiences. One fear for the Millennial Generation was that they might have learned from the X’ers that war is easy; that it’s as simple as a video game, with an outcome that’s always clear and decisive. It’s now known that the Millennial Generation’s war time experiences will be much like the Builder’s, in that it will simply be about the preservation of freedom in America, as a culture, and this should not be taken as lightly as a video game.

## **The Builders**

On list of occasions for the Builder's we almost always have the development of franchises and the introduction of radio. We see the Great Depression, the development of the Interstate transportation system, the nuclear bomb, and the suburbanization of America. The life events which most impacted this generation were the dramatic conclusion of WWII, the preservation of freedom, and the entrepreneurial spirit which gripped America with a "can do anything" attitude.

## **The Baby Boomers**

For the Baby Boomer's, specific events are Woodstock; the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Bobby Kennedy and John Kennedy; and the beginning of space travel. In addition, there were the social movements related to Gay Rights, Women's Rights, Equal Rights and Civil Rights.

It is interesting to note that only 250,000 people attended Woodstock, yet 30 years later when I ask about the events which had the most impact on the generation, this single affair tops the list every time. It wasn't the specific concert that was most important, but the attitudes, values and ideals surrounding Woodstock that permeated the entire generation, even outside of that geographic area.

## **Generation X**

The introduction of the computer as an everyday part of life tops the list here. For the Generation X'ers, "Where were you when Ronald Reagan was shot?" is the same as when Baby Boomer's are asked, "Where were you when JFK was assassinated?" The falling of the Berlin Wall, the end of Communism, and the end of the Cold War were significant events for the Generation X'ers who were coming of age at that time. It meant the end of dual-superpowers, and a belief that America was supreme in all endeavors, again.

Many grand world events have shaped the lives of Generation X'ers who grew up during relative political calm and extreme economic prosperity. And yet, underlying their experiences has typically been an anxiety, mistaken by many as apathy.

## **The Millennial Generation**

For the Millennial Generation the most significant events have been school shootings, the terrorist attacks in Oklahoma City, New York and the Pentagon, and

increasingly unpredictable and random acts of violence. This is also the first generation to be completely technologically literate, right out of the crib.

Not too long ago, I was sitting in my office working on my computer. My then five-year old son was sitting at the other desk, playing a video game on the other computer, and talking to his Grandmother on a cell phone. I looked over at a five-year old who is able to surf the Internet and talk on cell phones and I marveled at the complete integration of technology with this generation's lifestyle.

### Chart 3: Values, Attitudes and Morals

Builders	Baby Boomers	Gen X	Millennial Gen
No Sex	Free Sex	Safe Sex	Self-Sex
Conservatism	Liberalism	Libertarianism	Conservative
Patriotism	Free Love	Autonomy	Selectively Tolerant
Thrift	Share & Care	Tolerance	Multi-taskers
Religious	Conspicuous Consumption	Inventive	Self-Protective
Diligence	Open-Minded	Spiritual	Ingenuity
Perseverance		Protective	Cautious
Creativity			

Each generation has been characterized by a specific set of values, broad trends and social phenomena that help to instill values on a broad scale. Identifying trends within groups of millions is not a perfect working method and does not take into account individuals who may exhibit ideals, values, and attributes far different from the vast majority of people within their generation. However, when I ask groups to identify the values and attributes of each generation, these are the most popular answers:

#### The Builders

- Patriotism, Conservation, Thrift, Spiritual Values, Diligence

Patriotism is one of the values important to this particular generation. They understand clearly the importance of freedom, since they almost observed the loss of freedom early in their social and psychological development.

My friend Ned (who we met in a previous chapter), being the quintessential Builder, did indeed exhibit many of these values. At every house he has lived in, there was always a flagpole planted in the front yard, proudly flying the Stars and Bars. If you drive around town with Ned on holidays, you'll find his patriotism is quite intense and somewhat judgmental. He exhibits anxiety and irritation with those who do not fly their flag on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Veteran's Day, Ground Hog Day or even Secretary's Day.

## The Baby Boomers

Commonly identified values and characteristics most important to the Baby Boomers are often divided into 'before thirty' and 'after thirty' categories.

At first, it seemed as if they wanted to share everything, drop out, sit around in a VW bus and just relax and get along. Once known as the "Free Love - Share and Care Generation", over the last few years, they have been characterized as the "Me Generation", a self-centered group of individuals. 'Conspicuous consumption' is now the norm for the fully adult, SUV driving Baby Boomers. Instead of camping in a tent, this generation spends the night at the Radisson Hotel or the Holiday Sun Spree Resort.

What happened? Why did they change so dramatically after age thirty? The reason seems rather obvious to me: wealth.

The Boomers benefited tremendously from the hard work of the Builder Generation and experienced the luxuries that wealth could buy. Given a choice and opportunity, would you rather stay in a tent on the beach, or in a nice room at the resort? Would you rather drive a VW bus or a Lincoln Navigator? Would you rather have a house built to your own specifications or move into an aging home with problems left behind by the previous owners?

I think the prevalence of luxury, the experience of true wealth, and the acceptance of social differences are the main factors that led to the dramatic change in the values, attributes and characteristics of this generation. They saw their parents and grandparents struggle, and now, since they don't have to pinch pennies and struggle, why should they?

Coming of age also brought a different kind of political consciousness to this generation. As they matured, they discovered that instead of fighting the system from the outside, they could work from within the system to effect change.

## Generation X

Many view Gen X'ers as an apathetic group of whiners who were handed everything they wanted. Clearly, they are an impulsive generation. If the prior generation could be labeled the "Me" generation, Generation X may accurately be labeled the "Me Too" generation.

Along with the deficits, which may characterize any generation, there are some tremendous strengths to be found with the X'ers. They embrace new technology and are not afraid to try - or make - something new.

This incredibly autonomous generation is extremely tolerant. The Builders may be characterized as conservative, the Baby Boomers were once liberal and now slightly more conservative, but the Generation X'ers are perhaps the first truly libertarian generation.

It is interesting to see how the events of a prior generation lead to the values and attributes of a successive generation. The X'ers do not remember a "colored"

water fountain and a "white" water fountain. Although individuals may not morally endorse the lifestyles of other individuals, they are comfortable accepting individuals who are different; look different, think different, speak different languages and are of differing religious beliefs.

A couple of years back, a client told me this story. It was New Years Eve, and my client, being a non-drinker, was at a loss as to where to take his wife. Their young baby sitter suggested they stop by a bar called TNT's. They took her recommendation, went to the bar, and had a blast. At midnight, everyone kissed and toasted with a class of champagne, my friend of course had a glass of club soda. The next day at his mother's house, eating black-eyed peas with his family, the story came out about where he and his wife had partied the night before.

His sister asked, "Isn't that a gay and lesbian bar?"

"Yes it is," my client replied.

His mother looked shocked and appalled. She said, "Is there something you're not telling me?"

"No, Mom," my client chuckled and rolled his eyes.

Actually, he hadn't even thought of it as a gay bar until his sister pointed it out. Although it was a little different at midnight when everyone was kissing, he and his wife had a great time and planned to attend a New Years Eve party there again in the future. To them, it was just a bunch of people having a good time. Sexual preferences were of no concern.

### **The Millennial Generation**

The Millennial Generation is so far considered to be fairly conservative, although their values and attitudes are not fully developed because of their youth. They have an insatiable quest for knowledge and appear to recognize the seriousness of the issues that confront them.

Like the X'ers they are a tolerant bunch, but perhaps not to the same extreme. Where previous generations for various reasons may have had biases against an entire race, religion or country, or be willing to accept all races, all religions and all countries, the Millennial Generation has learned that there are good and bad in every situation, and that you must make judgments based on individuals, rather than groups.

They will have many challenges to face, and although problems and deficits do exist (as with any other generation), without a doubt they are poised to soon become what Tom Brokaw called the Builder Generation: "The (next) greatest generation of them all".

## CHAPTER 4

### STRENGTH FROM WITHIN

Before we begin discussing the presenting problems affecting the younger generations, I want to spend some time focusing on the strengths of the Generation X'ers and the Millennial Generations.

Generation gaps are real. Generation animosity is probably just as real. It is common for society to observe and focus on the negative aspects of successive generations, as each generation tends to see itself and its own experiences as superior and more important than those who follow. Consequently, the younger generations generally take a lot of flack and criticism. While the young Millennial Generation has received its fair share of criticism already, the Generation X'ers have by far received more scathing disparagement than any other living generation.

Some of these criticisms and concerns are genuine, but the strengths of each generation must also be acknowledged, for the strengths are the tools we will use to assist in counseling. We are unable to fix what is wrong with these clients. We cannot restore their family system to what it "should be". We will not be able to pull out their nose rings and bellybutton things and make them look like prior generations. We will not be able to change the economic reality that it is mathematically impossible for 19 million Generation X'ers to support 72 million Baby Boomers. All we can do in inter-generational counseling is take the strengths of each generation and use those strengths for problem solving.

When I conduct individual therapy sessions, I always attempt to identify the strengths of the client. I learned a long time ago that in the era of managed care, limited time and limited resources, fixing what's wrong is not a likely scenario.

Clients who I work with in addiction treatment through the criminal justice system come to me with social problems, family problems, or vocational problems, legal problems, sexual problems, health related problems, personality disorders, and difficulties in education and finances. In a couple of out-patient therapy sessions, or even with the luxury of a few months of residential treatment, fixing what's wrong is really an unrealistic goal in psychotherapy. Psychotherapy has the ability to impact people, not because we fix what is wrong, but because we focus on the strengths of an individual to compensate for the deficits that exist.

In couples counseling, I don't try to fix what has been wrong in 10 or 20 years of marriage, instead I try to take what is right with the individuals and use those strengths as a starting point for positive change in the relationship. How does one go about doing this? I give them an assignment called a Marital Treasure Chest.

Most couples spend years looking at what is wrong with their partner. They remember everything their partner has ever done wrong. They are saving Marital Green Stamps. (By the way, you probably only know what green stamps are if you are a Baby Boomer or a Builder, or maybe an older X'er.) Couples tend to engage in competitive misery with their peers and family, concentrating on how lousy their partner is. After years of collecting Marital Green Stamps remembering things like, "You said on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1987, that my mother wore army boots. And we agreed that every other week you would take out the trash but you failed the last 26 weeks," eventually, couples only remember what is wrong with their partner, and fail to recognize what is right.

I give the couples a spiral notebook with instructions to place the notebook where both partners can easily see it. Every day they must write down one thing of value about their partner. One word, one sentence, one short paragraph. Often, this is the first time in years that an individual has bothered to look at the positive aspects of their partner. It is impossible to fix what has been wrong in the past. It is possible to take what's right with each partner and use it to compensate for the deficits that are present.

In individual counseling, I use the same approach. For example, take the client who is depressed and defines themselves by their deficits; "I'm a procrastinator, I'm inarticulate, I'm boring". Clients always know what's wrong about them. Usually they are frustrated by the inability to identify their own strengths. I have watched clients sit with a blank piece of paper trying to identify three things that were right with them for 20 - 40 minutes before they could put an answer down.

The deficits by which they identify themselves are really the problems in their life. They are the personality characteristics, or as AA calls them, 'personality defects', which have impeded their happiness or their ability to function. Even though their deficits are often realities, their strengths are just as real. Sadly, they are not as practiced at recognizing those strengths as they are at recognizing their deficits.

An individual must stop defining themselves by their deficits, and begin defining themselves by their strengths. To reinforce this, I give my clients a dry erase marker. They are instructed to write down three strengths that they identified on their bathroom mirror. I tell my clients, every morning when you wake up, instead of saying “Oh God, it’s morning,” say, “Good morning, God.” Instead of thinking, “another day with William the depressed, procrastinating, miserable letter carrier,” redefine yourself by your strengths and say, “another day with William the trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent letter carrier.”

These strategies, which are useful in individual counseling, can be applied to inter-generational counseling. We will now identify the strengths of the two generations with which we seem to have the most difficulty.

## **Strengths - Generation X**

X’ers claim autonomy and empowerment as positive aspects of their generation. They have an entrepreneurial spirit. They have respect for the environment, natural resources, and an ability to understand how their behavior affects the world around them. Although some individuals may be selfish, the generation as a whole is giving and loving.

They understand the importance of family relationships. Generation X has not always had healthy family models, but even so, they crave and understand the importance of those relationships. They have a thirst for spiritual satisfaction. They are responsive to the needs of those around them. And they seem to take financial responsibility seriously.

Although all youth must learn the value of money and the need to save, the X Generation as a whole, particularly as it has begun to enter middle age, has prepared well for their financial future. In contrast, a huge segment of the Baby Boomers appear unprepared for retirement. They spent freely, believing they would retire and live off their pension or the wealth of the Builders. But the Builders have lived much longer than expected, which has eaten away their savings, and their children’s potential inheritance. And, many older builders have been forced out of their jobs, to allow for a younger (and less expensive) employee base.

It is a common experience to speak with Generation X couples in counseling who are having financial difficulties, only to discover that they have 50 to 150 thousand dollars in retirement funds. They live paycheck to paycheck and have a hard time doing it, because they have been maxing out their 401K’s and all other available retirement programs. This generation believes they are more likely to see a UFO than a social security check, and they are probably correct. As a result, they do not look to the prior generation for their long-term financial status. Instead, they have developed a discipline and autonomy in regards to finances, which will put them in a much better position later in life than where the Baby Boomers currently find themselves.

In their teens and twenties they were called a generation of ‘slackers’, because they didn’t appear to want to work on someone else’s schedule, or play by other people’s rules. True, they enjoy their personal freedom, but they are not afraid to work hard and try something new. Consequently, it’s not uncommon for them to start their own company. If they see a product that doesn’t work well enough for them, they might alter it, or make a new, better one.

For example, Michael Dell, born in 1965, started selling computers from his college dorm room in 1984. He dropped out to start Dell Computer, which he took public in 1988. Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com, was born in 1964. Jerry Yang, cofounder of Yahoo!, was born in 1968 and became a billionaire while working on his Ph.D. All of these men are listed on the Forbes 400 Richest Americans list.

## **Strengths - The Millennial Generation**

Courage is a hallmark of this generation. Although experiences of fear, anxiety, insecurity, and a lack of personal safety have been plenty, to date they appear capable of rising to these occasions and rarely back down in the face of challenge or confrontation. To their advantage, this generation is completely technologically literate. They are well educated. For this generation, the Master’s degree will be a typical achievement.

The Millennial Generation is also a passionate generation.

When I do crisis intervention training for schools, I am often specifically requested to address the issue of violence. Incredibly, by the time they are five years old, this generation has typically seen five thousand deaths on television. Curious, I counted the instances of mass school violence in recent years. The answer was amazing: There have been 16 youths make the national news because they shot their peers or teachers on school grounds. Sixteen. We watched those news stories and responded to those events by asking: What has happened to this generation? Why are they so violent? Unfortunately, the news skews reality. Although 16 kids did harm their peers and teachers on school grounds, 56,999,984 kids did not.

56,999,984 kids did not harm their peers or teachers.

Instead, often in heroic ways, the majority of these children came to the aide of others in distress. They helped people escape from buildings under siege; they diligently worked to extricate those from rubble in terrorist attacks. These kids donated time, effort and blood following these disasters. They reached out to assist others while putting themselves in danger.

After the Paduka Kentucky shootings and the Westwood Baptist Church shootings, The Millennial Generation rallied around their spiritual values, seeking to understand and to forgive, while at the same time developing diligence and the resolve to avoid future catastrophe.

The strengths of each of these generations must be our focus if we are to create interventions with individuals who are having difficulties.

Counseling, by definition, deals with what is wrong, rather than what is right. There must be a problem of some sort, or the person wouldn't be in our office. As professionals, we should understand that the clients on our caseload in addiction treatment, or the criminal justice setting, or those with educational and behavioral difficulties, are actually a generational minority. It is easy for a counseling professional to become cynical, because 8 to 10 hours a day, 5 or 6 days a week, they only see problems and a focus on what is wrong with people rather than what is right.

A school counselor, exasperated by the problems of "today's youth", was asked how many students were enrolled in the school. The answer was 1200. The next question was, how many students and families are you truly dealing with on a serious level? The answer was 30. Now clearly, 30 out of 1200 does not constitute a majority. Yet, the perception is given that *all* of the students of that generation have these problems.

Another illustration of this tendency to see the world through the counseling lens is my own reaction to a statistic I read a couple of years ago. The article noted that in the last 30 days, 1% of the U.S. population had used cocaine. I saw that statistic and thought to myself, "That's crazy! Only 1% of the U.S. population used cocaine? No way, it can't be that small of a number. In fact, I'm the only one I know that doesn't use cocaine." Then I realized that I am a substance abuse counselor. The reason why everybody I know uses cocaine is because 8 to 10 hours a day, 5 or 6 days a week, I spend my time providing substance abuse counseling treatment services to cocaine addicts. My perception was that everybody uses cocaine. The reality is that 99% of the U.S. population has not used cocaine in the last 30 days.

Identifying the strengths of a generation is essential. We are not going to solve the problems of a generation by dwelling on the deficits. Success may be inspired by drawing on the client's strengths to solve problems.

## CHAPTER 5

### PRESENTING PROBLEMS

In my counseling practice, I have identified six presenting problems commonly found among the younger clients in my caseload that I believe are related to generational experiences. None of these presenting problems is unique to the Millennial Generation or the Generation X'ers; all of these presenting problems occur in each generation. However, I believe the severity or the prevalence of these presenting problems is exacerbated in my younger clients because of their generational experiences.

The six presenting problems are as follows:

1. Difficulty with interpersonal relationships
2. Vocational frustration
3. Widespread addiction
4. Spiritual confusion
5. Impulsivity sometimes mislabeled as hyperactivity
6. Anger and other difficulty with intense human emotions

#### **Presenting Problem #1 - Interpersonal Relationships**

A primary model for healthy relationships historically has been the family system. However, the family system of today is different from the family system of previous generations. The primary model for healthy interpersonal communications and interactions in the past came from the parent-child relationship. As we discussed earlier, the importance of the parent-child relationship has changed. Now, instead of an inter-generational relationship being most important, it appears to be a lateral

relationship; for the younger generations, the sibling and peer relationship takes precedence in importance.

We probably cannot fix the family system problem from a counseling perspective; it's a social dilemma to be addressed in another forum. Our dilemma is to impact the fall-out of this profound social change, which has left our younger clients unable to interact on an interpersonal level with spouses, employers, their own children, and the world around them.

Complicating this new social structure is the new influence of technological communication. The Generation X'ers were the first generation raised with television as a baby-sitter. Consequently, they learned to zone into a television set instead of communicating with the people around them. As the Millennial Generation has come of age, technology has given them the opportunity to appear as if they are interacting with other people. Instead, it provides only a forum for communication rather than the development of true interpersonal relationship skills. Specifically I am talking about the computer, E-mail, chat rooms and technologies like this, which are an integral part of our younger clients' lives.

I've been online since 1984, a lot longer than most people. I am a computer literate professional, and I spend a fair amount of time communicating with people in my world on the Internet. I communicate with people I already know, and I have met new people on the Internet, and have actually gone on to develop friendships with those individuals in my real world.

A few years ago I was part of a list serve - a group of individuals who exchange ideas via email, usually surrounding a specific topic. The topic of this group was repressed memory syndrome, and we would debate ideas about false allegations and problems with the psycho-fads of Disassociative Identity Disorder and repressed memory therapy. Rob, one of the other professionals, and I became great friends on the Internet, regularly exchanging emails both on and off the list serve. He was a psychologist in Midland. Over a period of about a year or so, I felt as if our professional relationship had actually become a genuine friendship. We regularly exchanged ideas, personal information and feelings with one another, just as you would with any friend. I happened to be presenting a workshop at Midland College, so I emailed Rob.

>> Hey, I'm going to be at Midland College next month doing training. If you need some CEU hours, why don't you come to the workshop as my guest? I'd love the chance to meet you in real life, and if you can't make the workshop, give me a call and we'll meet for lunch. <<

I sent the E-mail off, and got a reply the next day:

>> LOL, Richard I will be unable to meet you at the workshop or for lunch. I am not in Midland, Texas, I am in Midland, New Zealand. <<

(NOTE: By the way, if you don't know what "LOL" means you are not from the X or Millennium generations)

For over a year I had exchanged ideas, thoughts and feelings with a person who I believed was my friend. And although we had been friendly on the Internet, the reality is that our relationship would never progress beyond the Internet, because we weren't even in the same hemisphere. When it was my winter, it was his summer; my day was his night, my today was his tomorrow.

Technology has given a generation that has not been adequately prepared for developing interpersonal relationships skills, a forum for believing they are developing relationships while maintaining isolation.

## **Presenting Problem #2 - Vocational Difficulties**

Some of the realities facing the younger generation that present in counseling practice are related to vocational difficulties and vocational fears. I could do a 6-hour workshop just on the economic realities of generational differences.

The term "McJob" and the term "anti-sabbatical" are both used to describe vocational experiences of today's younger generations. A "McJob" is a job an individual takes after they graduate with an advanced degree because they are unable to find work in their chosen field, often because the Baby Boomers have chosen to stay in the workforce longer, therefore decreasing the opportunities available.

The autonomy of today's younger generations and the difficulty the older generations have had with some of their values or appearances have no doubt led to some inter-generational conflicts. The term "anti-sabbatical" specifically refers to today's generation's practice of intentionally taking a job for only one year or so, for the purpose of making only enough money to do something that they would rather do the next year. But their employer generally does not know that this is their plan. A friend of mine did this; she worked hard for a year in a professional position following graduation from college, and when she saved enough money during that first year of work, she quit her job to go backpacking around Europe. That is a perfect example of an "anti-sabbatical".

## **Presenting Problem #3 - Addiction**

In the year 2000, the statistics showed decreasing use of cocaine. Although the decrease in cocaine use was statistically correct, at the same time there was an increase in the use of Heroin. After spending billions of dollars on anti-smoking education and outlawing smoking in almost every public place in America, today's youths smoke cigarettes at a rate greater than any generation since the GI Generation.

Members of Generation X and the Millennial Generation often have difficulties managing emotions, relationships, and behaviors. Consequently, these generations are plagued with addiction related problems.

Since the beginning of time, Man has desired to change the way he feels with mood altering chemicals. Addiction in and of itself is not a new problem. The rates of addiction are so high in our current culture (even after so much money has been spent on education and after a 30 year War on Drugs has been waged), which we must recognize addiction as a problem unique in it's severity to the younger generations with which we are dealing.

### **Presenting Problem #4 - Spiritual Hunger**

The younger generations often present in counseling with spiritual difficulty. 'Spiritual' and 'religious' are terms that are frequently confused with each other. Although religion can be an important part of an individual's spiritual life, in this text, we are concerned with spiritual needs in the broadest sense.

Our spiritual needs have been defined by a number of different writers. William Glasser, in his book Reality Therapy, said, "Our greatest need is to love other people and to be able to receive love in return". In his most recent book, Dr. Glasser says, "Our greatest need simply is a sense of belonging". In the 1960's, Eric Berne wrote the book "I'm Okay, You're Okay." Transactional analysis, of course, at its core meets a spiritual need. A popular author in the field of Christian counseling, Lawrence Kraft, used the words "security and significance" to define our spiritual needs.

When I meet clients in individual or couples counseling, spiritual needs are often at the heart of the difficulties they present. They are spiritually confused and spiritually thirsty.

My background is in ministry; my Bachelor's degree is a B-Min. Having worked in churches, I find it interesting to observe how they have responded to a decrease in attendance over the last 25 years. It seems that most every denomination, from the traditional Episcopalians to the Baptists to the Church of Christ, have all sought to increase attendance by developing "non-traditional" worship services, often labeled "Contemporary Christian Worship". Instead of a traditional sermon and hymns, they sing pop praise-and-worship songs and have a skit instead. Instead of an organ, they may feature acoustic guitars or a full band.

Contrary to their intentions, this church marketing effort really seems tailored to appeal more to the "Baby-Boomers" rather than the younger crowd. The churches have been shocked to discover that despite their time, money and effort for development, Contemporary Christian Worship services have not increased attendance.

The Baby Boomers have already been to church; the Builders took them to church when they were children. If they are not going to church now, it is either because they do not know what church is all about or because for one reason or

another, they decided to drop out. These new worship services, probably designed by Baby Boomers, meet the style and tradition with which Baby Boomers are most comfortable.

The Generations X'ers and the Millennial Generation were not always taken to church by their Baby Boomer parents. As a result, they do not know what church is all about. The younger generations of today crave answers to spiritual need rather than experience of spiritual power. Consequently, contemporary Christian worship services have failed to create excitement on Sunday morning, simply due to their style and delivery.

If you turn on any alternative music format radio station, you will hear songs that often reflect a spiritual quest. A few years ago, a Grammy Award winner was a woman who simply put a childhood prayer into a rock and roll song. A band called "Eels" has a song called Novocain for the Soul. The lyrics say, "give me something to fill this hole." A band called "Everclear" has a song called Why I don't Believe in God. These and many others certainly reflect a spiritual thirst.

Turn on the radio and listen to alternative music stations. There is more music from this generation asking spiritual questions, demanding spiritual solutions than during any other generation.

## **Presenting Problem #5 - Impulsivity**

The Generation X'ers/Millennial Generation grew up with drive-through windows, ATMs and bags of microwave popcorn. They expect to get what they want - now. This is certainly reflected by everyday behavior in other important areas of life.

In a popular song in the mid-90's, by a band called, "Four Non-Blondes," the lead singer crooned "I'm 25 years old and I'm still trying to get up this great big hill of hope to my destination." In the song, the singer seemed to be frustrated that by 25 years of age, she had not yet achieved everything that she had hoped to achieve.

My friend Jack bought his first Cadillac when he was in his 80's. I asked him why he bought a Cadillac; he had always driven Buick's before. Jack said, "Richard, I always wanted a Cadillac and so I bought one." This man waited his entire life to finally get what he always wanted and was content to wait. Today's generation is typified by their desire for instant gratification.

Think about the simple things in life: Popcorn, for example. Years ago, popcorn was cooked by heating oil in a large pot. Two kernels were placed in the oil and when those kernels finally popped, you could pour in the rest of the popcorn, it took about 10-15 minutes. Then, in the late 60's and early 70's the coolest invention of all arrived - Jiffy Pop. But, it burned. Jiffy Pop soon gave way to an even more efficient way to make popcorn - the air popper. The only problem with the air popper was that the popcorn tasted like a cardboard box and there was no way to get the butter to drip over all of the pieces of popcorn without making a mess. Finally, in 80's, microwave popcorn solved all the problems. I just recently bought a new microwave and I notice

you no longer have to read the popcorn bag to find out how many minutes it must cook. The new microwave ovens have a button simply labeled “large popcorn” and another button labeled “small popcorn.”

The other day, I was hungry at lunchtime, so I went to a fast food place. I pulled into the drive-thru at hamburger stand #1 and there were 3 cars in front of me. I thought, “That is too long to wait.” I then backed out of line and drove over to hamburger stand #2, where there was only one car in line.

This generation demands what they want NOW.

### **Presenting Problem #6 - Intense Emotions**

The 6th presenting problem I see manifesting among my younger clients is anger and extreme difficulty in handling intense emotions. Many of the things this generation is angry about are legitimate issues.

- Dissolution of the traditional family structure and a fatherless America becoming the norm are legitimate reasons for a generation to be angry.
- Economic frustrations facing the younger generation that both major political parties refuse to address in any significant manner are legitimate issues for a generation to be angry about.
- A lack of security present in the current generation is the result of political policies related to immigration, international weapon sales and the failure of governmental leaders to address international concerns, are legitimate reasons for a generation to be angry.

Anger with specific family members, segments of society, with the government and with ones self all seem to be characteristic. But legitimate or not, much of this anger is quite problematic. Ill prepared to efficiently manage emotional expressions and their intensity, and raised on psychiatry’s lie that all human conditions are caused by a serotonin or dopamine problem in the brain, this generation is frequently surprised and frustrated when psychotropics fail to provide instant relief from emotional stressors.

The challenge for clinicians is taking generational strengths and using them to help individuals manage their intense emotional difficulties. We must help this generation become proactive rather than reactive.

## CHAPTER 6

### Cross-Cultural Counseling Skills Applied to Inter-Generational Counseling

For several years, I was licensed by the state of Texas as a Chemical Dependency Counselor. The Texas state licensing agency, TCADA, (Texas Commission for Alcohol and Drug Abuse), requires documentation of continuing education in cross-cultural counseling. It is interesting though, that TCADA will only accept cross-cultural counseling workshops that focus on a couple of specific issues. For example, a workshop on racial differences or sexual orientation count as cross-cultural counseling, however, a workshop on inter-generational counseling does not qualify.

In training workshops, I typically see three or four different racial groups and six or seven different ethnic groups in the room. However, there are usually 50 or 100 different cultural experiences in the room. I often have more in common with people who do not look like me than with people who do. I may not have the same sexual experiences or preferences as some other people; however, I may have more in common with them than I do with some people who behave similarly to me sexually.

When we talk about cross-cultural counseling and diversity, we are most often speaking about racial or sexual differences between one group and another. In reality, however, anything that separates one person's experiences from another person's experiences is a cultural difference. Many sociologists have pointed out that racial factors rarely separate individuals; the greatest influencing factors in individual differences are economic experiences.

It is important for us to recognize that inter-generational differences are cross-cultural differences. This kind of suffering is probably as important to understanding human conduct and human behavior as religious experiences, racial identification or ethnic characteristics. Inter-generational experiences are at least, if not more, influential as these factors in a person's life.

I want to address six strategies for cross-cultural counseling. These six strategies can all be applied to individual counseling with those whose generational experiences are different from our own. Whether you are a young counselor working with older clients or an old counselor working with young clients, implementing these

cross-cultural counseling skills during inter-generational counseling situations can be effective in managing the therapeutic process.

### **Skill #1 - Understand Your Client's Communication Patterns**

25% of the English language we use today did not exist 40 years ago, and many of the words we use today have different meanings for different generations. Not too long ago, an older counselor said to me that he always found it difficult to work with the new substance abusers because when he was growing up, a “crack salesperson” was someone who was really good at selling anything.

When we realize that our clients, who are different from us, speak a different language than us, we can then recognize our need to learn communication patterns so that we can be effective with a group of different individuals.

About a decade ago, working with adolescents in a residential treatment setting, I was exposed to some new words. Time marches on and now these are all old words, but they will still serve for the example. One day, one of the kids in group called one of the other kids, a “fat dime.” So, I immediately confronted the jerk for his rude behavior towards the girl. The entire group looked at me as if I was an idiot. I held my ground and told them that disrespect in the therapy group would not be tolerated.

Well, I really had egg on my face when the group pointed out that fat was not f-a-t, it was p-h-a-t and means “good” and a dime was a ten (as in “a perfect 10”). They guy I thought was a jerk had essentially called the girl a cool name. Because I did not understand the language of my clients, to them, I appeared to be out of touch and ignorant.

A few weeks later, this same group was sitting out on the porch on a Friday afternoon. Many of the group members were planning to go on a weekend pass. Some of the adolescents were talking about kicking back and chilling by smoking a “blunt” over the weekend. It was a new word that a new generation had just begun to use.

I thought I understood the reference. I told the group that I too might kick back and smoke a blunt over the weekend. They looked at me and asked, “You like toking up on a blunt?” And I said, “Certainly, especially after a big Mexican dinner or late in the evening when I’m getting ready for bed.” They all chuckled and smiled at one another and then went on their merry way.

After some of the kids had left, a few that remained filled me in. They said, “Richard, do you really like to smoke a blunt?”

I said, “Sure.”

They said, “And you really think it’s okay if these guys smoke a blunt over the weekend?”

Feeling progressive, I replied, “Surely kids in treatment have problems far more severe to address than the desire to smoke a Swisher Sweet cigar on the weekend.”

The kids began to laugh, and said, “Is that what you think a blunt is? Well, the blunts, they were talking about might have started in the Swisher Sweet factory, but by the time they get them this weekend, they’ll be filled with marijuana and those boys will be as high as kites.”

Oops. “They were planning to get high this weekend?”  
“Yep.”

“They were discussing their plans to get high, right in front of me, their substance abuse counselor?”

“Yep.”

More egg. Scrambled. I did not know what they were talking about because I did not understand their language.

Frustrated by this incident, I decided to do something about. I walked around the dorm room and looked at their music CD’s. At that time, the bands were Toad the Wet Sprocket, Tripping Daisies, Nirvana and Run DMC. I visited Tower Records in Austin and walked up to the clerk who had a nose-ring tied with a chain to his lover’s nipple and purple hair sticking out of his head. I told him that I needed \$100.00 worth of this music. I really didn’t care which ones he sold me because I didn’t know what any of it was. He picked up a handful of CD’s, and charged me \$100.00. I got in my truck and began listening to the music and reading the lyric sheets that came with the CD’s.

Each generation expresses their own ideas and experiences using their own language in their own music. When finished my study, I had learned a few things. Surprisingly, I learned that I actually liked some of their music, but more importantly, I now understood the language of my clients.

A long time has elapsed since that experience and because words and times change, I continue to learn the language of today’s generation. I’ve found that the easiest and cheapest way of doing it is to simply make an effort to turn on MTV once a week or so, because MTV always plays the current hits.

When we hear young people use words we are not familiar with, we are often hesitant to admit that we’re ignorant. I have found that when we ask the people whose experiences are different to clarify what they mean by the words that they use, they are usually more than happy to share this information.

The comedian Chris Rock released a CD called Bigger, Better and Blacker. There were several cuts on the CD of interest to me and interspersed between them

was a running joke about “Words of Wisdom from the ODB”. Chris Rock is funny, so I knew the running joke had to be funny, but I didn’t get it.

My cultural experiences in life are different from Chris Rock’s. I grew up in suburban Chicago; he grew up in urban Los Angeles. Chris Rock is an African American; I am not. Chris Rock grew up in poverty; I did not. Chris Rock grew up near a beach; I grew up in the harsh winters of Northern Illinois. Although our ages are close, our experiences were totally different.

I know most of the Community Supervision Officers in the city of Dallas because I do training for that department on a regular basis. During one of the breaks, I noticed a group of 25 to 35 year old African American officers standing around talking. These men were my friends and coworkers, so I knew these officers would be able to explain the joke to me.

I asked them, “‘Words of Wisdom from the ODB’, what is that?”

The whole group burst out laughing, looked at me and at the same time said “Old Dirty Bastard.”

I asked, “Who is the Old Dirty Bastard?”

They said, “If you don’t get it, you don’t listen to urban rock. The Old Dirty Bastard is to rap music as Elvis Presley is to rock and roll.”

The Old Dirty Bastard destroyed his own life. He spent time in prison and he spent time in an asylum. The joke is that nobody would ever want to accept words of wisdom from the ODB. Because these officers had a cultural experience and a racial identification much closer to Chris Rock’s than my own, they understood the joke. Because I had the courage to ask about the language I did not understand, they were able to explain the joke to me and now I get it.

It is essential for clinicians to develop and implement strategies that allow us to understand our client’s language.

## **Skill #2 - Motivation and Behavior**

Motivation and behavior are related. I get calls from people who ask, “Is tattooing bad? Is nose piercing bad? Is eyebrow piercing bad? Is belly-button piercing bad?” And so on. When we work with people who are different from us, the behaviors we see are not necessarily what we should be looking at in determining health or unhealthiness. The motivation should be of primary interest and concern.

Tattooing, for example, is one of the latest rages among the Generation X’ers and the Millennial Generation. I was in a Kinko’s Copy Center preparing for a training session, and to my right there was an approximately 25-year-old female dressed in a beige business suite: a beige business skirt with a beige blouse and matching pumps. Her long hair was pulled back with a beige bow that matched her outfit. She was attractive and she caught my eye. On her ankle, under her beige nylons, she had a

tattoo of a butterfly. We each went about conducting our business and I left the store.

Driving down the road later I thought, “Wow, butterfly.” I didn’t think about it again, until about two weeks later.

Driving through Austin on I-35, I pulled off the highway and up to a Jack-in-the-Box drive through window to refill my big ice tea for the ride home. Nearby is a Planet K head shop. (That’s where you buy your pipes, rolling papers and mystical pictures to stare at when you’re in a chill’n and groove’n mood.) While waiting at the drive through window, I watched a man saunter out of Planet K. He wore no shirt, one shoe and torn jeans. His head was shaved bald. As he walked closer to my car, I made sure the door was locked. As he came closer, I could see that across the whole left side of his shaved head was a tattoo of a spider web. Finally, he was close enough that I was able to make out the spider tattooed in the corner of his eye, as if it were crawling out of the web and into his eye socket.

When my order was filled, I got my big ice tea and I headed up Interstate 35, and thought, “Wow, spider web”.

Two tattoos, the same behavior. But, these two tattoos were received for two entirely different motivations. One tattoo was healthy, the other unhealthy. What’s the difference? A woman who most likely believed that the butterfly tattoo was beautiful acquired the first tattoo. You personally might not want to wear a butterfly forever, but her motivation was probably, “Butterflies are pretty, and I would like to keep one on my ankle for eternity.” It probably was that simple.

Why does the man leaving the Planet K have a spider web tattooed across his head with a spider crawling into his eye socket? I could be wrong, but I don’t believe he consciously understood the significance of this decision as he was sitting in the tattoo parlor, wondering what to have tattooed across his head. I do believe that at a subconscious level he chose to get a tattoo that would shock and alienate others. He most likely felt that society did not accept him for who he was.

This is likely true, and probably because of his unhealthy actions in life. He chose to get a tattoo with a spider web across the left side of his head, not because he thought spider webs were beautiful, but because he wanted something so repulsive and shocking that a first glance would alienate him. In his own mind, he could then justify his continued irresponsible life choices by believing it was not his fault that life was difficult. In his mind, society rejected him without first getting to know him.

Another example of assessing motivation over behavior comes from our professional ranks. In a conversation with an employer of counselors, I was asked about situation in which they had hired a new counselor. When hired, the woman looked “normal”; later, she adopted an eyebrow ring. The agency had no dress code and the director was not sure what to do about this problem. She told me the new counselor was a 29-year-old female, and good at her job.

I asked the director (realizing that she was in her late 50’s), “Why do you think she got the eyebrow ring?”

The director replied that when asked the same question, the counselor had simply stated that she thought it was attractive. I told the director not to worry about it and to let her continue to wear her eyebrow ring.

She said, “But it’s repulsive! What do you mean let her wear her eyebrow ring? That’s just inappropriate.”

My response was not what she wanted to hear. I said, “No. If you had told me that her reason for wearing an eyebrow ring was because as a young counselor she felt the need to be more like her clients in order to be accepted by them, I would have told you to yank the eyebrow ring out. But, that is not what you told me. You told me she actually thinks it is beautiful. And, although the behavior here may be different from what you do in your own life, the motivation for her action is not an unhealthy thing at all.”

### **Skill #3 - Empathy and Identification**

Recognition of the difference between empathy and identification is the third strategy from cross-cultural counseling that we may apply to inter-generational counseling. In graduate school, most of us had a course on developing advanced accurate empathy and creating empathetic therapeutic environments for dealing with clients. I learned in graduate school that empathy is not being like someone; it’s simply hearing someone.

Many new counselors make the mistake of believing that in order to be effective with a client they must identify with the client. In order to be effective counselors we must empathize with our clients, but empathy is not identification.

My life experiences are not those of all of my clients. However, I have still been effective with clients who are very different from me from generational, racial, or financial perspectives. This is not because I have become like my clients or can relate directly to their experiences, but because I simply listen to my clients.

My clients don’t care if I am just like them. All they really care about is do I listen to them, and respect them. After I bought all those CDs and learned the language of my clients, I learned I really did like some of their music, I actually like “Lords of Acid” and “Nirvana”, and fast forward to the new century, I like “Evanescence” even some of “Eminem’s” music.

However, when kids, or even adults in treatment ask what kind of music I listen to, I don’t try to impress them with how hip I am or how much like them I might be. Instead, I tell them, “What I really like is ABBA, the Bee Gees, and the sound track to Grease.” The reality is that although I have expanded my musical taste in recent years, I grew up in the Disco Generation, and that is still the kind of music I like best.

When I tell kids that I like disco, sometimes they snicker. But when they start rapping the lyrics to a “Temple 6” Mafia song, and I chime in with them, they understand that even though I’m not just like them, I still understand them.

Empathy goes much further in counseling than identification ever will.

#### **Skill #4 - Values, Beliefs, and Norms**

The fourth hallmark of cross-cultural counseling is the recognition that cultural experiences are a combination of a person's values, beliefs and norms. Our goal in counseling is not to help our clients become more like people of our own generation, but to help our clients become the best them that they can be. We must recognize that our inter-generational client's values, beliefs, and norms are different from ours - and that is OK. We become malignantly narcissistic when we fail to respect our client's values, beliefs, and norms, and try to force them into a mold that may be more recognizable to us as 'good'.

An example of this comes from my experience working at an outpatient adolescent therapy program. One of the core values of this program was to help adolescents to either graduate from high school, attain a GED, or at least prepare for a GED. A client referred to us from Pushmataha County Oklahoma was brought into our treatment program in Tulsa. When he arrived, we explained to him that his therapeutic success would be contingent upon his earning a GED. He said to us in that very first client meeting, "But I don't need no GED."

We explained to him that he did need a GED; that education was a hallmark of success and would open vast opportunities for him. Then if he got his education, we could get him social service money and he could do something really cool in life like attending Okmulgee Vo-Tech, where he could get a certificate in heating and Air conditioning. This achievement would enable him to move out of Pushmataha County, move to Oklahoma City, and make \$30 dollars an hour.

His response was, "But I don't want to leave Pushmataha County Oklahoma, and I don't need no GED. I'm not interested in no heating and air conditioning."

We said to him, "If you are not willing to invest in your own treatment by completing your education, then this program has nothing to offer you."

The treatment program discharged him as a non-compliant client, sending him back to the referring judge because he didn't accept our values as his values.

I look back on that case now and I realize how much I learned. Person ally, I believe education is important and education is a hallmark of success and brings about opportunity. These are my values and the values of most of the members of my generation. However, they were not the values and beliefs of that kid from Pushmataha.

The treatment program did that client a disservice, because, as he said, he "didn't need no GED". What he needed was for us to teach him the skills of functioning in a healthy way without breaking the local law and ticking off the Judge

who had sent him to treatment in the first place. He recognized this fact, even when we did not.

## **Skill #5 - Relationship To Client**

We must learn how to develop a relationship with the client. Today's younger generations value genuineness more than anything else in the counseling process.

I have only had one client ask me the specifics of where I received my degree and who did my clinical supervision. My clients don't care what degree I have, or whether it is an MS an MA or an MSW. They don't care if my Bachelor's degree is in ministry or science. They don't care if I have a PhD or a PsycD or a DSW. What my clients care about is whether or not I care about them.

In the era of managed care, limited time, and limited resources, it is easy for us to become encumbered by administrative tasks and fall into the trap of treating our clients as if they are patient number 304-72C. Genuineness can make or break a course of treatment.

I am, very proud of my education. I worked hard for my Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree and my Master's degree. When I graduated with my Masters and began practicing psychotherapy, I took all of my diplomas down to the frame shop and had them matted and framed. Because I was proud of my educational achievements, I hung them in my office for all to see. I soon realized the display had an unintended effect: Clients would look at my wall and they would think, "Wow, he's so different from me, there's no way he can really help a person in my situation."

In truth, even though I had achieved a high level of education, I was actually much more like my clients than they would ever know. Most clinicians can relate to the experience of listening to a client speaking and feeling like it's your words coming out of their mouth. The display of my diplomas discouraged relationships with my clients because of their perception that I must be too different from them. I took the diplomas off the wall and replaced them with art from the shopping mall.

As you enter my office now, you will find old movie poster and posters that have cute little sayings on them like quotes from Everything I Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten. My favorite poster of all (remember I'm a substance abuse counselor) is Winnie the Pooh with his head stuck in the honey tree. Christopher Robin, Eyeore, Piglett and the other characters from the Winnie the Pooh stories are all lined up behind Pooh trying to pull him out of the honey tree, and the caption underneath says, "It all comes from loving honey too much."

I am still proud of my educational achievements but I've learned that in order to establish a relationship with my clients, I must first appear genuine to them, rather than just educated.

## **SKILL #6 - STYLE AND APPROACH**

Learning to recognize a style and approach that meets our clients at their particular point of need - and developing a style and approach that we are most comfortable with - is a requirement. This means we must balance our own needs with a style and approach to which our clients respond.

Teachers who are accustomed to giving 50-minute lectures must learn that the generation they are now teaching will not respond readily to their old strategies. They must now learn how to create commercials every 11 ½ minutes in the classroom, whether they like it or not. How do you create a classroom commercial?

- Interaction with the students,
- Group activity,
- Teach two subjects at the same time,
- Use a fact of the day at periodic intervals throughout the hour,
- Be creative.

It is essential to create a style and approach that is dynamic, motivational, and draws attention specifically to the topic at hand.

Creating a style and approach based on the current younger generation's experiences is a challenge for all clinicians, but the response by clients is dramatic and influences the efficacy of the counseling.

## CHAPTER 7

### INTERVENTIONS

Is it impossible to impact the presenting problems of the younger generations?

I believe the answer to this is, “yes.” Counseling cannot fix all problems and is limited in its ability to truly influence a generation as a whole.

To address many of today’s presenting problems, spiritual, cultural and economic solutions must be developed and provided by the client’s religious, clinical, and educational communities.

Younger clients often present with problems related to:

- Addiction
- Vocational difficulties
- Emotional lability
- Relationship difficulties

and other presenting problems, which are in part exacerbated by their generational experiences.

We need to create interventions to decrease the severity of client condition and to allow maturation in a manner consistent with healthy psychological living.

#### **Intervention #1 - Learn About Your Client**

The first intervention actually is not a task for the client, but for us, the clinicians. As professionals, we need to learn about the values, beliefs and norms of the clients on our caseload. It is our responsibility to learn what they respond to and what they reject. We must then invent and implement consistent strategies of treatment and intervention that will work, based on their specifications, not ours.

Too often, we take for granted the manner in which our clients present. We assume that our clients come to us with the same level of knowledge, experience, and understanding about situations that we have. We expect them to share our values, beliefs and norms, and we chastise them (as an intervention) when we find this to be untrue.

Sometimes we utilize a behavioral modification treatment program. This may be successful in an inpatient psychiatric facility, but overall, this strategy does our clients very little good outside of an artificial environment.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the clinician to learn how to reach a generation whose experiences are different from theirs. It is up to us to become educated, and it is up to us to use this education in a dynamic manner to create intervention strategies that work.

My advice and challenge to all professionals is simple: If you find yourself working with people who are different than you, listen to their music, read their books, attend their gatherings, go to their worship services, see them in action, listen to them and attend to them. Through these actions, mental health professionals will become adequately equipped to provide intervention strategies that can produce lasting change for the benefit of our clients.

## **Intervention #2 - Therapeutic Big Macs**

One essential strategy for effectively impacting the next generation is to provide therapeutic Big Macs. What I am talking about are tasks or homework assignments, which are provided to allow clients to focus on the immediate goals of treatment between contacts or sessions.

In the good old days, it was enough to simply meet with a client once a week in outpatient therapy, and review with the client what had happened in the prior week. However, exciting things surround these generations, many of which are far more exciting than the paths or goals of therapy.

Therefore, when a client leaves our office, they are inundated with messages contrary to the goals established in treatment. They must split their attention between video games, peer groups, fast dollars, exciting gadgets, toys and information - stimulation from every corner of the planet. Even our most disciplined and compliant clients often lose sight of the therapeutic goals between sessions. They forget on what they were supposed to be working.

Therapeutic Big Macs keep them focused on the process of making change. These assignments may be:

- Written
- Internet research
- A daily thought
- A daily question
- An activity such as journaling.

The point is to keep them focused during the week or even every day between contacts, to reinforce the work done in therapy.

For clients with anger or anxiety difficulties (which are common for this generation), one of my favorite assignments is journaling, which helps the client to scale their emotional experiences, by putting each into perspective. This also helps them develop alternative coping strategies for responding to these emotions, based on ideas that come from within the clients themselves, not on ideas that come from the therapist.

The journaling assignment has two parts. Let's say the emotion to work on is anger. For the first part of this assignment, I have my client write "anger" in their journal every day. Then, on a scale of 1 to 10, with "1" being the lowest and "10" being the highest, they rank the intensity that they experienced that emotion.

### **ANGER**

**Rate: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

In other words, a client who has difficulty with anger will write "anger" in their journal for the next 7 days. Each day they identify their level of anger at their angriest point during the day, i.e. level 3, level 5, level 7 and maybe a level 10.

This allows my client to see that they are neither angry, nor un-angry, but that they are angry at a specific level. When our clients understand that emotions are not simply generically pleasant or unpleasant, but manifest at different levels of intensities, they are able to scale the importance of that emotion into perspective.

For the second part of the journaling assignment, I ask my clients to identify their response when they felt that level of emotional intensity, by using a set of simple questions:

- **What did you do?**
- **Was it a healthy response? Or was it an unhealthy response?**

If the client decides their response was healthy, that is the end of the day's journaling. If the client decides their response was unhealthy, there is one more question to answer.

- **What else could you have done, when you felt this level of anger?**

At the end of 30 days, the client has in hand a set of scales that not only show their emotional difficulties scaled into perspective, but also a list of coping strategies and positive solutions, that came from within themselves.

They now have essentially a self-created recipe book of positive coping strategies - that they have already implemented - which can be used in future situation. Self-confrontation is always a more effective tool in therapy than a therapist originated confrontation.

### **Intervention #3 - Genuineness**

In a therapeutic relationship, younger clients are often most concerned about assurances that the therapist cares about them. I have never met a therapist who got in the field because they wanted to make the big bucks. Most of us became involved primarily because we like helping people make positive changes in their lives. Dealing with professional realities such as managed care, limited time, limited resources, budgetary allocations and funding cutbacks, high caseloads and demands from administration as well as clients, it's easy to lose sight of why we entered the counseling profession. Ultimately, it's because we enjoy helping people, and it is essential that we communicate this to our clients.

It is easy to become overwhelmed with the responsibilities, obligations, and administrative tasks related to counseling. None-the-less, if we fail to communicate to our younger clients a genuine desire to assist them, we will lose the ability to create and manage our therapeutic relationship.

Every therapist has had a client confront them and say something along the lines of, "You're just here for the money!" I respond to my clients with honesty and tell them, "You are correct; I am here for the money. This is what I choose to do for a living. I choose to do this to pay my mortgage, make my car payment, and buy my groceries. So, you are right. But, I do this to earn money instead of flying planes or working at a bank or selling shoes, because I actually care about clients like you." Genuineness.

I mentioned earlier that I removed my framed degrees from the walls of my office. I did this to give my clients an opportunity to meet me and see me as a person, not simply as a professional, and to remove any perceptual wedge between my clients and me.

### **Intervention #4 - Create Commercials**

When working with younger generations in therapy, teaching, or parenting, we must recognize that they have been programmed for a commercial break every 11½ minutes. We will only be effective when we recognize that this is not a psychiatric illness, but a culturally learned pattern of behavior. Although this pattern may frustrate those of us from older generations, it is a present day reality.

Traditional therapy is boring. One person sits at a 45-degree angle from another person, leaning forward with open body posture and speaks. Our younger clients are bored with our traditional approach, and I think it is essential to bring excitement to the therapeutic process. There may be times when the traditional 50-minute therapy session is appropriate, or when the 50-minute therapy session is simply required, but who decided that people get well in 50-minute increments? Sometimes a shorter period may be more appropriate with a client, or an intensive longer period may be appropriate.

In situations that require a 50-minute session, creating commercials may be as simple as intentionally shifting the subject every 10-15 minutes or so, or even change

places with the client and sit in a different chair.

An example of this and the administrative reaction to this style can be summed up by this example. The client in this example was a 16-year-old schizophrenic at a treatment facility that required 50-minute sessions. It is hard enough to provide therapy to schizophrenics in a 50-minute time frame, much less 16-year-old schizophrenics. After 20 minutes of sitting at a 45-degree angle and processing things, I said to my client, who was becoming agitated and unable to focus, "Hey, let's walk out to the cafeteria and get a coke." We walked to the cafeteria and returned to my office. We talked for another 10 to 15 minutes. At that point, he again became disinterested and unable to focus. So, I suggested, "We have a couple of minutes left, why don't we sit on the porch at the picnic table and spend our last 10 minutes out there?" We moved to the picnic table and concluded our session outside.

Later that afternoon, I was called into the hospital administrator's office. The hospital administrator glared at me and said,

"You know, Richard, we provide 50-minute sessions here."

I replied, "I am aware of that"

They said, "I observed your afternoon session."

"Oh? And what did you observe?"

They said, "You spent about 20 minutes talking to him and then wondered off to get a coke; you came back to the office, spent a couple of more minutes with him, and then walked out to the patio area for the last 10 minutes."

I said, "Yes, that's what happened."

She said, "A 50-minute session is a 50-minute session."

Frustrated, I said, "It was a 50-minute session; it was simply broken up into three different segments. And for once, it was a productive session."

Providing care to our clients at their particular point of need rather than remaining tethered by requirements to do things "the way we have always done it before" is essential for effectively reaching this generation.

When I conduct workshops and training sessions, I will usually take two small breaks in the morning and two small breaks in the afternoon, instead of the traditional single long morning and afternoon break. At the bottom of each hour, I will read a poem, a funny E-mail, or break our group up into smaller groups for 5 or 10 minutes to discuss the concepts we talked about in the prior hour.

At the conclusion of the training sessions, people usually say to me, "Wow, Richard, the time sure went by quickly!" I smile and reply, "The time is the same as at any other workshop."

But, as Einstein said, it is relative. Instead of teaching 50 minutes at a time, I alter my teaching method halfway through each hour for a couple of minutes. I have threaded commercials throughout the training day, and people like it.

Those commercials allow my clients to maintain and/or regain focus on the educational tasks at hand, and typically provide professionals with a stress-free training day that seems to just zoom by.

## **Intervention #5 - Options Creation**

One of the first therapeutic workbooks I put together for client use was called “Options Equal Solutions.” That workbook has been out of print for a number of years now. However, much of the content has been utilized in some of my newer publications, and I still use some of those work sheets for clients that I see in private practice.

I am a firm believer that people only know how to do what they know how to do, and they don’t know how to do anything else. When I get angry, I have about 20 different behavioral options to choose from, while my clients typically only have one or two. Our younger clients have access to many resources the older generations did not, but they do not seem as able to use those resources to create options.

They spent their first 20 years sitting in front of the television baby-sitter, rather than implementing solutions to life’s challenges and difficulties. When we work with younger clients, it is important to create interventions that help our clients to explore optional behavior.

I have worked with hundreds of addicts. If you ask an addict why they use, especially a younger addict, they will usually tell you that there’s nothing else to do, or that they are bored.

A 16-year-old client from Coweta, Oklahoma was in trouble with the school system because he had been caught drinking at a high school football game. His mother was also concerned because, although she was unable to prove it, she believed that he had been smoking pot with some of the other boys from school. The “last straw on the camel’s back” came when he was arrested cruising up and down Main Street with some of his friends, in the back of a pickup truck, drinking beer.

I asked him, “Why is it that you drink and use drugs?”

He said, “I live in Coweta, Oklahoma, dude. What else is there to do?”

I thought about it for a minute. And, well, I couldn’t think of anything to do in Coweta, Oklahoma either.

So, I said, “Although I don’t know what else you could do in Coweta when you’re bored, I do know that there must be at least one other thing you could do.”

In my frustration, I gave him an assignment that probably should have set him

up for failure. I handed him a piece of paper and told him to come up with 100 things you can do in Coweta when you're bored, other than drink and do drugs. I told him that he would not be able to leave until he was finished with the list. Now he was frustrated, but he took a pencil and paper and went off in the corner he started writing.

I walked out of the room for a moment and thought that maybe 100 different things was a harsh assignment. However, I had given those instructions, so I was going to stick to it. It took him almost 50 minutes to come up with a list, and I figured he would be pretty mad. But when he brought it to me, he was excited and said, "Dude, can you believe it? I came up with 100 different things I could do when I am bored other than get high!"

He did mention that he might still get high; yet, he had a list, and his ideas were on it.

I looked over the list and was amazed. I had figured that most of the things on the list would be passive-aggressive or angry responses. Instead, most were actually healthy. A few of them were pointless and one was antisocial, but for the most part, it was a pretty good list.

He was so excited about his success in completing the list that he asked a very important question: "Can I take this and show it to the rest of the therapy group?" My answer was a shocked, "Uh, yes! You certainly may."

So we went off to group therapy and he started by sharing his list: "Hey, I thought of 100 things you could do other than use drugs when you're bored!" The group teased him: "No way! There's nothing else you can do, and certainly not 100 different things!" In defiance, and with pride, he read his entire list to the group. Amazingly, they became so excited by what they heard that they asked if they could paint the boring walls of the group therapy room with this list of 100 different things.

Options Creation. It's a tool for influencing the next generation. Any activity we can devise that will help our clients to create options and alternatives will be effective.

## **Intervention #6 - Music**

I like to use music in patient education and therapy groups. Use the music that today's generation is listening to, reprint the lyric sheets and play those songs as a way of opening dialog with clients in therapy and educational group settings. It's also useful in individual therapy.

Years ago, I hosted a radio program called the "Late Show" on a Christian radio station in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It was not a popular show because it was not a popular station. One night, I gave away dinner for two to the third caller and only two people called, so I ended up eating dinner that night with my brother-in-law. Despite being a low power AM station, it was an interesting show and a bit controversial, since it was a Christian music station and I played secular songs.

I played the songs that teens were actually listening to at the time, then I would play a Christian music song that either echoed or was the antithesis to a theme in popular music. Listeners would call in and we would talk about those themes. For a low power station in the middle of nowhere, it generated a lot of phone calls. It became popular because I was using the familiar cultural experiences of a specific group to target a message to that particular group.

Whether used in a radio show, a classroom or a therapy group, this technique has tremendous validity, and it's a comfortable way to open a dialog with clients and talk about subjects that they might otherwise be uncomfortable discussing.

### **Intervention #7 - Teach the Skills that Build Healthy Relationships**

Today's younger generations grew up with the latchkey and divorced parents, and spend their free time sitting in Internet chat rooms creating cyber relationships. They have not learned how to meet new people in person, how to communicate assertively, or how to develop healthy relationships. They do know how to seek instant gratification from a relationship, sex or co-misery with their peers, but they do not know how to develop intimacy and true friendships.

There are many books out there on how to develop a relationship. The easiest strategy for teaching people to build intimate relationships is to teach assertive communication. We put together a therapeutic workbook called, "Getting Along, A Guide for Healthy Interactions." I expected to sell the workbook to a few marriage and family therapists. Instead, it sold to thousands of professionals, ranging from community supervision officers to individual therapists and family counselors. We have received tremendous feedback from all of those individuals because the book teaches how to build healthy relationships based on assertive communication - in language that people understand.

In the world of therapy, we often discount the importance of teaching assertive communication. The basic formula for an assertive sentence is:

**"I feel, want, and/or need \_\_\_\_\_."**

We fail to teach this to clients because we believe it's so remedial, that it's not within the scope of psychotherapy. Nevertheless, it is in fact, the single most important strategy for helping clients develop healthy relationships.

## Intervention #8 - Help Your Client Find A Family

Traditionally family meets significant needs for our clients.

- Mentoring
- Loving
- Affirmation
- Education
- Security
- Significance
- Identification.

However, most of our younger clients come from nontraditional family structures, and therefore their needs have not been met.

It is impossible in therapy to restore a client's family to the 1950's. With some of our clients, a traditional gathering of their entire family in the same room would be a bad idea anyway.

Termination begins in the first session. The only way to successfully terminate our client from therapy is to help them identify the situational supports that could be, should be and ought to be there for them.

Therapists must know about the resources in their community that can fill these voids and meet client needs in relation to family and friends. The professional can incorporate all community agencies, support groups, religious organizations, clubs, and places to volunteer into treatment therapy.

A 32-year-old client named William had a 16-year-old daughter. He was a responsible single parent and had raised his child alone since her birth. He dropped out of school, found a job as a handyman, and began working. The mother had left them due to her own drug use.

William had casually dated several women over the years, but he had never married nor formed any lasting relationships. As his daughter approached her teenage years, he wanted to give her the attention that he had not received as a teenager, and so he devoted all of his time to her.

Now that his daughter was 16 and had begun to develop a life of her own, William found himself with more and more free time, so he decided to begin dating. During one therapy session, we were discussing his current frustration. He said, "I would love to find a girlfriend, but every time I go to a bar, I just meet drunken women and pool players. I don't play pool, and I don't drink. So, I've just given up on trying to ever meet a woman I can love."

I asked, "Isn't there any other place you can meet a girl, besides a bar?" William replied that he didn't know where else to meet people. I reminded him that on his intake form he stated that he was a Christian.

He said, "Well, since there was a spot on the form that asked about my religion, I filled it in. But, I have not been to church in 25 years."

I said, "I saw a sign for a singles bowling league on Friday nights at one of the Methodist churches in town."

He replied, "I don't bowl, and I'm not a Methodist."

Hmmm. "So? You're sick of meeting women in bars, right? Why don't you see if you can meet one in a bowling alley?"

He laughed. "You obviously know nothing about bowling."

Here we go. "Why do you think that?"

"Because bowling is just an excuse to go to the bar earlier."

I replied, "Well, you're right that I'm not much of a bowler, but somehow I doubt that the Methodist singles group will be as wild as the tavern where you've been hanging out."

He just shrugged his shoulders and left my office in frustration. The next week he came in with a smile on his face.

I asked, "What's the smile all about?"

He said he had gone bowling with the Methodists.

I said, "Really? That's great! Uh, did you meet any women?"

"No, but I did meet some pretty cool people and I might go again."

After about 8 weeks of bowling with the Methodists, William had become very involved in their singles group. Because I was perhaps interested in attending that church myself, I asked him what it was like on a Sunday morning.

Surprised he said, "How would I know?"

Now I was surprised. "Well, you've been going to church there for the last two months."

He laughed. "No, I have not been going to church there. I've been going to their singles group."

"You've never been there on a Sunday morning?"

He laughed again. "No."

“Why not?”

“Because I’m not a Methodist.”

William had become very involved in the Methodist singles group, and one would have imagined that eventually he would meet some sober Methodist women; he did not. In fact, when I last talked to him, he still had not found a serious girlfriend or even a real date.

But William did find something at that Methodist single’s group. He met a 62-year-old single man named Fred. Fred had never married, had no children and lived alone. My client did not become involved with Fred sexually, but they became very close friends.

William had grown up in a fatherless home. Even though he never found a date at the Methodist Church group, he did find somebody to meet the needs that a father could have provided for him. In Fred, he discovered a mentor; someone to learn from; a male with whom he could grow spiritually, even though neither one of them had become Methodists.

Creating interventions that help our clients to meet the needs of traditional family relationships in other venues is an essential task in working with the younger clients. Therapists who are aware of community resource organizations, clubs, groups and fellowships are therapists who are able to create these interventions for clients in a meaningful way.

## **Intervention #9 - Self-Healthcare**

Working with younger clients is a physically and mentally exhausting task. Younger clients are demanding. They require a tremendous amount of energy and even if you are only a generation older than your clients, they can wear you out. I am convinced that good counselors take care of themselves. I function better on an emotional level when I have enough sleep, eat three meals a day and take time to meet my own needs for healthy interactions.

If you spend 6, 7 or 8 hours a day working with or teaching younger clients, and you do that 5 or 6 days a week, it’s easy to come home, stick your feet up on the couch, watch a little TV, fall asleep and start over the next day.

I meet about 5,000 therapists a year while I’m out doing training. Many are burned out, bummed out, cynical and depressed. I think the reason for this is not that the world has become a rotten place, but because these therapists have not taken care of themselves. We need to meet our own basic needs through healthy living, self-care, and perhaps even therapy of our own. If we want to be effective in working with the younger generation, we must be effective in managing our own life first.

## CONCLUSION

This text is certainly not an exhaustive work on the subject of inter-generational counseling. In fact, it's basically just a starting point. My hope is that this course has helped you to see the influences and experiences of the five living generations and how those experiences and influences shape and affect both the healthy and unhealthy behavior of clients in therapy.

Additionally, my hope is that you can see how your own experiences shape your attitudes and values toward the counseling process. Through this extended awareness, I believe we have the ability to create interventions in a manner that will truly meet our clients at their particular point of need. The intervention ideas offered are just suggestions. My hope is that you will expand on the ideas that I have found valuable, and devise a way to apply them individually to the clients on your caseload in a way that is productive and beneficial for all involved.

Although at the time of this writing, the material in this course was very current, without a doubt years from now I will look back at this original manuscript and think how outdated it has become. Things are always changing. New words will be incorporated into our vocabulary; new experiences will define successive generations; younger generations will become older generations; and the problems of each generation will become more complex as the strengths of each generation will become more vibrant. This course is, I guess, a work in progress.

Time will reveal the outcome of the Generation X'ers and the Millennial Generation. It is my sincere belief though that although the presenting problems enumerated in this text, do exist, the solutions to solving these problems also exist within each member of their respective generation.

## APPENDIX

About two years prior to writing this course, I presented this material at a live conference in Dallas. A woman who attended the workshop objected at one point in the morning session, and said,

“So far Richard, this is a White workshop. You have been talking about the people, the events, and the values that have influenced each generation. Yet, for a large segment of the population, the African American community in particular, what you were talking about was not valid and I did not understand the differences between each generation from a racial perspective.”

She pointed out that during the 60's, white kids were protesting war and camping out at Woodstock. There were not too many black folks there, and the “Rosa Parks of America” were still simply trying to get a ride on the bus. She was very defiant and upset, telling me that although the context of the workshop was applicable to the White experience, I failed to understand the Black experience in America.

I did not accept her criticism. I did not believe her point was invalid, but I do believe cross-cultural experiences transcend much more than racial lines.

I have to agree with her that, particularly before and during the Baby Boomer generation, things were very different across racial lines. And, yes, because things were different for this segment of the population, in some respects, what we have addressed in this text was different.

For example: for the majority of white Americans, the Baby Boomers were the first generation to enjoy the rewards of the freedom and wealth procured by a prior generation. For many African Americans, Generation X was the first generation to experience the benefit of the wealth and freedom procured by a prior generation. This is an important sociological reality and it does impact our understanding of some of the issues addressed in this course.

What we have discussed are broad social trends that may or may not be an atypical experience within certain groups of individuals. However, when we remove the political and social realities of the Civil Rights Era, we can see that much of this information does, in fact, transcend racial lines.

While injustices and inequities have existed in the past and do currently exist in the present, many of the experiences between X Generation Caucasians and X Generation blacks are the same. This is true for the Millennial Generation as well, and even when we look at prior generations, we can see that similarities, differences and inequities all exist.

Before the GI Generation, blacks and whites fought side by side with Hispanics and Native Americans to procure freedom for our country. And while from a political perspective some of these freedoms might not have materialized for some individuals of this generation for many years to come, they did eventually materialize.

When we look at the Baby Boomers and the vast numbers of people included in this generation, not only are whites represented, but blacks, Hispanics, Asians and other ethnic and racial groups. Higher levels of education became the norm in the Baby Boom Generation, for both blacks and whites. Perhaps it was not the exact same level of educational achievement and opportunity, but nonetheless, it was higher than before for everyone.

The Generation-Xer, whether they were black or white, watched Bill Cosby and the Huxtables on TV, and they all wondered who shot J.R.

Whether white or black, or red or yellow or purple, all Millennial Generation children were affected by the terror of the Islamo-fascists on September 11th.

I will not dispute that as professionals, we must approach the subject of inter-generational counseling while considering other cultural factors in understanding human problems and human behaviors. However, I will continue to disagree with my colleague that this is just a “White workshop”, because the skills necessary for cross-cultural counseling and inter-generational counseling are the same.

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Richard K. Nongard, LMFT/CCH/CPFT  
Executive Director, Author, Keynote Speaker

# "Nose Rings and Bellybutton Things"

## 6 Continuing Education Clock Hours

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## EVALUATION OF LEARNING QUIZ - PAGE 1 of 4

PRINT & FAX or MAIL THIS PAGE AND THE ANSWERS PAGES TO OUR OFFICE

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## **EVALUATION OF LEARNING PAGE 2 of 4**

### **Course Title: "Nose Rings & Bellybutton Things"**

#### **6 Hours of Approved Continuing Education Credit**

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- A.) Verify that you have read the required course materials
- B.) Demonstrate an understanding of the practical application of the course materials
- C.) Officially document your participation and completion of this course

#### **➤ ANSWER THE FOLLOWING EVALUATION QUESTIONS – TRUE OR FALSE**

- T F 1.** I have read the required .pdf text file for this course.
- T F 2.** Our generational experiences often dictate our values and attitudes, which translate into specific behaviors.
- T F 3.** There are a hundred different causes for the behaviors we have labeled ADD or ADHD.
- T F 4.** Generational differences are real, and must be explored from a cross-cultural perspective.
- T F 5.** The GI Generation was born from about 1901 to 1924, and is characterized by the military experiences they endured while pursuing the preservation of national and individual freedom.
- T F 6.** The Baby Boomers, the Builder's enormous troop of children, were the first generation to fully experience 'adolescence'.
- T F 7.** The Baby Boom generation normalized divorce in American families, and as a result, the successive generations we work with experience a family structure much different than prior generations.
- T F 8.** The small number of Gen-Xer's presents some interesting challenges for this particular generation.
- T F 9.** The Millennial Generation was born from about 1961 to about the year 1981.
- T F 10.** The influence of Bill Gates was felt primarily by Generation-X.
- T F 11.** Anti-heros, such as Hitler, had little impact on the Builder generation.
- T F 12.** It is common for society to observe and focus on the negative aspects of successive generations, as each generation tends to see itself and its own experiences as superior and more important than those who follow.

***The Evaluation Quiz continues on the next page →***

**EVALUATION OF LEARNING (Cont'd) PAGE 3 of 4****Course Title: "NOSE RINGS & BELLYBUTTON THINGS"****6 Hours of Approved Continuing Education Credit**

- T F 13.** X'ers claim autonomy and empowerment as positive aspects of their generation.
- T F 14.** A huge segment of the Baby Boomers appears financially unprepared for retirement.
- T F 15.** Courage is a hallmark of the Millennial generation.
- T F 16.** The family system of today is different from the family system of previous generations.
- T F 17.** Sociologists have pointed out that racial factors separate individuals less than economic conditions.
- T F 18.** 25% of the English language we use today did not exist 40 years ago.
- T F 19.** Recognition of the difference between empathy and identification is the third strategy from cross-cultural counseling that we may apply to inter-generational counseling.
- T F 20.** Good counselors take care of themselves.

## **GRADE THIS ONLINE COURSE! – Page 4**

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