

Gen Z is Redefining Communication in Romantic and Platonic Relationships

ORANGE, CA— Gen Z, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012, is transforming the way people communicate in both romantic and platonic relationships. In a world shaped by instant messaging and social media, young people are rewriting the rules for how connection and commitment are understood.

Whether using emojis to express affection or setting clear boundaries in group chats, members of Gen Z are known for blending digital and emotional literacy.

Love in the Digital Age



When it comes to romantic relationships, dating apps like Tinder, Bumble, and Hinge have become a major factor for Gen Z. Pew Research report, reports 53% of young adults aged 18-25 have used a dating app at some point. However, unlike older generations, Gen Z is less likely to view dating apps as merely a tool for hookups.



“A lot of people think we’re just casual daters, but that’s not entirely true,” says Kyle Harris, 19, a U.S.C. business student. “Gen Z is serious about finding authentic connections, even if that means swiping through a lot of profiles.”

Communication within these romantic relationships is equally shaped by technology. Many prefer video chats and voice notes over traditional phone calls, believing it adds a layer of intimacy to their conversations. For 20-year-old Emily Chang, text messages are a practical way to check in throughout the day.

“It’s not about sending novels, but quick updates. Like, if my boyfriend texts me ‘Thinking of you’ or sends a cute TikTok, it feels genuine.” Chang said.

Boundaries Are Key

Mental health awareness has become a cornerstone of Gen Z culture, and this extends to how they manage communication in relationships. The American Psychological Association reports that Gen Z is the most stressed generation, with mental health struggles exacerbated by societal pressures and a constant stream of digital information.

In romantic relationships, this might mean openly discussing personal struggles. Yet, even in friendships, digital boundaries are essential. Patel notes,

“We’re not afraid to tell our friends if a group chat is too overwhelming or if we’re feeling burned out,” 20-year-old Jacquin Smith said.



The Role of “Situationships”



Another term that has gained popularity among Gen Z is *situationship*: romantic or sexual relationship that is undefined and noncommittal.

“Situationships are both freeing and stressful,” says Luke Michaels, 19, a college sophomore. “You get the benefits of a relationship without the pressure. But it can be complicated if one person starts catching feelings.” He emphasizes the importance of clear communication to navigate these scenarios.

In a recent CNN Opinion piece, Sara Forastieri Vicente explains how Gen Z is reshaping “happily ever after” by prioritizing self-care and friendships over traditional romantic relationships. Due to pandemic-era social anxiety, many young people now favor “situationships” and platonic support networks, reflecting a generational shift toward emotional well-being and flexibility in love (CNN).

Communication in Friendships

Platonic friendships are also being redefined by Gen Z. The rise of “friendship dates,” where friends dress up and go out to dinner, underscores the importance of platonic love in their lives. Social media platforms like BeReal and Instagram Close Friends stories foster more intimate and intentional interactions by encouraging users to share authentic moments with a select audience.

BeReal prompts users to post unfiltered images in real-time, promoting genuine expression over curated content, while Instagram Close Friends allows users to share personal updates with a trusted circle. This shift prioritizes meaningful connections, as users seek to engage more personally and authentically rather than projecting an idealized version of their lives to a wider audience.



“Social media can be toxic, but it can also be a tool for staying close,” says 18-year-old Alex Nguyen. “I have a long-distance best friend, and we use Snapchat Streaks to check in every day. It’s silly, but it means a lot to us.”

Despite their heavy reliance on technology, Gen Z values in-person connections just as much. “At the end of the day, nothing beats hanging out IRL (in real life),” says Nguyen. “All the emojis in the world can’t replace a real hug.”

A Generation Defining Their Own Rules

As Gen Z navigates the complexities of modern communication, one thing is clear: they are rewriting the social norms for romantic and platonic relationships. From setting digital boundaries to embracing non-traditional labels, this generation is teaching the world that meaningful connections can be both flexible and deeply intentional.

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