



RELATIONSHIPS

MIND THE GAP

EXPERTS OFFER A QUICK AND DIGESTIBLE GUIDE TO NAVIGATING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GENERATIONS BY LAILA ELISE

We've all had a good laugh or two poking fun at different generation's preferences over the years. Millennials and Baby Boomers in particular have been the target of about as many jokes as they have marketing campaigns. But does the date we were born, or which generation we fit into ideologically, have any real effect on how we communicate with each other beyond the obvious technological preferences? Our age can influence how we come across to others, but can it be a real hurdle in the development of a close intergenerational relationship? Here we take a quick look at a few expert tips to help us mind that gap.

Keep your focus on the person and not the number or stereotype.

Jean M. Twenge, Ph.D., professor of psychology and author of *iGen* and *Generation Me*, noted it's important to remember that while there are basic

differences between generations, the average doesn't always translate to the individual. As busy humans, our tendency often leans toward making quick judgments rather than looking at each person uniquely – which can be problematic in the development of any relationship.

Don't let negative connotations interfere.

Often times with generation gaps, whether it be in a professional or personal setting, people tend to approach others with caution if there is a significant age gap; some might even assume that no legitimate closeness or bond can even be made. But this behavior only enforces the gap between generations and does nothing to bridge it. In fact, one study by the Concordia Journal of Communication Research found that many generations actually have more in common than they realize, and one of the biggest issues in overcoming barriers is the fact that each

generation feels the other has a negative impression of them (entitled, tech ignorant – sound familiar?) Instead of assuming a person has no interest in your Bitcoin seminar, vintage car show, or whatever else you feel is unique only to your age group, try making a conscious effort to share your passions and educate others. You might be pleasantly surprised at a person's willingness to learn and connect.

Be flexible not only in how you outwardly communicate, but also how you listen.

Adjusting our communication style to meet the needs of someone we care about is one thing, but it is trickier to listen and look for cues from others when their method and preferences are different from our own. Face-to-face communication has historically been the best way to overcome these variances in style, as people are able to read body language, better detect tones, and listen with more care and intent. **1**