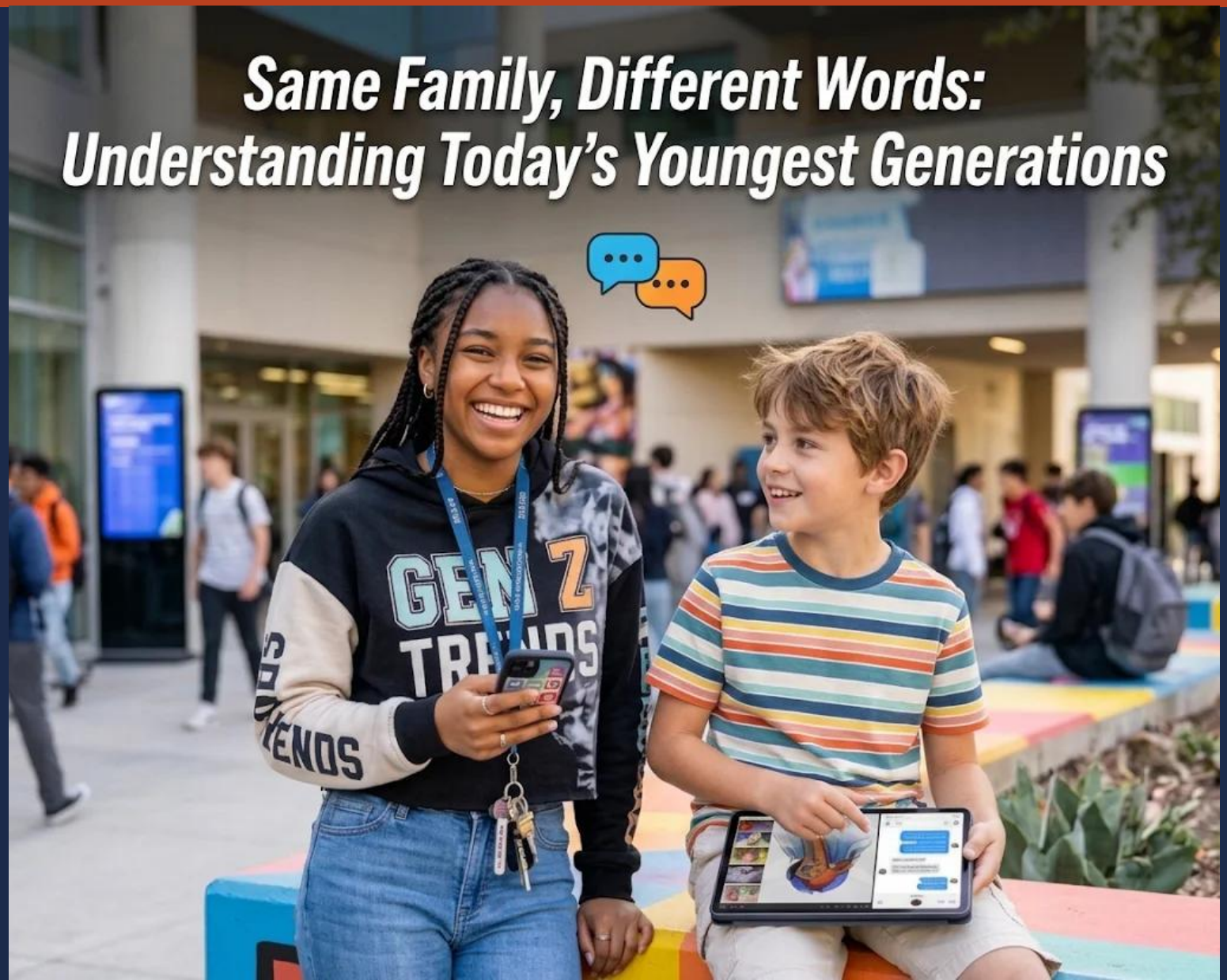

GEN ALPHA
2010-2025
VS
GEN Z
1995-2010

OLLI AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI



Can you translate this?

"Slay, besties! No cap, this class hits different. It's giving big brain energy and I am dead serious — if you ghost your grandkids, nieces, or nephews after this, that's a big L. We're here to rizz up our intergenerational relationships. Period."

Boomer words (circa 1965):

"Hey, cool cats! No jive — this class is far out, the most! I'm not just flappin' my gums, Daddy-O — if you give your grandkids the brush-off after this, that's a real bad scene. We're here to make our family scene groovy. And that's the way it is!"

Meet My Expert Panel

Reuben (12) (my Grandson) and Carter (14) (my Great-Grandson !)

My 2 **Gen Alpha** experts — (born after 2011), these are one of the 2 generations this presentation is about.

Lucy & Frida: Reuben's sisters (my 2 Granddaughters) — **Gen Z** (born after 1997).

They also have interesting generation language and more, that we're exploring today.

Why this matters:
These aren't statistics. They're real kids in your presenter's family — which means every story, every slang word, and every insight in this class has been field-tested at the dinner table.

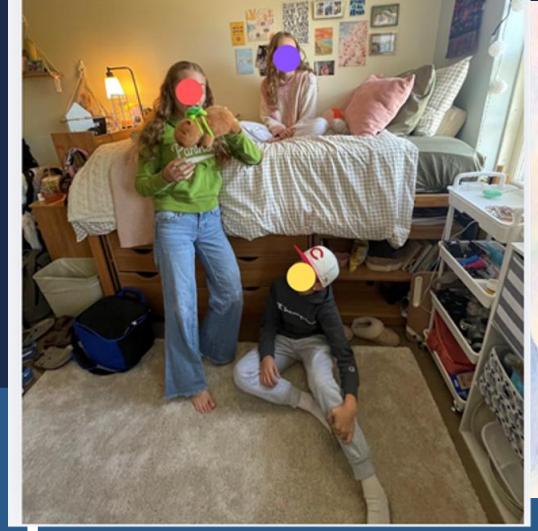




Carter

STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE

Lucy, Frida, Reuben, & Carter





Reuben, 13
Gen Alpha

"I sometimes think that older people or adults don't realize that as Gen Alpha we sometimes do understand that screens can be harmful even though we are on them a lot."

Carter, 14
Gen Alpha

I enjoy playing my "Roblox" game while using my avatar and also use "Discord" to talk to my friends.

Lucy
Gen Z

I feel like the biggest thing that we wish our grandparents knew about our generation's use of technology is that a lot of it is very similar--it's all the same language; it's just we say it in different ways.

As generations have progressed, we've created new words depending on what's in or what's going on at the time, but they often all mean the same thing.

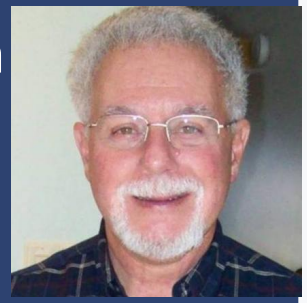
Frida
Gen Z

"I don't think older generations understand how not having social media puts you at a disadvantage with talking to your friends".

The 6 Living Generations

Raise your hand for where You Fit?

Silent Generation
Born 1928–1945
Age 81–98



Baby Boomers
Born 1946–1964
Age 62–80

Generation X
Born 1965–1980
Age 46–61

Millennials (Gen Y)
Born 1981–1996
Age 30–45

Generation Z ★
Born 1997–2010
Age 16–29 TODAY'S FOCUS

Generation Alpha ★
Born 2011–2024
Age 2–15 TODAY'S FOCUS

Translation:

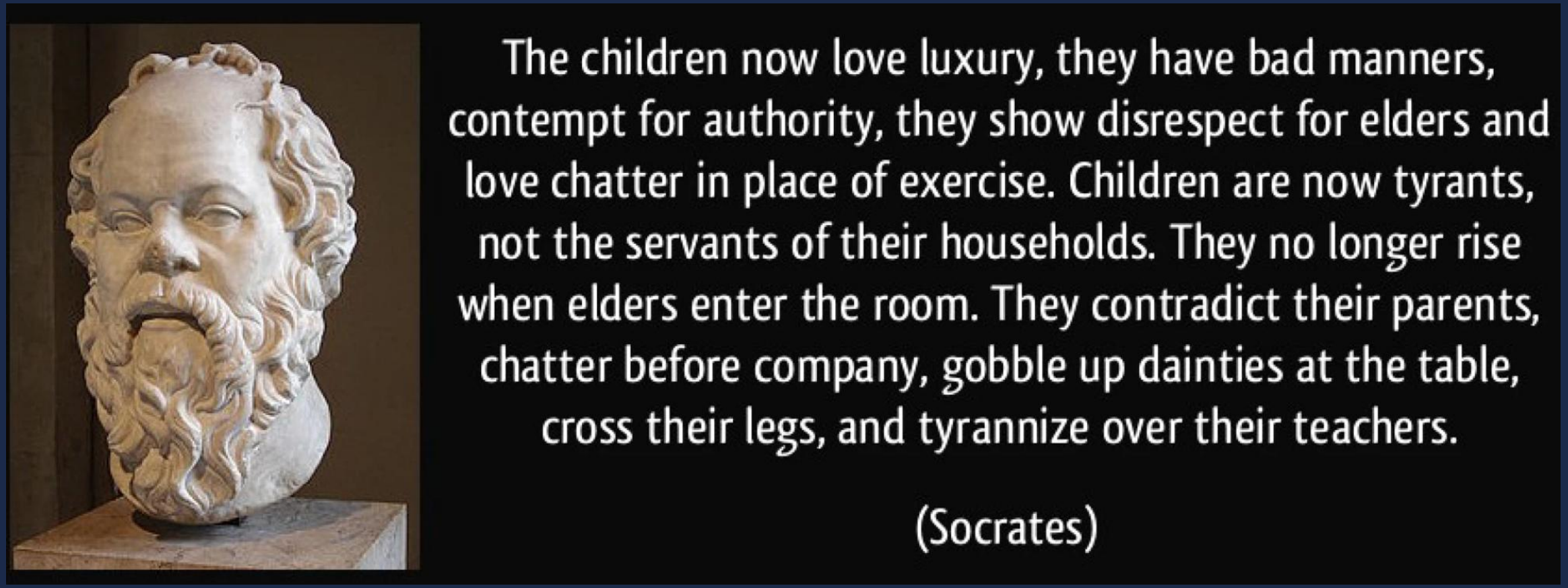
"Excellent, friends! Honestly, this class feels special.

I'm completely serious — if you ignore your grandkids, nieces, or nephews after this, that's a big mistake.

We're here to improve our family relationships. End of story."

WHAT GENERATION DID YOU COME FROM ?

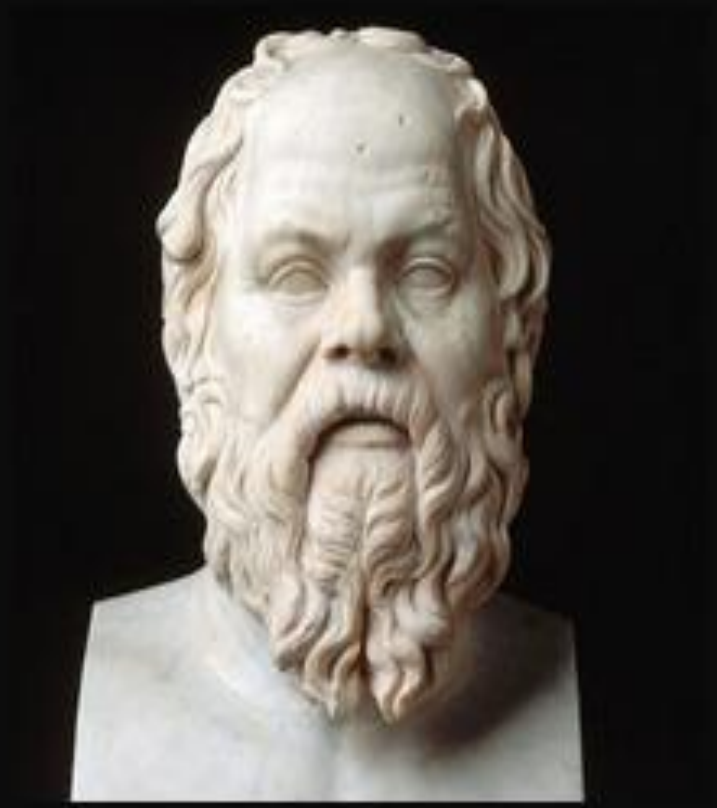
Silent	Baby Boomers	Gen x	Millennials	Gen Z	Gen Alpha
1928-1945	1946-1964	1965-1980	1981-1996	1997-2012	2013-2024
					
Age: 80 - 98	Age: 61 - 79	Age: 45 - 60	Age: 44 - 29	Age: 13 - 28	Age: 1 - 12



Actually, traced to a 1907 teacher's notebook.

Every generation has always shaken its head about the next one

It’s good to know that all the generations are doing just fine.



If the whole world depends on today's youth, I can't see the world lasting another 100 years.

~ Socrates

SECTION 2

Their Internet Platforms

The Social Media Universe

The Main Platforms — What Are They & Why?

Raise you hand if you have heard of:

Snapchat Snaps (messages) that disappear. The ghost logo = vanishing messages.

TikTok Named after a clock ticking — short bursts of time.

Instagram "Instant camera" + "telegram" = Instagram.

YouTube "You" (the user) + "Tube" (old slang for TV).

Discord For gamers — where opposing forces come together.

Roblox "Robots" + "Blocks" — building-block game world.

BeReal The name says it: be your real, unfiltered self.

Locket Like a photo locket worn around your neck — but digital.

Who Uses What: Gen Z vs. Gen Alpha

GEN ALPHA

Born 2011–2024 • Ages 2–15

- Roblox (their #1 platform)
- YouTube (heavy)
- Snapchat
- TikTok (growing)
- iPad apps & games

GEN Z

Born 1997–2010 • Ages 16–29

- TikTok (dominant)
- Instagram
- Discord (especially gamers)
- YouTube (heavy)
- Snapchat & BeReal

Both generations love YouTube — but it can lead kids to inappropriate videos. Watch together, and use YouTube Kids or parental controls for younger children.

How Much Time Are They Online?



Daily Screen Time

Gen Z (ages 16–29)

7–9 hours per day

Gen Alpha (under 15)

8–10+ hours per day

For comparison: The recommended limit for children 8–18 is **2 hours** of recreational screen time per day.

What Is a 'For You' Feed — and Why Is It Powerful?

1. You watch a video about cooking
2. The app (application) notices — and serves you more cooking videos
3. The more you engage, the more it narrows what you see

Result: A child interested in cooking becomes a young chef. A child who watches one sad video may be served hundreds more. The application responds to whatever it detects — good or bad.

Kids Aren’t Just Watching — They’re Creating

MEET SALISH MATTER

Age 16 • A Gen Alpha YouTube star

- In her dad’s videos since age 8
- Started her own channel in 2023
- Netflix series with her dad (2026)
- Her own skincare line at Sephora
- Kids’ Choice Award winner (2025)

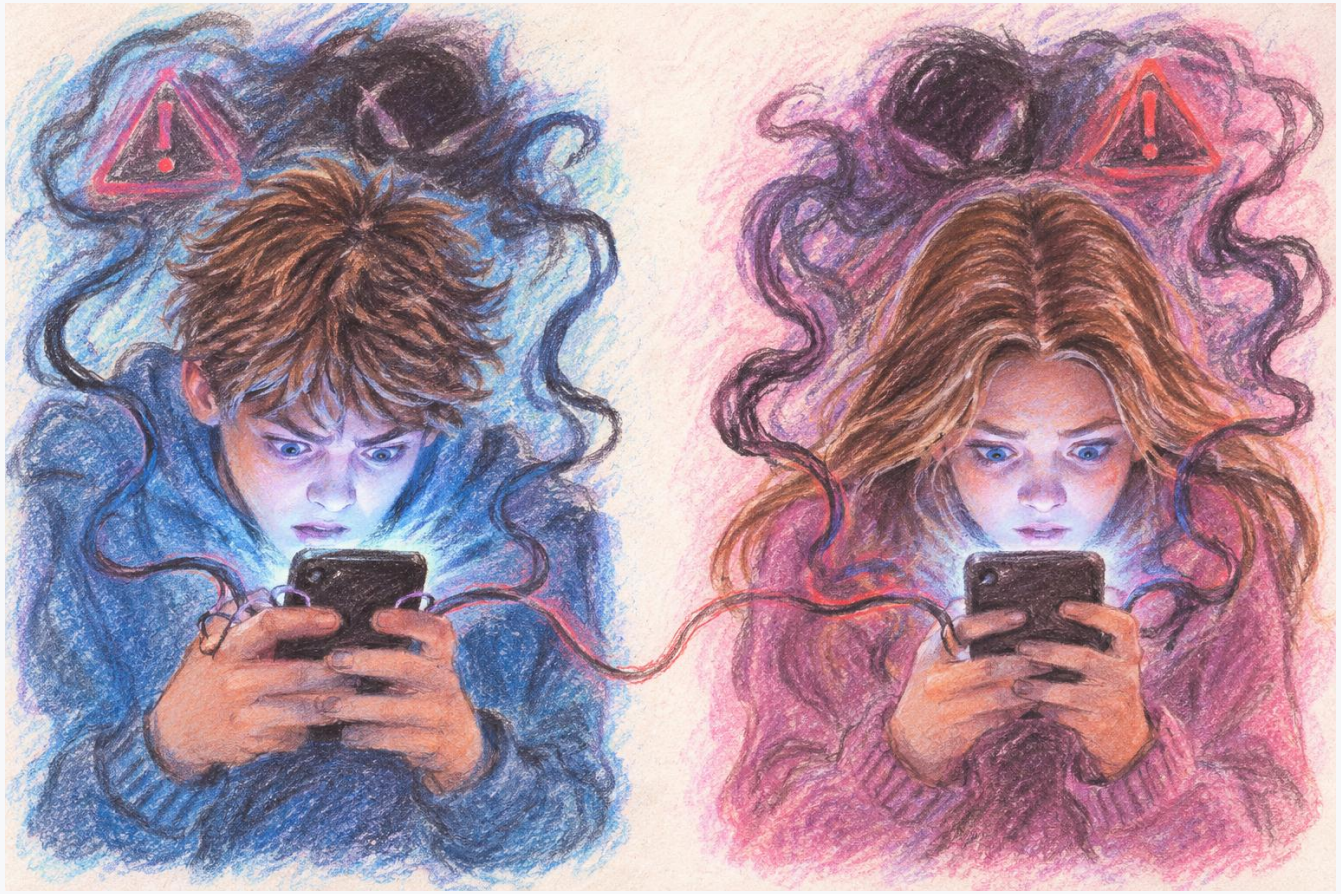
KIDS AS CREATORS

Not just watching — making

- Film, edit & post their own videos
- Build games in Roblox & Minecraft
- Some earn real money — or run brands
- Most teach themselves from videos
- Kid creators are today’s celebrities

Ask your grandchild: “Who do you watch on YouTube? Have you ever made a video?”

The Dark Side of Social Media



The application has a dark side:

A child who watches one anxious video may be served hundreds more.

- Content about extreme diets, self-harm, or dangerous stunts can escalate quickly
- Kids often don't realize it's happening — it feels like they're just 'browsing'
- The more upsetting the content, the more the application amplifies it

This is not about blame — it's about awareness.

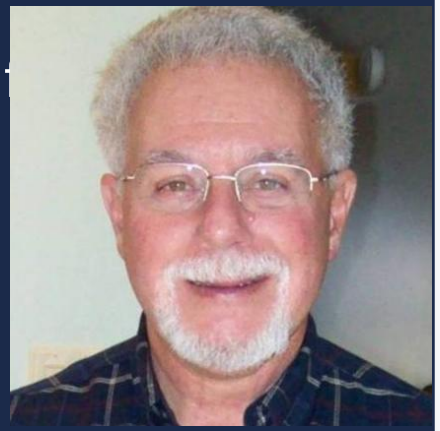
SECTION 3

Who Are They Online?

Faces, Avatars & Digital Identity

Four Ways They Show Their Face Online

1. **Real Photo** Their actual f
on Instagram, school apps, or when they want to be recognized.



2. Bitmoji
A cartoon version of themselves.
Customized to look like them — hair, skin, style — but cute and safe.



3. Gaming Avatar
A fully made-up character — could be a robot, an anime hero, or a creature.
Zero connection to real appearance.



4. AI Portrait
Their real photo run through an AI app that redraws them as a painting, anime character, or a fantasy hero.



Kids maintain multiple visual identities simultaneously — different faces for different audiences

Gaming Avatars: Roblox, Fortnite & the Real Money Economy

In these games, your avatar IS you.

Kids spend real money on digital outfits called **"skins."** These give no game advantage — they're purely about how you look.

In Fortnite, a player with no paid skin is called a **"Default"** — and that carries real social pressure, just like wearing the wrong brand of sneakers in 1985.

$3.6 Billion

Roblox revenue in 2024 (mostly from in-game purchases)

43%

of children's most-requested gifts: in-game currency



Dressing Their Avatars Allows Gen Z Consumers To

47%
Express their individuality

43%
Feel good about themselves

35%
Show off their digital collection

32%
Feel more connected to friends online

25%
Feel more connected to friends in person

24%
Feel recognized in the digital world

Source: Roblox survey of 1,000 U.S. young people ages 14–24, Sept 2022

THE MOST POPULAR AVATAR FASHION ITEMS



Pants
23.9%



Dress
18.6%



Top
13.3%



Corset
8.0%



Cargo Pants
6.9%



Jacket
4.2%



Skirt
4.0%



Bodysuit
2.3%



Hoodie + Shorts
2.2%



Outfit
0.9%





SKINS FROM OVERWATCH LEAGUE



FORTNITE SKINS



Dressing Up an Avatar Costs Real Money

Kids buy “skins” – outfits and looks for their game character or avatar

Fortnite

$9 – $43

per outfit (skin)

Paid in V-Bucks: $8.99 buys 800

Roblox

$1 – $5

for most avatar items

Rare items can top $500

Snapchat Bitmoji

Mostly free

basic outfits

Some brand outfits cost extra

Why the spending adds up

Play money hides real dollars

Coin packs never match prices, so kids buy more

“Limited time” pressure

Items vanish from the shop to rush a decision

“Free coins” offers are scams

They steal passwords and accounts

Want to Try It Yourself? It's Easier Than You Think!

Bitmoji

(Cartoon avatar)

1. Search Bitmoji in your phone's app store
2. Download the free app
3. Answer questions about your appearance
4. The app builds your cartoon!
5. Use it in texts, emails & Snapchat

🕐 Takes about 10 minutes

Facebook Avatar

(Already on Facebook!)

1. Open Facebook on your phone
2. Tap the menu (three lines)
3. Scroll to See More then Avatars
4. Tap Get Started
5. Customise your cartoon character

🕐 Takes about 5 minutes

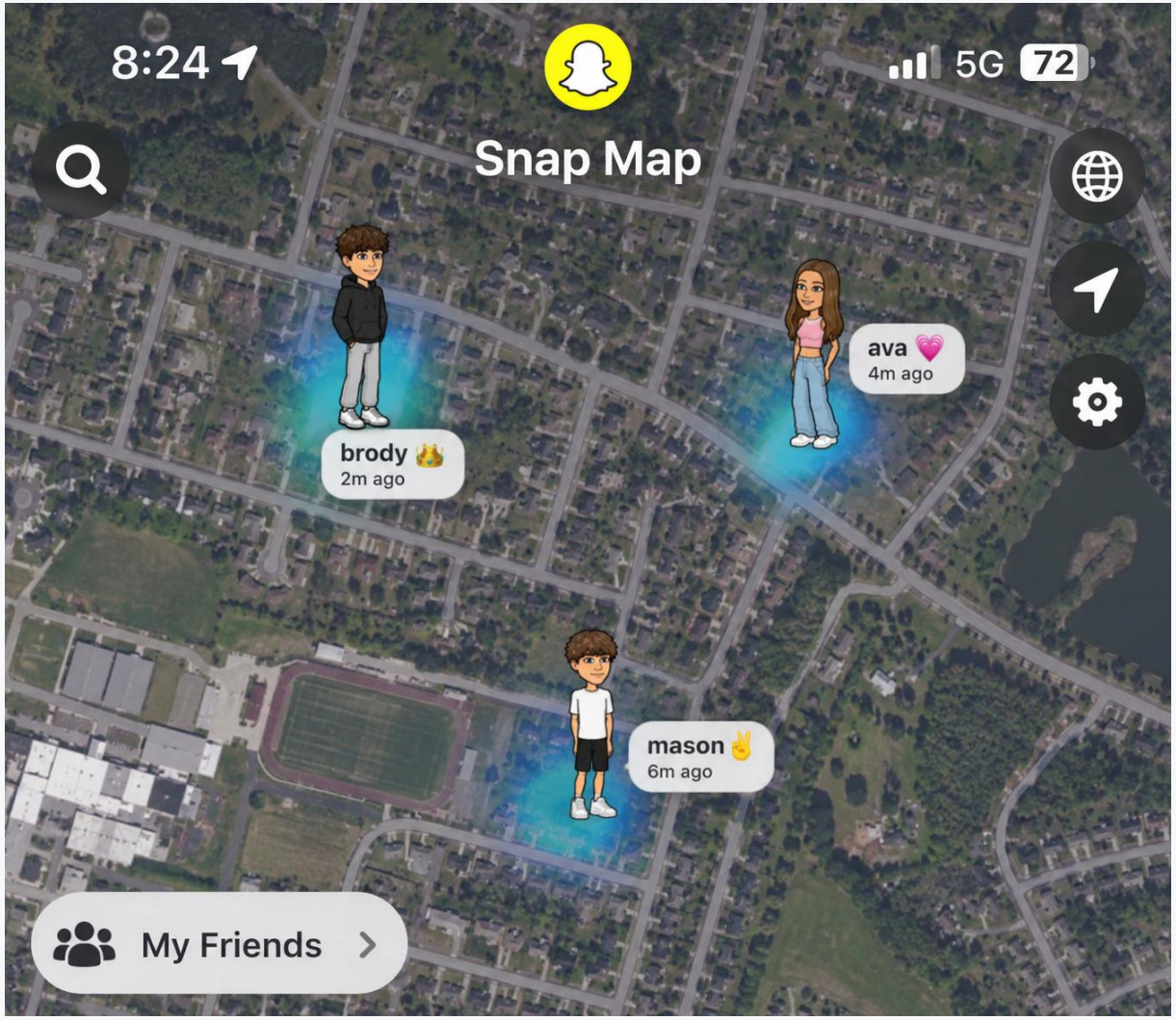
AI Image of You

(Adobe Firefly — free)

1. Go to firefly.adobe.com
2. Sign in with a free Adobe account
3. Click Generate Image
4. Describe yourself + a scene
5. AI creates your image instantly!

🕐 Takes about 5 minutes

The Snap Map — Where Are You Right Now?



Snap Map — Location Sharing:

Snapchat has a built-in map showing your exact location to friends — updated in real time.

- Your Bitmoji character appears on the map wherever you actually are
- Friends can see if you're at school, the mall, or a friend's house
- Can be turned off ("Ghost Mode") — but default is ON
- Over 300 million people use Snap Map monthly

Snap Map: Who Can See Where You Are?

Snapchat can show a child's location on a live map to their "friends"

Not all "friends" are friends

Many teens accept people they barely know

Home and routines show

The same dot every night can reveal where a child lives

Location gets passed on

Friends can screenshot it and share it with others

Feeling left out

Kids can see friends gathered together without them

Safety tip: Ghost Mode hides your location. Ask your grandkids, "Are you on Ghost Mode?"

Finstas & Spam Accounts — Their Private World

FINSTA

"Fake Instagram"

- A second, private Instagram account
- Followed by only 5–15 very close friends
- No parents, no teachers, no relatives
- Posts are messy, raw, and unfiltered — the real them
- Name is usually something unrecognizable

SPAM ACCOUNT

"Close friends only"

- Similar concept on TikTok and Snapchat
- Used for genuine self-expression without an audience
- They call it 'spam' because posts are frequent and low-effort
- Often where real emotions and struggles get shared
- Being invited to follow a finsta/spam = deep trust

"Private" Doesn't Always Mean Safe

The real risks aren't governments — they're closer to home:

Unknown 'friends'

A predator who gets accepted as a follower can see location, photos, and messages.

Screenshots last forever

Snaps 'disappear' for the sender — but a screenshot by the recipient is permanent.

Peers (friends) you trust today

Most harm comes from classmates sharing private content publicly, not strangers.

Private ≠ encrypted

Finstas, spam accounts, and DMs (direct messages) are all stored on company servers and can be accessed.



3 Questions to Ask Your Grandchild

Ask them conversationally — not as an interrogation:

Question 1

"Who can actually see where you are on Snapchat?"

Question 2

"Do you know everyone who follows your private account?"

Question 3

"Do you know that screenshots last forever?"

The Golden Rule for Kids: "If you wouldn't want Grandma to see it — don't send it."

The Snapchat Signal System: What Their Photos Really Mean



The Ceiling

They open your Snap and immediately take a photo of the ceiling to send back.

Meaning: They saw it. They're acknowledging you. But they don't really want a full conversation right now.



The Half Face

They take a selfie but crop out most of their face — just eyes, or just forehead.

Meaning: Low effort but engaged. It says 'I see you, I'm here, but I'm not in the mood to pose.'



The Full Face

A full, clear selfie — maybe even a smile or a pose.

Meaning: They're in a good mood, they want to connect, they're happy to hear from you.

AI-Assisted Socializing — They Ask AI How to Talk to People

Gen Z's Newest Communication Tool:

Many teens now use AI chatbots to help figure out what to say to friends and family.

Questions they actually ask the AI:

- "What should I text back after they said this?"
- "How do I tell my friend I am upset without a fight?"
- "Can you help me write an apology?"
- "What does this message mean — are they mad at me?"



How They Actually Type — The Unwritten Rules

Lowercase = casual & warm

"hey" feels friendly. "Hey." feels cold or annoyed.

CAPITALS = shouting or angry

"OK" reads as passive-aggressive. "ok" is completely fine.

No reply = low priority

Leaving a message on "read" is a quiet signal to back off.

Short = good

"lol" and "fr" (for real) are full responses. A paragraph feels intense.

Periods feel harsh

"Sure." reads as irritated. "sure" or "sure!" reads as warm.

Emoji meaning shifts by age

😂 = old generation. 💀 = Gen Z for "dying laughing."

Then vs. Now — How Communication Has Changed

Silent & Boomers

Phone calls, letters, personal conversation



Gen X & Millennials

Email & texts arrived in adulthood



Gen Z

Texts & DM (direct message) is — a phone call feels like an emergency**!**



Gen Alpha

Voice notes, reaction emojis, short video



→ **Communication is getting shorter, faster, and more visual with each generation** →

SECTION 4

Their Language: Slang & How They Really Talk

Including: Three Quiz Rounds

Where Did These Words Come From?

One River, Many Tributaries

Gen Z and Gen Alpha slang doesn't come from one place — it flows from several cultural streams that merge online.

AAVE

The primary engine: 'slay,' 'bussin,' 'no cap,' and 'rizz' all come from AAVE **(African American Vernacular English).**

Ballroom Culture

'Slay,' 'fierce,' 'serving looks,' 'reading' — all ballroom vocabulary, now used everywhere.

Gaming

'GG,' 'NPC,' 'AFK,' 'no-scope,' 'respawn' — gaming gave them a whole new language for life.

K-Pop Fandoms

Fan words: 'stan,' 'bias,' 'ship,' 'era' — spread by passionate fanbases online. **(K-Pop = Korean Popular Music)**







Quiz Round 1 — Do You Know These Words?

Rizz	Natural charm or charisma — the ability to attract someone effortlessly. "He has serious rizz."
Bussin'	Extremely good, especially food. "That cornbread is bussin'."
Skibidi	2023 viral nonsense word from a YouTube series — became a Gen Alpha all-purpose expression.
No Cap	No lie — completely true. "No cap, this is the best pizza I've ever had."
Slay	To do something impressively well. "She slayed that presentation."
Brain Rot	Oxford 2024 Word of the Year — the mental numbness from too much low-quality online content.

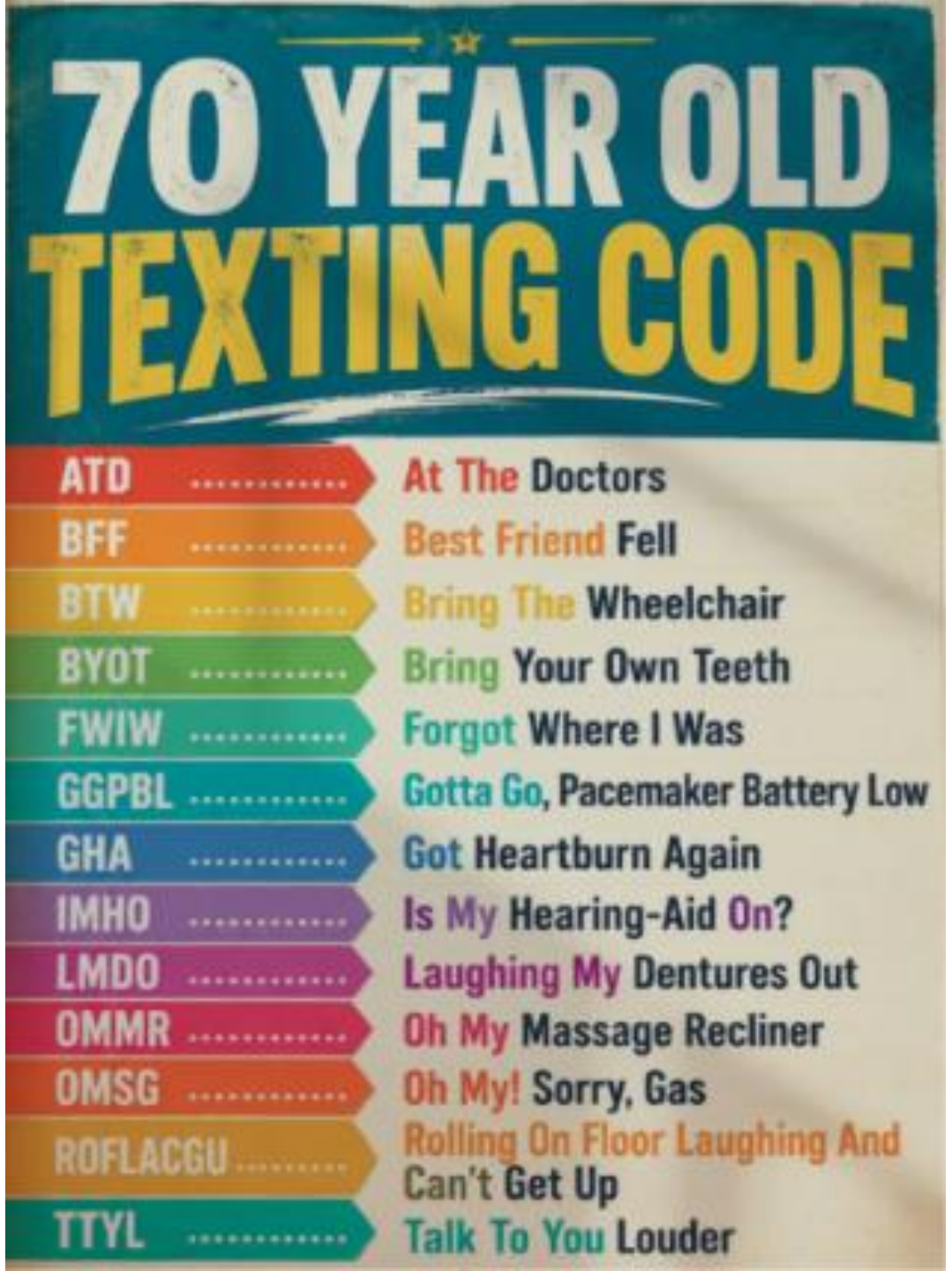
Quiz Round 2 — Born in Gaming, Used Everywhere

NPC	Non-Player Character — a background figure with no real personality. "He's such an NPC" = boring, robotic, no original thoughts.
AFK	Away From Keyboard — temporarily gone. "I'm AFK for a bit" = I'm unavailable right now.
Glitched	Something broken, weird, or out of place. "That situation was glitched" = nothing made sense.
GG	Good Game — gracious at the end of any situation. "GG" after losing = classy acknowledgment. Now used in real life.
IRL	In Real Life — as opposed to online. "We should hang out IRL" = in person, not just virtually.
Lagging	Moving or responding slowly (from internet lag). "Sorry, I'm lagging today" = I'm slow and distracted.

Quiz Round 3 — Expert Level Gen Alpha Slang

Delulu	Delusional — but used warmly. Someone hopelessly optimistic about an unrealistic dream. "She's so delulu about that actor liking her."
Mid	Mediocre — not terrible, not great. Just... average. "That movie was mid" = disappointing, nothing special.
Hits Different	Feels uniquely special — in a way that's hard to explain. "This song hits different at night" = it has a deeper impact in this moment.
Ate	Completely nailed it — performed flawlessly. (Pronounced 'eight') "She ate that performance" = she was absolutely perfect.
Sigma	A lone wolf who doesn't follow the crowd — does their own thing confidently. Opposite of someone who needs approval.
It's Giving	It has the energy or vibe of something. "It's giving holiday movie" = it feels very much like a holiday film.

WE HAVE OUR OWN TEXTING CODES !



Could You Read This? The Cursive Card Problem

The Gap Goes Both Ways

A 2026 college graduate receives graduation cards from grandparents.

They are beautiful, heartfelt — and the graduate cannot read a single word.

Why? The cards are written in cursive — and most schools stopped teaching it.



Gen Z & Alpha:	Many have never written or read cursive. To them it looks like a foreign language.
The irony:	**They can decode emoji sequences but cannot read a handwritten birthday card.**
The bridge:	Some schools are re-introducing cursive — and some grandchildren are asking to learn.

SECTION 5

How They Communicate & Treat Each Other

The signals, codes, and unwritten rules of their social world

The Hidden Signal System
Reading Between the Lines

👁️ Half-Swiping

Partially opening a Snapchat message just enough to read it without triggering the 'opened' notification. The sender thinks you haven't read it yet.

📖 Leaving on Read

Opening a message and deliberately not replying. The sender can see it was read. It's a quiet signal of low priority — or a power move.

👻 Soft Ghosting

Responding with only a reaction emoji (a like or heart) instead of words. It's a way to acknowledge without engaging — slowly ending a conversation without a confrontation.

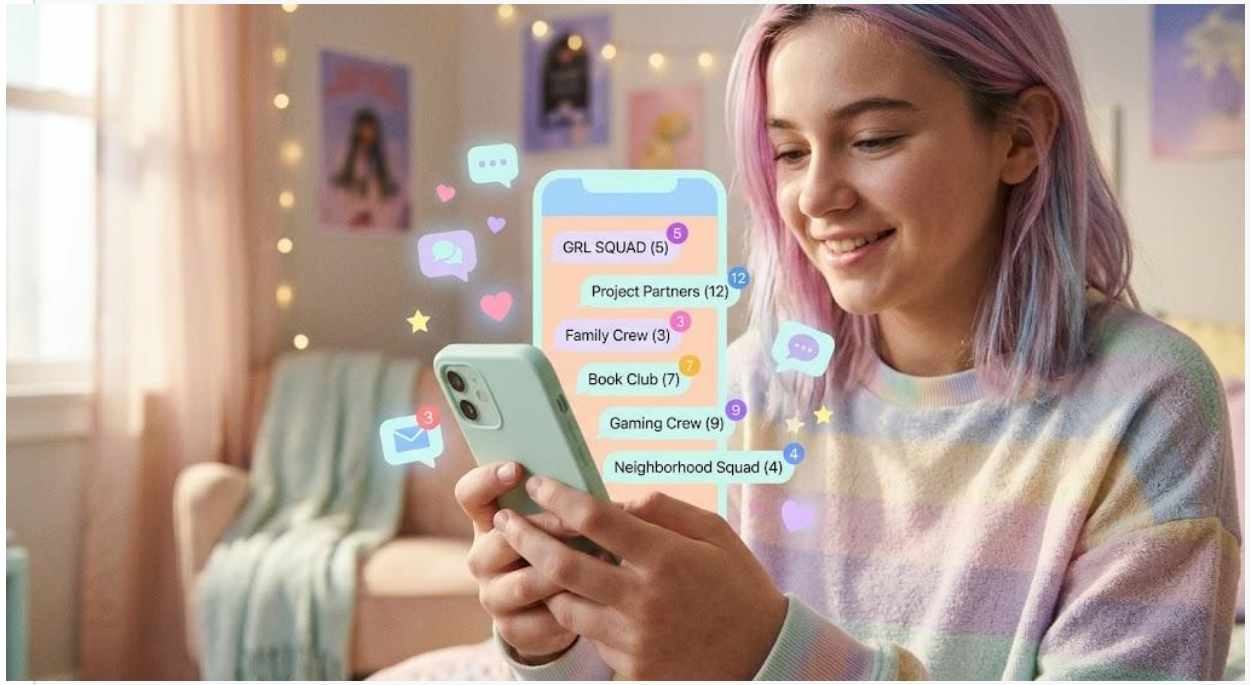
🌅 The Slow Fade

Gradually making replies shorter, less frequent, and less engaged over days or weeks. A gentler form of ending a friendship or relationship without a direct conversation.

Group Chats — Their True Social Home

The group chat is where their real social life lives.

- **Being added to a group chat** is a meaningful sign of acceptance — you're in the inner circle.
- **Being removed from one** can feel like a public humiliation, even if no one else knows.
- **The group chat name** matters enormously. Being renamed off is a social signal.
- **They maintain multiple chats** simultaneously — one for each friend group, each context.
- **Volume is staggering:** hundreds of messages a day in active chats is completely normal.



Instagram & TikTok Power Moves — The Unspoken Rules



Actions that send silent messages:

- **Watching a story but not reacting**
  'I see you, but I'm not engaging'
- **Not following back**
  A clear social ranking - they're below your level
- **Close Friends list exclusion**
  You're not in their real inner circle
- **Turning on read receipts deliberately**
  want you to know I'm ignoring you'
- **Posting right after a fight**
  Subtweet culture — it's about you without saying so
- **Watching TikToks without liking**
  Following secretly without wanting them to know

Curated vs. Real — The Great Identity Tension

THE CURATED SELF

Perfectly filtered photos. Carefully chosen angles.

Only the best moments. Consistent aesthetic. Everything coordinated.

This is the Instagram 'main page' — what the whole world sees.

It's a highlight reel, not a life.

⟺

THE REAL SELF

Photo dumps (messy, unfiltered, random).

BeReal's 2-minute unplanned challenge. Spam accounts. Candid over posed.

The fascinating rebellion:

A generation raised on filters is now deliberately turning them off as a statement of authenticity.

The insight for grandparents: The perfectly posed grandchild on Instagram may be very different from the real one who sends you a ceiling photo on Snapchat. Both are real. Trust the ceiling.

The Paradox Nobody Expected

Most connected generation in history.

Also the loneliest

80%

of Gen Z reported feeling lonely in the last year

3×

more likely to feel anxious than their parents did at the same age

51%

say social media makes them feel worse about their own lives

The Surgeon General of the United States issued a formal advisory in 2023 naming social media a public health concern for youth.

Why Are They So Lonely? Understanding the Dopamine Loop



How the cycle works:

1. Post a photo or video — feel vulnerable and excited
2. Watch the likes and comments roll in — dopamine hit
3. Engagement slows — anxiety rises, self-doubt begins
4. Post again to chase the feeling — the loop continues
5. Real-world connection feels slow and unrewarding by comparison

Dopamine is a chemical messenger in the brain that plays a key role in motivation, pleasure, and reward

The result:

The more time spent on social media, the worse many teens feel about themselves — but the app's recommendation system is designed to keep them coming back anyway.

The Sleep Crisis — Phones in the Bedroom

Teens are sleeping 1–2 hours less per night than a generation ago.

The main culprit: phones in the bedroom.

💡 Blue light from screens suppresses melatonin — the hormone that signals the brain it's time to sleep.

🔔 Notifications arrive at 2am. The average teen checks their phone within 5 minutes of waking.

📱 95% of teens have a phone in their bedroom at night. Most sleep with it within arm's reach.

😔 **Sleep deprivation directly compounds anxiety and depression — creating a cycle that's hard to break.**



Cyberbullying: When the Schoolyard Moves Online

Unlike traditional bullying, online bullying follows a child home 24 hours a day, 7 days a week — and an entire school can witness it simultaneously.

1 in 5 students report being cyberbullied

44% of teens say they've witnessed bullying on social media and done nothing

2× more likely to attempt suicide — victims of cyberbullying vs. non-victims

The critical difference from what we experienced: there is no escape. Home used to be safe.



"When I Was a Kid, They Just Called Them Difficult"

The Language of Neurodiversity

Today's kids have names for what they experience — and that changes everything.

- **Learning:** Dyslexia · Dyscalculia · Dysgraphia · APD
- **Attention:** ADHD · ADD · ODD
- **Neurodevelopmental:** ASD (Autism) · SPD · Intellectual Disability
- **Mental health related:** GAD · OCD · PTSD · SAD
- **The umbrella term:** NEURODIVERGENT — any brain that works differently from the 'typical' norm. Its counterpart: NEUROTYPICAL.



1 in 5 Gen Z young adults identify as neurodivergent in some way

Audience moment: 'Raise your hand if you knew someone in school labeled difficult or lazy — who today would probably be diagnosed with dyslexia or ADHD.'

LGBTQ+ Youth — Finding Safety in Digital Spaces

1 in 4 Gen Z adults identifies as LGBTQ+ — roughly three times the rate of Millennials at the same age.

Many come out online first — to a trusted internet community — long before they come out to family.



Key safe resources:

- **Trevor Project:** thetrevorproject.org — crisis support + TrevorSpace community
- **PFLAG:** pflag.org — support for families too. Specific resources for grandparents.
- **It Gets Better:** itgetsbetter.org — uplifting stories from LGBTQ+ adults worldwide

988 Lifeline: Call or text 988 — available for any mental health crisis

LGBTQ+ youth with at least one accepting adult in their family are 40% less likely to attempt suicide.

You don't need to understand everything to be that adult.

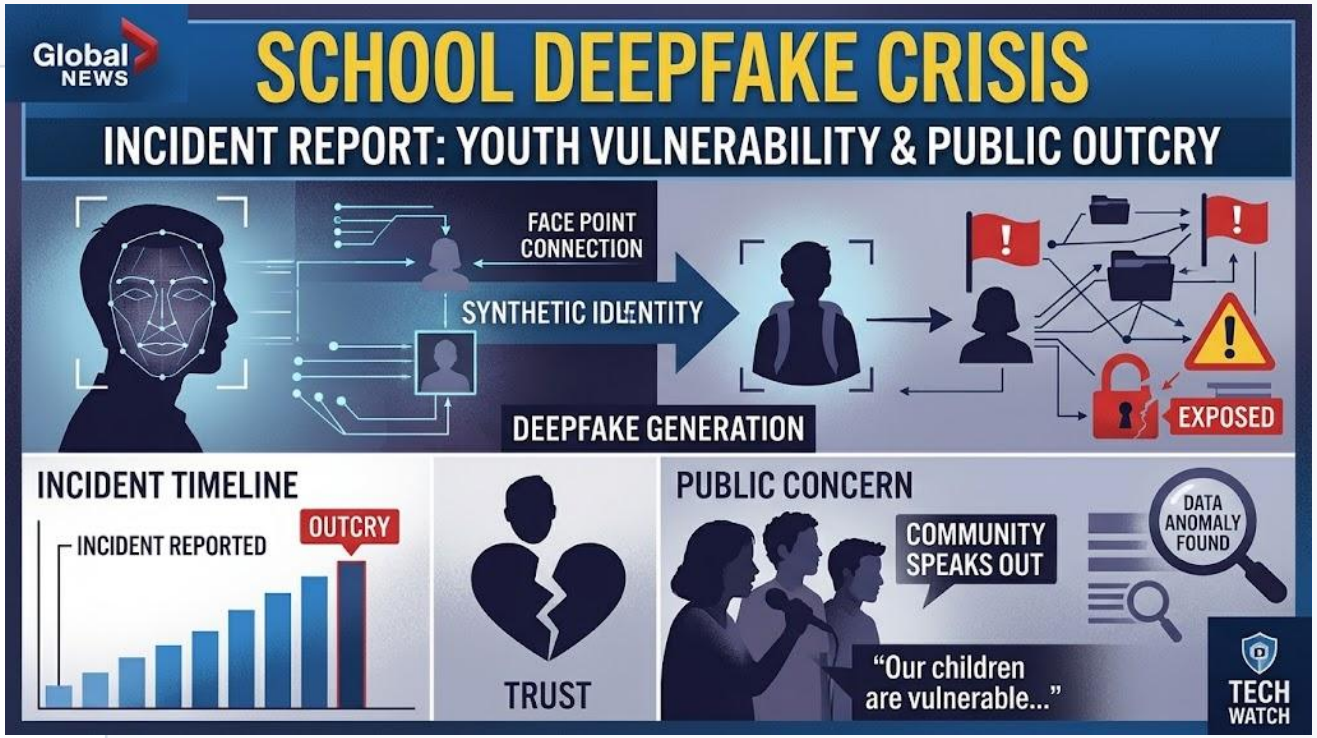
Deepfakes: When AI Becomes a Weapon Against Kids

What is a Deepfake?

An AI-generated image or video that places a real person's face into a completely fake situation — and makes it look convincingly real.

This is now happening in schools:

- 1 in 5 school principals has already dealt with a deepfake bullying incident
- The images are often sexually explicit and target girls specifically
- In 2025, the Take It Down Act made it a federal crime to share non-consensual deepfake images
- Apps that create deepfakes in seconds are free and widely available on any smartphone



The Take It Down Act (2025)

Signed into federal law in May 2025. Makes it illegal to knowingly publish non-consensual deepfake intimate images. Platforms must remove them within 48 hours of being notified.

DEEPFAKES: WHEN AI CREATES CONVINCING LIES

A deepfake is a fake video, photo or voice, made by AI, that looks and sounds like a real person.

Looks and sounds real

Face, lips and voice all match — even famous people can be faked.

Fake calls from "family"

A few seconds of someone's voice is enough to fake a phone call for help.

Protect yourself

Hang up, then call back on a number you already know. Use a family password.



That's not really former President Obama

This video was made with AI back in 2018 — and the tools are far better today.

What Schools Are Doing — Phone Policies in Action





The Yondr Pouch

At the start of the day, students place their phone in a magnetic pouch that locks. They keep the pouch with them all day — but can't access the phone. At dismissal, a station unlocks it.

Most students (after adjustment):
Report feeling less anxious and more focused in class.

Many students initially:
Feel intense withdrawal anxiety — which itself tells us something important.

Teachers:
Report dramatically better classroom engagement and more eye contact.

40+ U.S. states now have or are considering school phone ban legislation.

Another Approach — The “Phone Home”



Reuben’s School: No Pouches

Not every school uses locking pouches. At Reuben’s high school, the system is much simpler.

Some kids, like Reuben:
Keep their phone in a pocket, turned off.

“Phone homes” in class
A holder with a pocket for each student. Phones go in when they enter the room.

At the end of class:
Each student picks their phone back up on the way out.

Simple, low-cost — and no locks needed.

The Analog Islands Trend — Seeking the Tangible

Gen Z is deliberately creating phone-free spaces in their lives.

"So little of my life feels tangible. I wanted something real I could hold."

— 22-year-old Gen Z, on joining a letter-writing club

Film photography:

Disposable and film cameras are outselling digital among under-25s.

Typewriter groups:

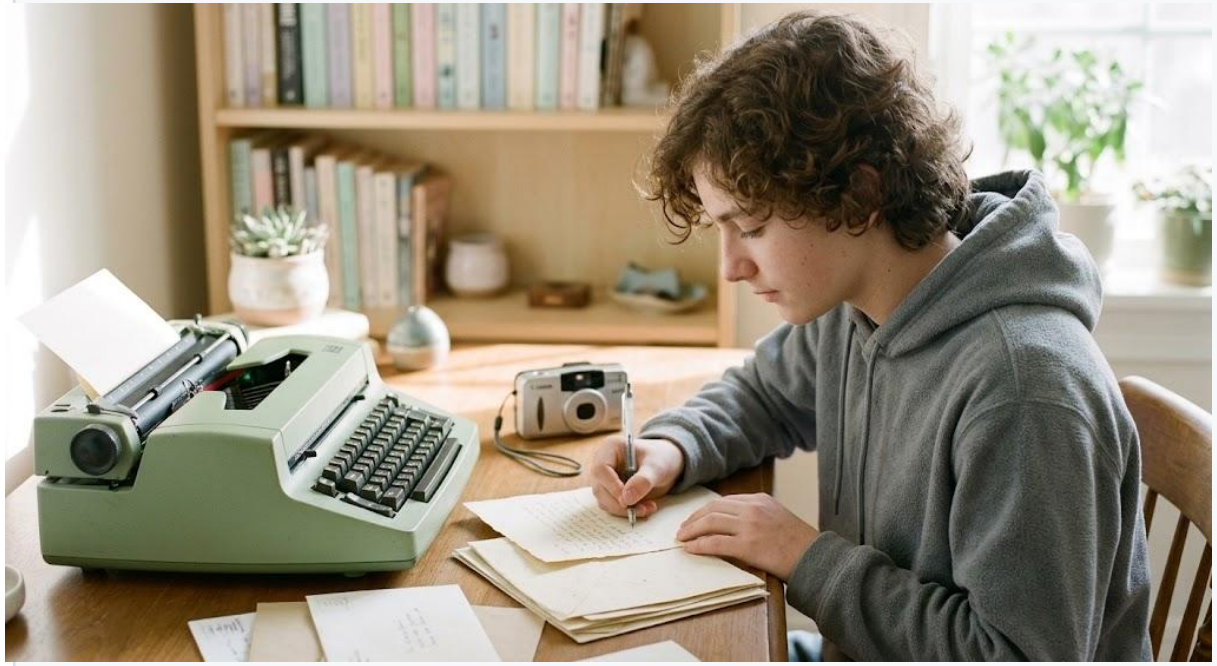
Meetups where people bring manual typewriters — no screens allowed.

Letter-writing clubs:

Groups writing and mailing physical letters. Pen pals are back.

Calligraphy classes:

One of the fastest-growing hobby categories among 18–30 year olds.



Their Complicated Feelings About AI

The Concern

Graduation Boos:

At University of Arizona and University of Central Florida commencements, students audibly booed when AI was mentioned. Not politely skeptical — genuinely angry.

The Job Anxiety:

65% of Gen Z worry AI will eliminate jobs they trained for.

Many spent 4 years studying for careers now threatened by automation.

⟺

The Embrace

Creative Uses:

Gen Z uses AI to write music, generate art, brainstorm ideas, and process their own emotions.
74% say AI makes them more creative, not less.

Social Uses:

As we saw earlier — using AI to decode messages, write apologies, and navigate difficult conversations.

It's become a trusted social advisor for many.

The nuanced truth: they hold both things at once — using AI strategically every day AND genuinely worried about their futures.

THE BIG REVEAL

What Do These Kids Have in Common With You?

86% of Gen Z consider themselves hands-on creatives

71% of all U.S. adults took part in at least one crafting project in 2024

Show of hands moment:

"Who here knits, crochets, sews, quilts, does woodworking, bakes, gardens, or does any kind of needlework or handicraft?"

The generation you just learned about is doing the exact same things.'

"Granny Core" — The Hobby Revival

The 'grandma hobbies' Gen Z has taken up:

- **Reading printed books** #1 most popular — 10.9% of Gen Z
- **Crocheting & knitting** TikTok's #WitchTok sparked a yarn revolution
- **Baking from scratch** 'Cottagecore' aesthetic — 34% of Gen Z bake regularly
- **Jigsaw puzzles** Sales rose 300%+ during 2020 and never dropped
- **LEGO building** Fastest-growing hobby for 18–35 year olds worldwide
- **Embroidery & cross-stitch** #Embroidery has 8.2 billion TikTok views
- **Tabletop & board games** Industry grew 30% in 3 years; Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) doubled
- **Scrapbooking & journaling** Analog journaling up 42% among Gen Z since 2021



"Granny Core" Meetups — Where Generations Actually Meet

Something remarkable is happening at craft circles, yarn shops, and community baking events:

Multiple generations are choosing the same spaces.

- **Knitting meetups** are specifically called out as spaces where multiple generations bridge naturally — no agenda, just the shared activity.
- **Event attendance doubled** year over year from 2023 to 2024 at craft-based community meetups.
- **The conversation happens sideways:** side-by-side activity creates more genuine connection than face-to-face questioning.
- **BookTok:** Gen Z's love of printed books has 80 billion TikTok views — and it's driving young people into libraries and bookstores where seniors already are.



Could THIS Be Your Bridge?

The research is clear: shared activity creates deeper connection than direct conversation.

Invite them to something you already do

Bake your signature recipe together. Work a puzzle at the kitchen table. Plant something in the garden. Teach them to knit one row.

Don't make it a lecture. Just do the thing, and let them join.

Ask them to teach YOU something

'Could you show me how to find a recipe on YouTube?' or 'Can you help me pick a show to watch?' Reversing the teacher/student dynamic is one of the most powerful relationship-builders with this generation.

They light up when an adult genuinely wants to learn from them.

The puzzle on the table

Leave a puzzle half-done on the kitchen table when they visit. Don't announce it. Don't insist. Just leave it there. Many grandparents report their grandchildren sit down and start working on it without being asked.

Side-by-side is the magic. The conversation follows naturally.

Why They Don't Answer Your Calls



It is not rudeness.

In their communication system, an unscheduled phone call signals something urgent or bad has happened.

Their world is asynchronous:
They reply when they're ready — not when the phone rings. That's not avoidance, it's their normal.

Calls feel like high-pressure:
A call demands immediate, unscripted response. Texts give them time to think — which they genuinely need.

83% of Gen Z prefer texting:
This is not a Gen Z quirk. It is a generational shift in what communication means.

The fix is simple:
Text first: 'Hey, would love to catch up — good time to talk?' A scheduled call gets answered every time.

The Text That Actually Works

What most grandparents send:

"Hi Sweetie! It's Grandma.

I've been trying to reach you for a few days.

I really miss you and would love to hear your voice.

Please call me when you get a chance. It doesn't have to be for long! Love you so much. Also, your Aunt Carol says hi."

Result: **Anxiety. Guilt. Avoidance. No reply.**

Why: too long, too formal, too much emotional pressure, guilt-laden, demands a phone call.

What actually gets a warm reply:

"hey! saw something that made me think of you. no rush to reply — just wanted to say hi"

Result: **A reply. Often within the hour.**

- Lowercase — it reads as casual, not demanding
- Short — respects their attention, no guilt
- No reply pressure — removes the anxiety
- Specific hook — makes them curious
- One message — not a wall of text

"We Stopped Talking to Our Kids. The Damage Is Real."



Based on a WSJ study and Kim Komando's viral 2026 column:

28% fewer words spoken daily
Americans spoke 16,632 words/day in 2005. By 2019: only 11,900. Under-25s losing words fastest.

16% fewer words to babies
Parents on phones speak 16% fewer words to their infants. This directly impacts vocabulary and cognitive development.

The Phone Pile Rule
At dinner, phones go in a pile in the middle of the table. First person to touch theirs does the dishes. 'You'll be amazed how loud the table gets.'

"The kid across the table is keeping score — and that scoreboard shows up at parent-teacher conferences a few years later." — Kim Komando

Where You CAN Reach Them

Start with text — it's the gateway.

Once texting is warm and regular, everything else opens up. They'll invite you into their world when they feel safe.

YouTube — Browse together. Ask them to find a video on something you're curious about. Completely open, no account needed.

TikTok — 'Grandmacore' TikTok is a real phenomenon — seniors with millions of young followers, just being themselves. You could be that person.

Instagram — Follow their public account. React to stories with a simple heart. Don't comment on every post.

Locket Widget — A beautiful app that sends real-time photos directly to your phone's home screen. Many grandparents use it just for this.



How to Show Up With Love

Practical, warm, research-backed suggestions you can start today:

Text without expecting a reply

Send a message just to say you thought of them. No question mark, no pressure. A one-way expression of love.

React to their posts with a simple heart

On Instagram or TikTok. No comment needed. Just the heart says: 'I see you. I'm paying attention.'

Remember what they mentioned and follow up

"Last time we talked you said you had a big test — how did it go?" This is everything to a teenager.

Don't make every interaction about the future

Avoid 'What are your plans?' or 'Have you thought about college?' Just be present.

Say 'I love you no matter what' — and mean it

For LGBTQ+ youth especially - that one sentence, spoken once, can be life-changing. Research bears this out.

Your phone-free attention is irreplaceable

Put your phone face-down when they're with you. That simple act communicates more than any words.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

What They Wish Their Grandparents Understood

"My phone isn't a bad thing — it's where my friends are. It's how I feel less alone."	— Gen Z, age 19
"I'm not being rude when I don't call back. I just get really anxious about unplanned phone calls."	— Gen Z, age 17
"When you ask me about my future every time we talk, it makes me not want to call. I just want to hang out."	— Gen Z, age 21
"I wish my grandparents knew how hard things feel right now. It's not easy being young in this world."	— Gen Z, age 18
"When my grandma just sits with me without trying to fix everything — that's when I actually open up."	— Gen Alpha, age 14

Warning Signs Every Grandparent Should Know



If you see something — say something. To a parent, a counselor, or the grandchild directly: 'I've noticed you seem different lately. I'm not going anywhere, if you want to talk'

You don't need to be a therapist.

You just need to notice — and be the adult who says something.

- Withdrawing from activities or friends they used to love
- Sleeping much more or much less than usual
- Significant changes in eating habits
- Giving away prized possessions
- Talking about feeling hopeless, worthless, or like a burden
- Sudden calm after a period of distress (can signal a decision has been made)
- Unexplained marks or injuries on arms or legs

Organizations & Resources — Take These Home

Common Sense Media

commonsensemedia.org

Free age ratings for every movie, show, game, app and book — the gold standard for families.

PFLAG

pflag.org

Support for LGBTQ+ people and their families — including resources for grandparents.

GLSEN

glsen.org

Safe schools for LGBTQ+ students, plus guides for families on how to advocate.

The Trevor Project

thetrevorproject.org • Call/text: 1-866-488-7386

Crisis support for LGBTQ+ youth under 25. TrevorSpace is a moderated online community.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text: 988

Free, confidential support 24/7 for anyone in crisis — or worried about a young person.

Child Mind Institute

childmind.org

Plain-language guides on anxiety, depression, ADHD and social media's effects on kids.

SECTION 6

The Future:

Will Young People Put Down Their Phones?

Spoiler: some already are — and the technology itself may help

The "Dumbphone" Revolution — and the new “Tin Can” Phone



Gen Z is choosing less — on purpose.

The Dumbphone:
Call and text only. No apps, no internet. Sales up 148% among 18–24 year olds.

The Tin Can Phone:
A screen-free device for young children (ages 3–8) that lets kids call family members — zero screen time. Grandparents can get one too.

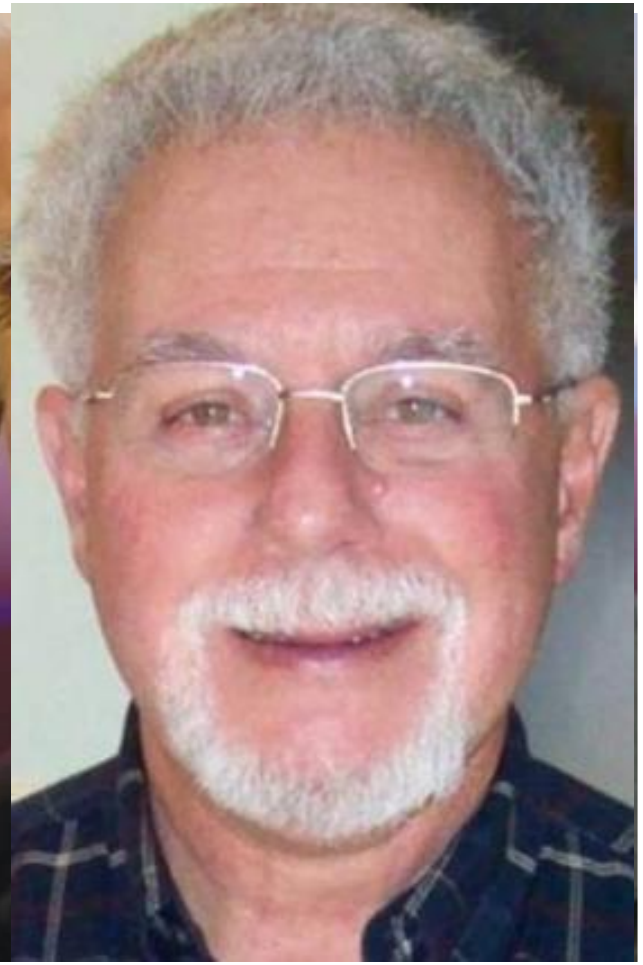


The flip phone comeback:
Motorola Razr, Samsung Flip. Fashion-forward and deliberately limited.

"Opting out is the new flex":
Choosing a dumbphone is now a statement of intentional living — like choosing not to own a TV.

HOWIE’S NEW PHONES !!







What's Coming Next: Smart Glasses and Ambient Technology

The biggest question in tech right now:

What could replace the smartphone?

Meta Ray-Ban Smart Glasses:
Already here. Normal-looking frames with camera, speakers & AI. Sales up 200%+ in 2025. Ask questions aloud, hear answers whispered back.

Google + Warby Parker:
AI glasses shipping late 2026. Gemini AI built in — whispers directions, translates conversations in real time.

Apple Smart Glasses:
Targeting 2027. Expected to be the iPhone moment for wearables.

Samsung & Snapchat Spectacles:
Both have working AR prototypes. The race is on for which company defines this new category.



Youth Sports — The Screen-Free Life

One of the biggest offline activities in their lives:

The grandparent advantage:

A grandparent in the stands — at every game, every match — is one of the most consistent forms of love a child can receive. They remember.

Sport = screen-free connection:

Games, practices, and post-game meals are natural phone-free zones where the best conversations happen.

Ask about their sport:

'Teach me the rules.' 'Who's the best player on your team?' 'What's hardest about your position?' Three questions that open everything.

26 million

U.S. kids ages 6–17 play organized sports — one of the largest offline youth activities in America



Seven Reasons for Genuine Optimism

The pendulum is already swinging back.

1. The dumbphone movement — young people deliberately choosing less capability
2. The analog hobbies revival — hands-on creativity over screens
3. Phone-free spaces — students are welcoming Yondr pouches after adjustment
4. Smart glasses on the horizon — ambient tech that doesn't demand attention
5. Gen Z loves real books — BookTok is sending them to physical bookstores
6. Gen Z is leading the pushback — they see the problem and are acting on it
7. Gen Z parents are putting their phones down for their babies — the cycle can break

Your undivided attention is one of the most powerful gifts you can give a grandchild. That has always been true. It is more true now than ever.

SECTION 7

Closing

Bringing it all home — with warmth, humor, and hope

A Generational Letter

To Gen Z & Gen Alpha:

You grew up holding the future in your pocket.

You're more creative and connected than any generation before you — and carrying more worry, too.

The adults in your life are trying.

Some drove across town today to try harder.

To the grandparents in this room:

You have what no app can replicate: history, patience, and love.

You don't need to know every word or trend. Just show up and put the phone down.

They are reaching back — in ceiling photos and Sunday dinners. Meet them there.

Questions to Take Home

To start a conversation:

- "What are you into right now?"
- "Show me something that made you laugh this week."
- "What would a perfect day look like for you?"
- "Who's your favorite person to talk to these days?"
- "Is there anything you're proud of lately?"

To go a little deeper:

- "Do any of your friends ever feel lonely or left out?"
- "Is there someone you can really talk to when things feel hard?"
- "What do you do when you need to feel better?"
- "Is there anything you wish I understood about your life?"
- "What's one thing you'd change about how we communicate?"

They're Already Reaching Back — Meet Them There

You don't need to master TikTok to connect with your grandchildren.

You just need:

- A puzzle on the table
- Some yarn on the couch
- Bread in the oven
- A text without expecting a reply
- Your phone face-down
- The words: 'I love you no matter what'



"The greatest gift you can give another person is your time. Because when you give your time, you are giving a portion of your life that you will never get back."
— Maya Angelou

Six Things to Take Home

If you remember nothing else from today…

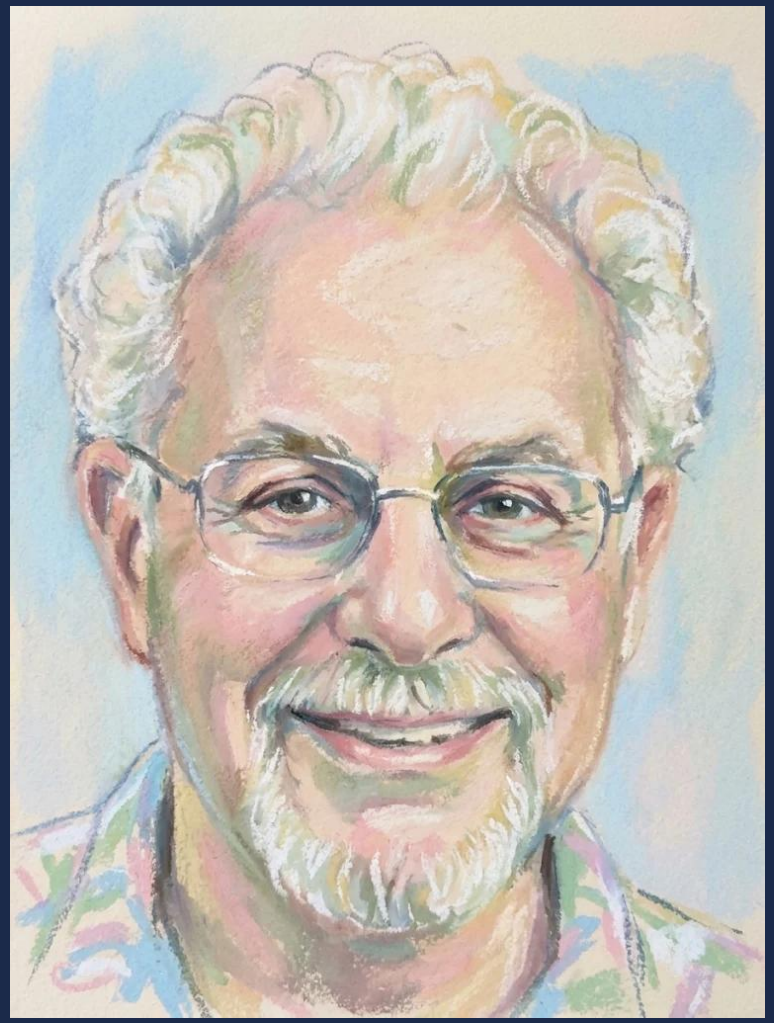
1. Their slang is creative, not broken — every generation invents its own words
2. Text first — keep it short, lowercase and low-pressure
3. Online life is real life — with real risks: sleep, loneliness and deepfakes
4. Watch for warning signs — and be the adult who says something
5. They're already reaching for puzzles, yarn and real books
6. Ask them to teach YOU — they light up when you want to learn

Your time and undivided attention are the gift no app can replace.

Thank You!

One final slang lesson:

"This class? No cap, it was bussin'. You all slay. GG (GG - its over) — now go rizz up your relationship with your grandkids."



An AI image of Howie

APPENDIX

Resources for Continued Learning

Gen Alpha slang list (2 pages)

Diagrams of Gen Z and Gen Alpha slang

Gen Z slang list (2 pages)

Resources for Continued Learning

Books worth reading:

The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt (2024) — The definitive book on social media & youth mental health

iGen by Jean M. Twenge — The research-based look at how smartphones changed a generation

Stolen Focus by Johann Hari — Why attention spans are shrinking and what to do about it

Websites to bookmark:

- **commonsensemedia.org** — Content ratings for every movie, show, game, app
- **childmind.org** — Plain-language mental health guides for families
- **thetrevorproject.org** — LGBTQ+ youth crisis support
- **988lifeline.org** — National mental health crisis line — call or text 988

Documentaries:

The Social Dilemma (Netflix, 2020)

Former tech insiders explain how social media is designed to addict. Accessible and compelling.

Screened Out (2020)

A family goes phone-free for a month. Funny and honest.

A note:

You don't need to read all of these.

One book, one documentary, one bookmarked website — and one more conversation with your grandchild — will do more than any reading list.

APPENDIX A — Gen Alpha Slang Glossary

6-7 — A deliberately nonsensical viral phrase (“six-seven”) with no fixed meaning — Dictionary.com’s 2025 Word of the Year.

Ate — Did something flawlessly; performed or executed perfectly. ("She ate that dance routine.")

Brain Rot — Content so silly or low-effort it feels like it's rotting your brain; also used affectionately for obsessive niche humor. Oxford Word of the Year 2024.

Bussin' — Exceptionally good, usually about food but expanding to anything outstanding. ("That pizza is bussin'.")

Cooked — In trouble, exhausted, or done for. (“If Mom finds out, I’m cooked.”)

Crashing Out — Losing composure; having a public meltdown or overreaction.

Delulu — Short for "delusional," but used affectionately for someone who fantasizes or wishful-thinks without shame. ("I'm delulu enough to think he likes me.")

Fanum Tax — Playfully “taxing” (taking a bite of) a friend’s food; named after Internet streamer named Fanum.

Hits Different — Affects you more deeply or uniquely than usual; a stronger emotional resonance. ("That song hits different at night.")

It's Giving — Gives off a certain vibe or energy. ("This outfit is giving main character energy.")

Living Rent Free — Something you can't stop thinking about; it occupies your mind without your permission.

APPENDIX A (cont'd) — Gen Alpha Slang Glossary

Mogging — Visually outshining or showing someone up, especially in looks.

Mid — Mediocre; neither good nor bad; disappointingly average. ("That movie was mid.")

No Cap — Truthfully; no lie; I'm being serious. ("No cap, that was the best meal I've ever had.")

NPC — Non-Player Character; someone who acts robotic, follows the crowd, or lacks original thought. (From gaming.)

Rizz — Natural charisma and charm, especially the ability to attract romantic interest effortlessly. Oxford Word of the Year 2023.

Sigma — A self-sufficient, independent person who operates outside social hierarchies; the lone wolf archetype.

Skibidi — Originally from a viral YouTube series; now used as a general exclamation or to describe something absurd or cool. Quintessential Gen Alpha nonsense-word energy.

Slay — To do something impressively well; to look amazing; general high praise. (Rooted in LGBTQ+ ballroom culture.)

Understood the Assignment — Knew exactly what was needed and delivered it perfectly.

Gen-Z Slangs

Short Words • Big Meanings



study with kubra

Learning The Gen Alpha Slang

ate	doing it with style	lit	cool/awesome
bet	yes	mewing	trying to look cool
boujee	fancy/luxurious	mid	something average
bussin	delicious	no cap	no lie, truth
cap	lie	ohio	weird
cheugy	out of trend	rizz	charismatic
cringe	embarrass	salty	feeling sad
delulu	delusional	sheesh	Wow
demure	modest, mindful	sigma	leader, or the popular/cool ones
drip	on trend	skibidi	bad
fanum tax	stealing a friend's food	snack	someone looking attractive
finna	going to or getting ready to	snatched	looking stylish
G.O.A.T.	Greatest Of All Time	sus	suspicious
Gucci	Good or cool	W	win
ick	dislike or disgust	sus	suspicious
L	loss	rizz	charming

APPENDIX B — Gen Z Slang Glossary

AFK — Away From Keyboard; not available or physically absent. (From gaming, now used broadly.)

Extra — Over the top; doing too much; dramatically excessive. ("She didn't need to make a whole speech — so extra.")

Finsta — A private, secondary Instagram account used for unfiltered, authentic posting with close friends only. (Fake + Insta.)

GG — Good Game; sportsmanlike acknowledgment; sometimes used sarcastically. (From gaming.)

Ghosting — Abruptly cutting off all communication with someone without explanation.

Glitched — Something that went wrong in a weird or inexplicable way, like a computer glitch. (From gaming.)

GOAT — Greatest Of All Time. ("LeBron is the GOAT.")

Highkey — Openly and obviously; the opposite of lowkey. ("I highkey love that show.")

IRL — In Real Life; the physical, offline world as opposed to online. (From gaming/internet.)

APPENDIX B (cont’d) — Gen Z Slang Glossary

Lagging — Moving or responding slowly; behind the pace. (From gaming — a slow internet connection.)

Lowkey — Subtly; quietly; not making a big deal of it. ("I lowkey love that cheesy song.")

Main Character Energy — Acting as if you're the protagonist of your own movie; confidence and self-awareness.

Periodt — A stronger, more emphatic version of "period" — meaning "that's final, end of discussion." (Rooted in AAVE/ballroom culture.)

Salty — Bitter, resentful, or upset about something, often a minor slight.

Shade / Throwing Shade — Subtle disrespect or a backhanded insult. (Rooted in LGBTQ+ ballroom culture.)

Tea — Gossip or inside information. ("Spill the tea" = tell me the gossip. Rooted in ballroom culture.)

Understood the Assignment — (Also used by Gen Alpha) Delivered exactly what was needed, perfectly.