

Announcer:

The Art of Leadership Network.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Welcome to the Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast. It's Carey here, and I hope our time together today helps you thrive in life and leadership. Whatever you are doing, wherever you are, welcome. We welcome new listeners to this podcast every month, every episode, and if you are new, hey, here's what we try to do. We try to bring you the best behind the scenes conversations in leadership, whatever you're leading. A lot of you lead in the local church, a lot of you are invested in the local church, a lot of you lead in businesses, we're just glad to have you, and today we're going to learn about Generation Z.

Dr. Tim Elmore is going to join us, and today's episode is brought to you by Pro MediaFire. You can sign up today for their free recession-proof growth strategy webinar, when you go to [promediafire.com/recessionproof](http://promediafire.com/recessionproof), and is brought to you by Compassion International. Meet a practical need for a child in poverty this holiday season. Simply go to Carey Nieuwhof:[promediafire.com/recessionproof](http://promediafire.com/recessionproof),

Well, have you ever tried to crack the code on Gen Z, who are now not just in high school, not just in college, but are entering the workforce? You've come to the right place. We're going to talk about how five different generations can get along at work, and why Gen Z mistrust authority, but also how to engage them. Tim Elmore is the founder and CEO of Growing Leaders, an Atlanta-based non-profit organization created to develop emerging leaders. His work grew out of 20 years serving alongside Dr. John C. Maxwell. His work has appeared in The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, USA Today, Psychology Today, and he's been featured on CNN's Headline News, and Fox & Friends to talk about leading multiple generations in the marketplace. He has written, are you ready for this? 35 books. Over 35 books? That's insane. Anyway, some of them sold millions of copies as well. It's great to have Tim back on the podcast.

Well, when you hear the word "recession," as I mentioned earlier, does it trigger you a little bit? One of the worst things you can do though is to allow fear to paralyze you, or overreact by cutting too much. The good news is, you can grow during a recession, it just requires a strategy. That's why Pro MediaFire would love to have you join their free Recession-Proof Growth Strategy webinar this month. It's a free event, and it's for businesses, non-profits, and churches, and in it, you'll learn about new technological advancements that can help you save money and grow. You'll discover how to hack your growth online with a new method, and you'll receive a digital next steps plan for your visitors, so you can grow during a recession. To do it, sign up today for their Recession-Proof Growth Strategy webinar from Pro MediaFire, at [promediafire.com/recessionproof](http://promediafire.com/recessionproof). That's [promediafire.com/recessionproof](http://promediafire.com/recessionproof).

And speaking of partners I love, I love Compassion. Our church has partnered with them, my wife and I have partnered with them, and wherever they serve around the world, which is 26 countries, they partner with the local church, to release children from poverty, in Jesus' name, and they're doing that this Christmas, in a way that your church can get involved in. You know what your church is going to be looking for? It's like, "What are you doing for people around the world this Christmas?" That's why you should check out Compassion's cool opportunity called The Giving Tree.

It's a simple way for your church to share the love of Christ with kids in need, by decorating a tree with ornaments that represent a variety of gift options. People pick a gift, and they give, and they help release a child from poverty, in Jesus' name. So check it out, and sign up at [compassion.com/givingtree/carey](http://compassion.com/givingtree/carey). I'm going to say that one more time, [compassion.com/givingtree/C-A-R-E-Y](http://compassion.com/givingtree/C-A-R-E-Y). That is my name, Carey. You can request a free ornament kit from the website, set up the tree

in your lobby, and a lot of people in your church can help a lot of people around the world, change their lives through their giving.

So, that's what we got for you this week, and I am so excited to bring you my conversation all about Gen Z, with the one and only, Tim Elmore. Here we go.

Tim, welcome back to the podcast. It's great to have you.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Carey, it's always good to be with you, and I so appreciate you talking to me more than once a year, so this is fun.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, that was interesting, because we try not to over-repeat guests, but when I saw your book I'm like, "Oh, I've been waiting for someone to write this book," so we're going to go there. So, you got a brand new book with fresh research, it's called A New Kind of Diversity, and I feel like I've needed this book for a few years, because I've been watching like everybody else, Millennials getting older, myself getting older, Gen Z coming out of high school, out of college, into the workplace, and you argue that the generation gap, I take it that's what you mean by the new kind of diversity, age diversity?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, you argue the generation gap at work, and I would say even in life between our families and that kind of thing, is getting wider, not narrower. How and why is that the case, Tim?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Well, I think there's a number of reasons, Carey, a perfect storm of reasons, not the least of which is new technology that's released when a generation is growing up creates a whole new mindset. TikTok was mostly adapted by young people first, et cetera, et cetera, but here's my biggest theory in one of the chapters of the book is. The gap between generations became wider, as the screens in our life went from public to private. Now, here's what I mean by that. When I was growing up, and that was many, many, many moons ago, we had one screen in our house. It was a black and white television, back in the 1960s, and we all gathered round the one screen, and watched something together. We called it a program. We don't call it a program anymore. I Love Lucy, Dick Van Dyke, Andrew Griffith. We'd all laugh together, and talk about it afterwards.

Then as time went forward, we had many TVs, or at least more than one TV, where the teenagers watch their show, and the adults watch their show, and as screens evolved, we now have a portable device in our hand, and it's a private screen where I may have... Well, I'll just be honest, I'm on certain platforms

that my kids aren't on. My daughter may be on a Instagram account that I know about, but I have no idea about the five Finsta accounts, fake Instagram accounts, where there's several personas. So, I just feel like we get niched, we're in niches today where we can have a very, very different experience than the people ahead of us and behind us.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I was just listening to one of Malcolm Gladwell's Revisionist History Podcast episodes, and the title came to me, he's a previous guest, but it's the episode when Will Met Grace, and what was really interesting about what Malcolm argued then, and Malcolm is, I think either around our age, or he's maybe just barely a Boomer, that kind of thing. I think he's a couple years older than me. I'm barely Gen X. I'm 65. Not 65, 1965, which makes me 57. But he talked about Gunsmoke, and how there was one screen, and how if you had the number one show on TV in the '60s, and I remember Gunsmoke reruns in the '70s, but I don't remember it in the first run. He said you would have 40% of America tuning into your show, and when Will Met Grace came on in the late '90s, they had a 14% share, 14 share.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Wow. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, about 14% of Americans watched Will and Grace, but now if you have a Netflix show, even Netflix, which is still arguably on a big screen, depending on how you're watching it, that might get a 1% share, and it's the fractionalization of an audience. So, you really had a national dialogue before, because everybody watched Seinfeld, everybody watched Cheers, everyone watched Gunsmoke, everybody watched whatever. Will and Grace, and he said that was the last show to really have a widespread audience, and now it's just all fractionalized, but you're arguing that's also happening to the way we approach life, the way we see the world, generational differences, that it's private, small, and fractionalized.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, no doubt about it, and I don't think anybody planned this. I think it's a perfect storm of elements, but we are now the, dare I say, victims of this niche society, where there may be four or five generations working together at a business, or a nonprofit, or a church or whatever, and we're not quite sure we can't get along or see things the same way, and then we just find ourselves in the niche with more comfortable people that talk like we do, think we do, vote like we do, and I just don't think that's bringing out the best version of ourselves. So, this book is meant to be an encyclopedia for people to have a reference to why so-and-so thinks the way they do, and maybe how to better connect with them, and lead them.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, it is really a reference book. I'm keeping mine on the shelf, so thank you publisher and Tim. Actually, it was from you. There was a nice little note, hand signed note inside. I'm definitely keeping my book, it's called A New Kind of Diversity, but what I really appreciate is how you point out the frustration, like the pain points. This is the Leadership Podcast, so you think about the pain points that leaders have in trying to navigate this in our lives, but I really want to double down on work. This is getting really complicated when you've got some Boomers on staff, Gen X on staff, Millennials on staff, Gen Z on staff now, and these are people you're trying to recruit as volunteers, these are people you're

trying to minister to, these are people you're trying to hire. Where do the frustrations show up? How in everyday life would you say, "Oh yeah, that's a generational tension?" Because I think it's showing up, and people don't even know what it is, Tim.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, no doubt. That's why I call it A New Kind of Diversity.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Like that's person's lazy, or that person's-

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, that's right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... demanding, right?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah. Well, Carey, what we're culprits at doing is stereotyping. If we think just a little bit about something we stereotype, and my definition of a stereotype, it's a mental shortcut that is not helpful. So, we start saying things like, "Well, all Builders are antiquated, all Baby Boomers are stubborn, all Gen Xers are skeptical, all Millennials are narcissistic," and then don't we say this, "All Gen Z-ers are fragile snowflakes?" We have heard that, haven't we? And I'm going, that is not true, and we know better.

But here's what's interesting to me, Carey. The term "generation gap" is actually almost 60 years old. John Poppy, a magazine editor, coined the phrase when the Baby Boomers were the young whippersnappers coming up, and he saw this big gap between those zany Baby Boomers who were protesting, and burning bras, and flags, and buildings, and everything else.

And now today, if we thought it was bad then, Carey, I bet you've seen this because you're on social media. If you follow social media, most platforms, you saw this mean-spirited generational thing started, #HowToConfuseAMillennial, where Boomers were putting up posts like, "They don't know how to read a phone book," or "They don't know how to use a payphone," or whatever, I don't know.

But then the Millennials shot right back, "Okay, Boomer." #OkBoomer was a huge hashtag, and then, "Okay, Karen," where Gen Z was poking fun at X-ers, and everybody's a Karen now asking for the manager in the restaurant, and intruding on the principal at the high school, just zany things. But then, Carey, it got really mean spirited. I don't know if you saw this, but about a year ago, there was a hashtag, #BoomerRemover, and it was a reference to COVID-19.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, I didn't see that.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, Boomers were dying from COVID, and Millennials were saying, "Hey, get out of here, Boomer Remover," and I'm going, "Oh my gosh, what are we doing?" Yeah, it's a little too much. So, my hope in this resource is to say there is something to be gained from every generation, as cliché as that sounds,

and we need to find that out. Instead of stereotyping, we need to understand, and when we understand, we start seeing the value.

So, can I tell a quick story? I think this might be fodder for great conversation. So, an answer to your question on why is it frustrating? I remember reading about Tony, and I put this in the book. Tony was a college student at Ohio University, just a couple of years ago. He had a part-time job as a college student working at a major paint retailer, paint brand that we would all know about. One day, he starts videotaping himself mixing paint colors and putting blueberries in white paint, and creating a vivid shade of blue or whatever, and he starts videotaping it and posting it on TikTok. Well, he goes viral. Next thing he knows, Tony's got 1.4 million followers on TikTok, 37 million views, and so he thought, "Well, my gosh, this could be a tool for marketing our company. This could be monetized."

So, he puts a slide deck together, ask the management if he could come and present how this might be a whole new tribe that they could gather. Well, Tony did not get one executive at this paint brand interested in his little presentation, didn't get one pair of eyes looking at his slide deck. Tony did get something he didn't expect. He was fired. Yeah, he was fired because they thought he was doing this on company time. He was probably distracting to the customers, he was probably stealing the paint.

Now, pardon me, I'm a Baby Boomer, so I can say this, is that not a Boomer? That's an old school, "You're probably stealing it from us, son," and of course, Tony wasn't stealing, he wasn't doing it on company time. They could not see through his lens. What could've happened if had they'd be able to listen to this young person and say, "You may have something we would've never found ourselves?" So, get this, Tony's fired, moved to Florida from Ohio, now has two million followers, set up his own paint store. Tony's doing fine, and they lost out. There's one illustration of how they could've benefited, but they just wouldn't, because they were just a bit stubborn.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, I'd love to walk through the five generations alive right now. Just give us a frame of reference for all five, and occasionally, not very often, but the Silent Generation, they're still in the workforce from time to time. Yeah.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, sometimes they are. So, Carey, to be honest with you, there's seven generations alive, five that may still be working together. So, the seven generations that are alive would be the Senior Generation, those that Tom Brokaw called the Greatest Generation. They fought in World War II, those civil people that were civil servants, that sort of thing. My Uncle Jean and Aunt Wanda are age 99 and 97, they're part of the Senior Generation. And by the way-

Carey Nieuwhof:

The Queen would be part of that Senior Generation.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

That's exactly right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

The former queen. Yeah, Queen Elizabeth.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

That's exactly right, yeah. And by the way, my Uncle Jean is still driving a Winnebago in Southern California. Scares the beejeebies out of me. So, next comes the Builder Generation, the Silent Generation that you referred to. They're definitely past retirement age, but they might still be in the workplace. They might still be doing maintenance, or lawn care, or just don't want to leave their job, because they love their job. They might be 80 years old, and still doing something, and-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Or the founder who has the corner office and comes in five hours a week, or that kind of thing? Yeah.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

That's exactly right. They could be anywhere on the corporate ladder, but they're just people that love work, and they don't want to go away. And then there's the Baby Boomers, we all heard about them forever. I am one of them. So, the Baby Boomers are called Baby Boomers, because nine months after World War II was over, the maternity wards filled up. It was a boom of babies, 76.4 million born in America, and I don't know how many in Canada, Carey, but just a lot of folks. Yeah, lots and lots of babies.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And what are the dates for that? '46 to '64? 1946 to '64 birth dates?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, '46 to '64. It began with the end of World War II, and ended with the public introduction of the birth control pill. So, following the Baby Boomers come the Baby Busters, or Gen X, that would be you guys. You're the very beginning of Gen X, I believe.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Just the beginning.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, yeah. So I think X Generation is what stuck as a title for you guys, because you didn't want to be called anything, but Baby Buster was the first title you were given, because it was a bust, not a boom. If you take the birth control pill, a contraceptive, and then you take Roe v. Wade, at least in the United States, you have a shrinking population, not a booming population, and that really-

Carey Nieuwhof:

But I remember being in college, the seminal book was Douglas Coupland's-

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... I forget the title, What was that? But anyway-

Dr. Tim Elmore:

It was-

Carey Nieuwhof:

.... I read it.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yes. Yeah. Reality Bites?

Carey Nieuwhof:

[inaudible 00:16:57].

Dr. Tim Elmore:

No, no, that was [inaudible 00:16:58].

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, the one before that.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah. Oh gosh.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Life After God. Life after God-

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Ah, yes. Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... was Copeland. Yeah.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And I remember reading that when I was an undergrad, and we were already resenting the Boomers. They'd taken all of our jobs, the economy wasn't very good. It was like, we don't want to live that way. If anybody's old enough, they'll remember the yuppy lifestyle, and I remember me and my friends were already like, "Yeah, that's definitely not us," but we didn't know what we were, and Coupland, who I think is a Canadian from Vancouver, he kind of captured the imagination of that generation. So, that was what, '65, 1965 to 19 what?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

'82. Some social scientists end them at different dates, but I think '80, '82, right? The beginning of the '80s is when that generation stopped, stopped being born anyway, yeah. And then the Millennials came

along. So, Gen Y, following Gen X, the Millennials were basically the people born in the '80s and '90s. That new generation came along when our view of children, as the society shifted.

So, you probably know this, Carey, but your generation, Gen X, were latchkey kids very often. Not all the time, but very often. Both parents were working, or the parents were divorced. And so, a kid might've come home from school and just was alone doing his homework or her homework, and figuring it out on their own. X was a generation that figured it out on their own. Well, in the '80s, parenting style shifted. It started with Adam Walsh, this little kid that was abducted, and later found dead. His parents absolutely started a movement of, "We must take care of our children." So, you saw the pictures of children on milk cartons that were missing or abducted, remember that? And we all got scared as-

Carey Nieuwhof:

I do now, I do. Yeah.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

... yeah, we poured the milk on our Cheerios, and got scared for our own children, and "baby on board" signs in the back of the minivan, diaper changing tables in the public restrooms. We were screaming to each other, "Children are everything," and you know what happened? Bunch of Millennials were born, 80 million Millennials in the United States. Again, not sure how many in Canada, but there was a different narrative as these Millennials were born, and they grew up with lots of confidence because like the Boomers, they were large as a generation, and they were cared for. I mean, we gave them trophies, just for participation. Remember this trend?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh yeah.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

So, anyway, whole different mindset.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's funny, you're reminding me I'm old enough to remember not wearing seat belts, and barely having seat belts in cars, and now a generation later, we're at "baby on board," and cautious, and they were even child leashes for a while.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Remember that?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, I do.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We never did that, but-

Dr. Tim Elmore:

I know.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... our kids were born in the '90s, but we never put them on a leash, but that was a thing, and it's like, "Really? Okay."

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, I know. It was a whole different... The narrative of society was, "We need to keep these kids safe, high self-esteem. Safety, status, and high self-esteem." That was the big three that parents seemed to raise their children by, whether they knew it or not. So anyway, that was the Millennials. Then Gen Z comes along, and as you just said, they're now entering the workforce. They're the kids that have grown up in the first several years of the 21st century, and they really only remember the 21st century. So, think about what their narrative might be. It started with the dot-com era bubble bursting, September 11th, 2001. At least in the United States, that was a big deal for us.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, it was huge all over, and most of our listeners are American anyways, so.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Okay. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, and then that really, that ushered in a whole new day of terrorism. Terrorism happened before then, but it was like a daily occurrence, at least in the mindsets of people. Somewhere, somehow, somebody's getting shot or bombed, every day it felt like. And then you had the smartphone coming along, which has been wonderful and terrible, I think we'd all agree, but we just got anxious. By the time we got a smartphone in our hand, anxiety and mental health issues became big. So, I won't go into everything, but Gen Z has a different mindset than the Millennials, and we can't just expect them to be a continuation of that Millennial generation. And then one last-

Carey Nieuwhof:

And how do you date Gen Z? What are the years?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

I date them right at the turn of the century, so 2001 to 2015, and the reason I stopped them at 2015, is at least for us in the United States, I think mostly in North America as a whole, the narrative began to shift again, in 2016, we just became polarized as a country. Not everywhere in the world, but at least where I live, it was, "You're either red or you're blue. It's black or white. I hate you. I love you." Nothing in the middle, and you remember when we talked about the paradoxes in the last conversation we had, we said, "No, it's not an either or world in every case. It's a both and sometimes," but oh my gosh.

So, the Alpha Generation are the youngest children being measured today, born 2016 onward, until about 2028, but we don't know when they're going to end, because there's usually a marker in culture or in history that reshapes a new demographic that comes along afterwards. So, sorry for that long answer to a short question, but-

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, but that's good.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

... that would be the seven.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's super helpful. So, it's interesting, you got a whole chart in the book, you've got a shorter version in an article, and we'll put all the links in the show notes, but let's focus on the five generations still contributing to the workforce, for the purpose of this podcast. So, can you walk us through what you call the life paradigm for each generation, and what it means? Because I thought that was really interesting, and then also outline for us the attitude for authority. So, you might want to do each in turn, So, maybe starting with the Builder or the Silent generation, what was their life paradigm? What was their attitude toward authority? Because it morphs significantly, and it really resonated with me, the way you described it.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah. It was very interesting to interview people from each of these generations, and see a pattern or a ribbon that was woven throughout the generation in their mindsets. So, for the Builder Generation or Silent Generation, I gave them, as they entered their careers, the life paradigm, "Just be grateful you got a job." My mom and dad are both part of this generation, and my dad said that to me clear into the 21st century. I said, "Dad, I started the company." "Well, just be grateful you have that job," that sort of thing. It was so funny, and I love that he carried a waste, not want not attitude, clear into the 21st century, but it was the Great Depression and World War II that shaped his early years. Now, his attitude toward authority, "Respect them. They taught me respect all authority. You respect the police." That's a [inaudible 00:23:55] today. "You respect the president. Even if you didn't vote for him, you respect him." That was the attitude toward authority.

So, the Baby Boomers come along, and I gave the Baby Boomers the life paradigm, "I deserve better," because Boomers felt entitled to a better life than mom and dad had. I have Boomers get mad at me when I say this because, "We weren't entitled." Oh yes, we were. If you look at the data in the '50s and '60s-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yes you were.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

... oh my gosh, it's so funny. All you have to do is look at the dating and go, "Oh my gosh, we were a miserable, selfish bunch of people," but we felt entitled to a life that was better, because it was not a time of depression, it was a time of expansion. Shopping malls were popping up, McDonald's was franchising. So, that was the feel. Now, the attitude toward authority for the Boomers, it was "Replace them." We were so feeling large and in charge, we just thought we'd take over as soon as we can, and we kind of did. So, different mindset. Now, you just stop me whenever you want to, Carey, but-

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, keep going. This is gold.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Okay, moving on to the Xers or the Baby Busters. I gave them the life paradigm, as they entered their career. So, not today, you guys are in midlife and beyond, but when they entered their careers, as they moved from backpack to briefcase, I gave them the life paradigm, "Keep it real." In fact, that was even a phrase that became a thing when you all were growing up in the '60s and '70s. It was like, "Don't tell me life is wonderful. It's not wonderful."

So, the Vietnam War was going on, and we were watching it on TV at six o'clock at the news, and it was not going well, and then in America, we had the Watergate Scandal. Now you had a Democrat and a Republican both lying from the White House. There was a very real wall that went up in the minds and hearts of American adults that said, "I'm not going to blindly trust a leader," and even though Xers were just children back then, they looked up at the grownups, they were a little skeptical. Your generation grew up a little more cynical yourself, and "Don't tell me it's awesome. It's not awesome," that very jaded kind of cynical mantra.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, that definitely has followed me through my life. Mm-hmm.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Isn't that interesting? So, attitude toward authority, again, not now perhaps, because you are mostly in leadership now, or management positions, but as you began your career, it was "Endure them. We got to put up with these idiots. So let's go get a Starbucks," that sort of thing. So, that was the Xers.

Okay, the Millennials, very interesting. Remember, the Millennials, by the way, this might be interesting for your listeners. If you look at the populations of each, it's hills and valleys, hills and valleys. So, the Builder Generation was a smaller population, because people felt like they couldn't afford kids back in the Depression. Baby Boomers, larger generation. Gen Xers, birth control pill, Roe v. Wade, smaller generation. Millennials are now the largest generation in American history, 80 million strong, and with immigration, which is the wildcard, they may grow as large as 100 million strong. So, they're young professionals, but they are large and in charge. So, and then Gen Z, the birth rate, the fertility rate's down again, and the pandemic didn't help. People said, "We can't afford another mouth to feed. Look at this thing. I don't even know if I have a job in 2021 or 2022." So, isn't that weird how it's just hills and valleys, hills and valleys, hills and valleys?

So, back to the Millennials. Carey, the life paradigm I gave to the Millennials as I interviewed one after the other was, "Life is a cafeteria." Now, let me explain. In the same way that you go to a cafeteria and you grab a tray and a plate, and you go down the line and you make up your own meal tailored for your taste buds, these young adults are making nearly every major decision of their life, as if it were one large buffet.

So, here's a couple of examples. My two kids are both Millennials. Bethany, my daughter is 34. Jonathan, my son is 30. They stopped buying compact discs to get their music years ago. I mean, why would they buy a CD? There might be six songs I don't even like, right, right? So, they get one song at a time, and they form their own playlist on Spotify or iTunes. It's a buffet. They make educational decisions this way. They graduate from high school, and go to three different colleges for one degree. I'm kind of tailoring my post-secondary experience here.

And by the way, many of your listeners may be interested in this, I definitely am. They make spiritual decisions this way. A little bit of Jesus, little bit of Buddha, little bit of Oprah Winfrey. Shake it together, I've made it my own faith. There's no one truth source, but this God really likes me. So very, very much

like a free agent, picking and choosing. There's quiet quitting, there's the Great Resignation. All this stuff is going on, and it's not always Millennials, but they're at the top of, "I'm picking and choosing my experience." So, we need to [inaudible 00:29:03]-

Carey Nieuwhof:

And what's toward authority for Millennials?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Attitude toward authority for Millennials is, "Choose them," because remember, life's a cafeteria. So, here's an illustration. I was on a major state university campus, I guess about 12 years ago when the Millennials were there, and it was not uncommon for me to hear one of the undergrads say to me, "Well, Dr. Tim, yeah, he's my professor, but he's not my mentor," and what they meant by that is, "I have to take this class, but I'm choosing the people that I let invest in me." They felt agency. There's a sense of agency in the Millennial generation that we can't get mad at, we need to get busy about and say, "All right, how do we leverage this in a wonderful way?" So-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

... now Gen Z, last one. Did you want to jump in? I'm sorry.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Nope, nope. Let's go to Gen Z.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Okay. Gen Z, I believe their life paradigm as they begin their career, and if you think about the last two or three years, it's no wonder this is the mantra that they might quietly whisper, but not too loud, "I'm coping and hoping." So, mental health is a huge issue, and they're bringing it with them into the workplace from the school campus, and the coping isn't always coping skills, it might be coping mechanisms, where they're just binging on a video game, that's how they get through the day. And I don't mean to stereotype, please forgive me, I love this generation. I think Gen Z may be the greatest generation we ever see, because they're going out with a smartphone, a tool that enables them to change the world, but right now it's just they're still hopeful. That's why I say "coping and hoping," because they're young, but it's very much a coping thing.

And then Carey, their attitude toward authority, because they did grow up with a smartphone, not just a cell phone in their hand, I wonder if they were honest with us today, their attitude toward authority would be, "Not sure I need them." Kids are asking Google questions that kids used to ask mom and dad. It's like I could just, thank you, Siri, Alexa, and Google. I talked to a dad recently that said, "I'm not having the same conversations with my teenagers that I had with my dad when I was a teenager." Well, you can thank Google, Siri, and Alexa for that. So, anyway, that would be-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Gen Z is not sure they need authority. I thought that was really interesting. Is that an individualistic, "I'm going to figure this out myself?"

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, very much. So, if you think about it, Millennials learned in teams, they played soccer in teams, did school projects in teams. Gen Z has been conditioned, mostly thanks to a pandemic, to learn individually on screens. So yeah, they're figuring it out, hacking their way through their life. Hacking is not just a technology term anymore. They get behind the system, and figure out how it works, and I love this about them, as long as we can build a moral compass inside, because right now, they're able to do things that we may not ethically should be doing, but it's all possible now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What are some of the other characteristics of Generation Z? Because I think this is the most mysterious to most listeners of this. It's like, yeah, we have a pretty good handle on the other generations, but I really want to drill down on Gen Z. So, what-

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Love this.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... do you seeing as some other characteristics of, well people from the age of I guess seven or eight, or whatever, right through to 21, 22?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, yeah. So, for listeners, for you to wrap your arms around this easily, if you're driving in your car and you can't write it down, let me give you two big words that are the two biggest realities for Gen Z: high agency, and high anxiety. So, they have a high sense of agency, much like the Millennials, but it's even more so, because they have this portable device in their hand that gives them influence, they are monetizing it. There are Gen Z influencers on social media that are making money off of their phone. It's crazy.

So, high agency, but then high anxiety. I remember reading this at the turn of the century as Gen Z began to be born, the average teenager in North America experiences the same level of anxiety as a psychiatric patient did in the 1950s. Isn't that crazy? I know, it is. So those would be two biggies, but let me just rattle off real fast. I'll be quick, but this is helpful to me as we hire Gen Zers. So, confidence has morphed into caution. The world is very uncertain right now. I would say-

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, they're not particularly confident?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Correct. They act like they're confident. There's a veneer of confidence, but it often crumbles quickly, we're finding as we do surveys, because it's just a very uncertain world. It's ambiguous, uncertain, complex. So they're very aware. I talked to one high school senior recently, Carey, that said, "Dr. Tim, I'm afraid to dream," and that saddened me, because don't high school seniors have a bunch of dreams, "I'm going to take over the world?" Well, they're looking at the future and they go, "Who knows what's going to happen in three years or five years, or whatever?"

So, there's a bit of caution, and I want to point out, Gen Z's learned from their Millennial counterparts. So, the Millennials entered the workplace with lots of confidence, because they've been told they were awesome for putting the fork in the dishwasher, and they were given participation trophies and everything else. So, they're going, "Don't want that to happen to me," so they're going in a little more pragmatic. I would say idealism is morphing into pragmatism. Oh, but here's some good news. Let me give you a couple good news. Spending money is morphing into saving money. They're much better at saving, than their Millennial counterparts at their age.

Carey Nieuwhof:

There is the argument that Gen Z is a entrepreneurial generation.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That they're into business. They're not afraid to make money, that they're savers, they see the mess that some of their parents have had financially. I mean, the number of senior citizens going into retirement with a mortgage now is staggering.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, it's scary, yeah, and Gen Z has definitely learned from us. So Carey, this is really good news. You just mentioned entrepreneurial spirit. 72% of public high school students plan to be an entrepreneur. They want to start something, not just join something. So, I would say workplace employers, how could you create an environment that feels entrepreneurial, that feels like a gig economy? Maybe you have a gig economy within your workplace. They're starting this and starting that, and yeah, they're going to make mistakes, but I tell you what, if you want to keep them, let them be a part of starting something. I just think that's going to be key. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Is that somehow related? This is just a random question, this could be totally wrong. Is that somehow related to the fractionalization that we started within this conversation? In other words, we're not all off a common narrative anymore, we're not watching the same shows, we're not reading the same books. So, is it that, "Oh, I don't have to do their thing, I can do my thing, because it's a highly individualized world?"

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, I think so. There are probably more factors than that, but I really think you're spot on. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Okay. You use the acronym, and if it's too much to get into, that's okay, but FOREIGN, that Gen Z is F-O-R-E-I-G-N. Can you walk us a little bit through that framework, if you think it'll be helpful for us understanding Gen Z?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

I do. I think if you're working next to a young person or hiring young people, this acronym, FOREIGN, you already know, they feel a little foreign as we try to work with them. So, the letter F reminds us they're fluid. They definitely have a fluid sense of identity. Their gender preferences are fluid and changing. One nationwide survey in the United States showed less than 48% found they were truly heterosexual, which means about half would say, "I'm not quite sure what I am," but that's just weird for us who are older. That's just very different. The letter O, they're overwhelmed. The number one word that university students used to describe their life is the word "overwhelmed." 94% say, "I'm overwhelmed," and almost half say, "I'm so overwhelmed, it's difficult to function." Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Do we know the sources of that? In what ways are they overwhelmed?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah. Well, think about it. The options you and I had coming out of college were way fewer, right? Today, it's overwhelming. I mean it's wonderfully overwhelming, but who knows what I should do? And I think they experience not only FOMO, fear of missing out, they experience FOMU, F-O-M-U, fear of messing up. I hear this from high school students all the time, "I'm so afraid of making a mistake." So, you might get paralyzed making a decision, because what if it's the wrong one? So, I think we need to have compassion on our kids. You have young adult children, I do too. We need to have compassion on them.

It's just an overwhelming world, and the smartphone, please forgive me if I sound like your grandpa, did not help us in this sense. If you spend two hours or more... Actually, let me just say that this might be a helpful handle. If you spend more than two hours a day on social media, you are measurably more vulnerable to anxiety and depression. That two hour mark is where it just begins to be measurable. So, I would say tell your kids, listeners, "You might want to just cut back on it. You don't need to scroll through this four, five, six hours a day," so that's the letter O.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I don't know if this was in the scope of your research, but is Gen Z the most active on social media and the most active on their phones, or are they clawing back on that too? Because they're pretty retro. If you look at fashion, they've gone back, not forward, which is interesting.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah. Yeah. So interesting.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Where are they on technology?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

It's a great question, and I'm going to have to guesstimate. So, it's an educated guess, but it's a guess. So, I think percentage-wise, yes, I think there are more Gen Zers on social media, because it's been a part of their life from the very beginning. But remember, the Millennials and Boomers are bigger generations, so it might be the number of Millennials on might be higher. So, I really do believe there's some good news to this, though. There's more and more Gen Zers that are retro, and I hear many of them going, "You know what? I'm getting off social media," and it's on their own volition. They're

choosing. They don't like what it does to their head, and the comparison trap, and all that's going on. So, I take courage in that, so.

All right, so the letter R in FOREIGN, reinvention. They would say, if they were honest with us, "Incremental change is not good enough." If you say you're going to make the church service better, or you say you're going to make the company better, don't just give me a facelift, give me an overhaul. So, one of the reasons we saw protest, and many of the protestors were young adults, weren't they? They were saying, "You guys made a mess. We need to reinvent this thing." So, "Defund the police," while you and I might go, "What in the world is that?" They're going, "You know what? Your system's not working," and it's their perception. I'm not saying listeners, you have to agree with them, but that's why they think the way they do. They look at us, Carey, and go, "What are you guys doing? And what are you failing?" So I just, ugh. So, reinvention.

The letter E, entrepreneurial, we've already talked about that. There's a great entrepreneurial spirit that we need to capitalize on, as they move from school to work. What's next? I. Oh, I is independent. So, yes. So, while Millennials learned in teams, they are very, very used to being independent, but Carey, for employers, let me just say this. They're testing right now, this moment, wanting to come back to the office, not work virtually. They're so longing for face-to-face interaction that even though they're not brilliant at it, maybe their emotional intelligence isn't extremely high because they are screenagers, they really do want to be back with people, and I just am hopeful that we can safely come back and just allow them to interact face-to-face. We need each other this way. That's my opinion.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. If we could camp there for a minute.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, sure.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I wanted to get to that, because I saw in your book that it seems like Gen Z isn't into virtual work nearly as much as Millennials or Gen X would be. Is that early data, do you think that's a reaction to the pandemic, or do you think, because the old phrase was "High tech, high touch," is it a bit of that? Like, "I'm on my phone, but I want to be in the room with you," or what's going on? Because when I'm still reading, if you read The Wall Street Journal or Harvard Business Review... Bless you, or The Economist.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

So sorry. Can you do that over? I think I'm done.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. You good?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

I think so. Let me drink [inaudible 00:42:10].

Carey Nieuwhof:

We're recording on separate channels. So, take some water, and I'll just throw the end of the question to you.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Okay. Okay.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, when I'm reading in The Wall Street Journal or the Harvard Business Review, there's a huge pushback against going to the office to this minute, and I'm just wondering, is that a temporary thing, or do we even know? Again, they're in their early 20s, the cement is wet.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, it is.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But there's an indication, and I know in our church, it's just a tiny sample of a much... The students are back way before the adults are back.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, yeah. I think-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Is it sort of like that? What's going on?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

I think so. I think in the workplace, Gen Z would say, "You Xers and Boomers have spent years building social capital, and we don't have that yet. So, we want to be building," and it's hard to do that with an hour meeting on a screen where... You know what I'm saying. I think they know they've got to build some stuff that needs to be face-to-face, and of course, the pandemic made them say, "I long to be back in class in person or at work in person," and I don't blame them at all. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, and it's a 10th of their life, if you think about this, right?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yes, that's right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

If you're 22, the pandemic, the shutdown was one 10th of your human existence, whereas for you and me, it was a blip on the radar, right? It's like-

Dr. Tim Elmore:

No doubt.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... yeah, a big blip, but it's like, yeah, we have way more memory outside the pandemic than we do inside the pandemic.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

No doubt.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, that'll be interesting to look at that trend long term. So, FOREIGN, that was I, independent.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Okay, yup.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What's G and N? What are G and N?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

G is geek. Now, I know that's an old fashioned term, but they are just tech wizards. There are exceptions of course, but they are so at home with smart technology. In fact, we often look to them, do we not? This is where reverse mentoring can be very helpful. I have a friend that told me one of his Gen Z employees said, with a smile, said to him, "I cannot figure out how you can be so wise and so clueless at the same time," and isn't that us? Isn't that us, Carey? We're wise and clueless, because it depends on the category. So, they are geeks [inaudible 00:44:21]-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Depends on the category.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You got it.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

So, Zanafa is in the room with me, you met her earlier. She is so much smarter than I am in so many categories, and you know what my job is with her? Be secure enough to let her use her gift, and be my teacher when it comes to these categories. So, that's the G.

Then the letter N, networked. They are connected not only 24/7, they really are, but globally. They are a global population. They may be playing video games with somebody in the Philippines or Korea at midnight tonight. So, those would be the markers that as we collated the data that helps parent a leader, a pastor, an employer, just figure out who this young employee might be coming through the doors.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And they're much more diverse, right?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's the most ethnically, racially diverse generation in history, even in America. It's not necessarily just a white generation.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Correct.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's very diverse. Let's go back to fluid. So, gender fluidity, what was that stat? What percentage think they're probably heterosexual? It was a minority, wasn't it?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah. Yeah, it was. It was 48%, nationwide survey in the United States. So, that means a little less than half was willing to declare, "I'm a male or female." The others, that would be 52%, would say, "I'm somewhere mixed, bi, maybe gay, maybe LGBTQ, somewhere in there, and it may be changing." That's another thing. They may feel one way at 14, and it's different at 18. So, here's what I struggle with on this. I don't think this is my age, I think it's my research. I believe what makes for a very healthy human being is congruency. Whatever you are, be congruent, have integrity, don't be waffling back and forth, and I know that they would say, "I wish I wasn't, but I feel like I am." But I think as parents, teachers, leaders, we've got to help them find a sense of congruency, and sameness, and integrity in their life. I just think that that makes us the best version of ourselves.

Carey Nieuwhof:

In what other ways are Gen Z fluid?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Well, I think in career choice. So, I had an employer recently say, "The corporate ladder has become the corporate lily pad." So, they're hopping around. So, they're fluid, and they may have six jobs in their 20s, and it is called the gig economy now. So again, I go back to that comment I made earlier, could we create some gigs within the workplace? Maybe even at a church, Carey? There's different jobs that come and go, projects where they don't get bored working the same one over, and over, and over, and over. Maybe there is.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What is that? What is the craving for variety? Because I see it too. I'm not at all disagreeing with you.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Mm-hmm. Yeah, yeah. Well, one thing that may be predictable, is they do get bored quickly. So, they are multitasking. Yeah, well, I mean, it's true. It's true.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, it's true. Duh. Duh.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's like, "Yeah, okay, how come I didn't think of that?"

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, you're right. Of course, they get bored quickly. Oh, geez.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah. So, in the year 2000, a teenager 22 years ago, had an attention span that was 12 seconds, and that didn't mean they couldn't pay attention longer, they might binge watch Game of Thrones on Netflix, but they would get distracted within 12 seconds, if something wasn't very engaging. Today, it's eight seconds for a teenager. So, that means they might get diverted or distracted quickly. So, we need to be engaging as teachers, we need to be knowing that they will get distracted quickly. They do multitask on five screens, not all at once, but they've got five screens in their life. They've got a tablet, a computer, they've got a phone, they've got this, that, and the other. So, I just feel like this is a reality that we can either get mad, or we can get busy. I say we get busy.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. So, let's take this into practical terms in the workplace.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Okay.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, a lot of leaders listening to this podcast, whether they're working in business, working in the church, they've got multiple generations on their team. They do have a couple of Boomers maybe hanging around. They've got Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z. It can feel impossible, like when you look at the charts in your book, it's like, "Gosh, I got to manage this person this way, that person that way, this person another way." They all have different attitudes.

I'm glad it's written kind of like a reference book and encyclopedia, but what do you do with that? Because are you just catering to people? Can't you have a unified vision and mission, or do you really have to... Because we've got the Great Resignation happening, and I've been thinking in the last few years when I talk to my friends, it's the Great Reset. Everybody has rethought everything. "Don't want to live here, don't want to work here, don't want to work here this way, don't want to do this anymore. Want to do less of this, more of that." Everybody's reset. So, how do you lead and manage in that kind of a reality?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, it does feel like too much work, there's no doubt about it. One of our Habitude images is called Chess and Checkers. I think great leaders play chess with their people, knowing I have a bishop in front of me, or a queen, or a rook, or a whatever. Instead of just a checkers piece, it looks alike. So, it's more work, but I think it's worth it. Chess takes longer to play than checkers, hello? And chess is harder to play than checkers, but I believe it's what we got to do.

Here's what I've tried to do at growing leaders, and I don't think I'm brilliant, but I've noticed our department heads are doing this as well. We first have to build a relationship, and in the context of a relationship, and by the way, we should underscore that most people would listen and go, "Oh yeah, yeah, I know them." When we surveyed Gen Z, they go, "Yeah, my teacher doesn't know me. She thinks she does, she doesn't." This is so sad, I had one kid, 18 years old say, "I think I got the wrong dad." Isn't that sad?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Whoa.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

And I think it was because he felt like his dad didn't really know him, or cared to know him, and I thought, "Oh my gosh, we adults are so production oriented, we're not even stopping to say, 'Let me really get to know you.'" So, this is going to be crucial that we do this.

But out of that context of relationship, Carey, we need to communicate decision making norms, and communication norms. So, when a Gen Zer comes on staff and wants to have a voice, which they do, we need to say, "No, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. You're not going to make a decision on this at 22. There's some norms that we have, just letting you know, we're a family here. This is the family rules." I think we need to communicate to them, "This is how we communicate." Is it Slack? Is it text? Is email? I think we get into trouble when we don't communicate the norm. So, that would be step one.

Here's a game that I think every leader ought to play, or every parent ought to play. Ditch the Niche. I call this Ditch the Niche. Remember how I talked about we're in niches all the time, of our own kind, and we're comfortable, and we talk with people that think just like we do? We need to find people from different generations, older and younger, and say, "Tell me your superpower, and I'll tell you my superpower." I think we're going to find complementary points of value that we can begin to trade and swap. And so, it needs to start with swap your stories, you'll always find common ground, if you're 58 and they're 22. But I'm telling you, we need to ditch the niche, and that means hard, harder conversations than if it was with our fellow Xers or Boomers, let me just say that, so yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think it's the third part of your book, you've got a whole section devoted to bridging the gap, which I think is helpful, but let's talk about the contribution. What do all of the five current generations have to offer? And the other thing I would say is really encouraging, because as the beginning of Gen X, I remember when I was 23, I had no use for anyone over 30, like, "Eh, not talking to you, not hanging out with you, you don't know anything," and that that's arrogance, and that's all these things. But what blows me away, I'll go for dinner with a couple in their 20s, and they're just so grateful to be with us, and I've got three decades on them. They're younger than my kids, and they're like, "No, we want to learn. Our notebooks are open," and is that characteristic of Millennials and Gen Z, generally? Do you see that?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

If they feel like there's a safe relationship, absolutely. So, here's what the data shows. You know The Barna Research Group.

Carey Nieuwhof:

[inaudible 00:52:58].

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Barna revealed some data last year that I thought was very intriguing. They said, "The average Gen Z member does not trust traditional institutions, government, business, education," sadly, "The church," sadly, "But they do trust an older person whom they know." So, the relationship is key. So, "I don't like your institution, federal government, but I do trust you if you're older and you build a relationship with me." So, that gets back to that relationship, and Carey, obviously, they feel like they're safe with you and can talk with you, so I think that's gigantic. Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. No, I'm seeing that all over the place when I connect with younger leaders, and that makes me very encouraged. I even say to my kids, there's not as much ageism, although you do see the "Boomer Remover" hashtags, and "Okay Boomer" and you see that kind of stuff, but it's good to know that on the personal level, I don't feel much of a generation gap, but I don't know, that could be me, I could be delusional. So, let's go through what each generation, just in a nutshell, has to offer. What does the Silent, the Builder Generation bring? What do Boomers, Gen X, bring to each other?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, great question. So, just in a single line for each one, I think this may be predictable, but the Builder, Silent Generation that are very, very old now, brings sage wisdom with them, and loyalty. Oh my gosh, they were a loyal generation. So boy, don't we miss that today? Wouldn't it be nice to see just a touch of loyalty here and there? Well, they bring it.

Baby Boomers, oh my gosh, stories, and experience, and life coaching. The Boomers should be utilized, by and large, with some exceptions, but by and large as coaches to younger generations. They've been through similar experiences in the past, with their four decades of experience on the job. So, we need to take advantage of that.

Gen X, I think Gen X brings pragmatic insights, remember the pragmatism they brought, and then contrarian points of view. I think Xers have always added back to that-

Carey Nieuwhof:

It's true.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, I got a contrarian [inaudible 00:55:13]-

Carey Nieuwhof:

We're pretty good at that. Mm-hmm.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, "What if this went wrong? What if that went wrong?" I don't like it, but I need it in my life, because I'm always the idealist that thinks we're going to change the world by noon on Friday. So, I love that, that your gen brings.

Millennials, oh my gosh. They bring confidence, and hope, and idealism, and we need to not lose our sense of hope and ideals, and they're still young enough, and I hope they never lose it, to have that sense of confidence and hope.

And then Gen Z, oh my goodness, entrepreneurial spirit. They bring a fresh set of eyes, just like any new generation has, and then I love just the hacker mindset. They're going to figure out a way to get it done. Cam is a brand new team member, He just graduated from Michigan on our team. He is such a hacker. He just figures stuff out and I go, "Man, you're just better than I am at this."

But Carey, I want to go back to something. I don't think I'm brilliant, but one thing I do have is emotional security. I must be secure enough to say to young people, "I love what you bring. It's better than what I have. I need what you bring." If we can do that, we may have something on our hands.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Do you think Millennials and Gen Z will continue to morph as they get older? There is the argument the Boomers have characteristics, but now that they're in their 70s, they're doing a lot of stuff that 70 year olds do, and will it be the case that 15 years from now when Gen Z is in their late 30s, that they'll be buying houses, settling down, a little more status quo, or do you think this is in their DNA?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

No, I think it's a little of both. So, we are shaped in our early years, you mentioned the term "wet cement" a little bit ago. We do develop wet cement. Easy to put your hand in a wet cement block of sidewalk, you got to get a jackhammer out after several weeks, but there is something about ageism that happens. So, what we do know in history, is we tend to become more conservative with time, because you have more to conserve. You got a mortgage, and this bill, and that bill, three kids. And so, naturally, you become more conservative, and maybe vote maybe more conservative, less progressive as you age. So, that's one thing that does happen. I do think that the Millennials will probably follow the pattern of Boomers. Carey, do you remember way back, you would've been still very young when this book came out, but when the Boomers were growing up, they left the church, and I remember a book that came out called The Baby Boomerang. The Baby Boomerang, and it was because the Boomers were-

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh yeah, okay. Vaguely, yeah.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

... boomeranging back when they started families. Well, hello? They want their kiddos to have these values, and they want honesty, and of course they do. So, I wonder if we're going to see a Millennial Boomerang, maybe? So, my hope is that as they get their sea legs and they decide who they are, and I don't know if that's a fair comment, maybe they know who they are, but maybe there'll be a sense of, "Okay, I'm on steady ground now. I do want those timeless virtues and values in my children, as I raise a new generation."

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, a lot of leaders right now, particularly church leaders, lead volunteer organizations and they're really struggling, because volunteers have not snapped back after the pandemic. I think it is the Great Reset that we're in right now, where everyone's questioning everything. How do these characteristics show up for different generations, when you're leading volunteers, right? You mentioned loyalty with Boomers. There's a lot of churches right now where they're very grateful they have Boomer volunteers, but most of their volunteers are Boomers because they're loyal, and they can't get the next generations engaged anymore.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah. So, my thought is that we keep them only when we add value, and they can see it's more valuable to stay than when I go. So, they could go on, the grass, could be greener on the other side, but I think it's greener where you water it, and if so, if I can water the grass here, maybe providing personal growth opportunities, professional development opportunities, gig economies within the team that I lead here, or the volunteers that I lead here, where they do a project and then they're done, it's more of an agile team than it is a forever and ever, and ever, and ever, and ever team. I think that's going to be key. In our workplace, we try to have a lot more autonomy. So Carey, this may seem crazy to you, but we give unlimited PTO to our team.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

So-

Carey Nieuwhof:

We just started that a year or two ago.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Did you? Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Unlimited personal time off. Mm-hmm.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

It's paid off greatly where we are. Here's what it's done. Well, number one, we hire very responsible people, so you don't just say that to anybody and they go, "Great. I'm on vacation for 364 days."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. "Where's my paycheck?"

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, exactly. So, we hire very responsible people that don't want to let their teammates down along the way, which is important, but then we say, "We trust you." This screams trust, and right now, Gen Z needs to hear from the older generation, "I trust you, I believe in you, and I trust you." So, that's huge, I think. We do give personal development time. Every Thursday at one o'clock, it's growth time for our team. We get together and we try to do something that's going to grow them as people. Yeah. So, those are just, I think some things that maybe a volunteer organization, you can add value that's not money, but it's meaning. Think of it this way, meaning may be the new money. So, if we can do that with volunteers, we may have something they'll grasp onto.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, and it's more than stand here and fill a slot. I think that's what's really helpful.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah, right.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Do you think that, because we've argued this over the years about Millennials, is it even the same or more true with Gen Z? The whole cause of mission, as you pointed out during the demonstrations of 2020 and beyond, or even if it's things like climate change, it's Gen Z that seems to be the most passionate about it. They're the ones on the street, so it's not like, "I'll never leave my phone behind. I'll never leave my house," they're willing to go, but there has to be a big cause or a big thing, and serving an institution because there's a need maybe isn't a compelling enough cause. Do you want to comment on that a little bit?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Absolutely. I think Generation Z members want to be a part of something that's very important, and almost impossible.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Ooh, that's good.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Very important and almost impossible. So, it has to really feel like "We're going to move the needle when we do it, and some people think we can't even do it." So, I think in fact, Carey, that may be every young generation over the last 50 years, but I really believe if we can offer something that seems very important, almost impossible, we're going to have them at the heart level. We're going to win them at the heart level.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I find that very compelling as well, and I'm definitely not Gen Z. Okay, that's great. Any other insights you'd like to share? This has been a really helpful exercise in trying to crack the code on the generations, particularly Gen Z.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah. Well, I have started something here that has worked for me, maybe it will work for you and your listeners. It's a term that I may have brought up before as I've conversed with you on a podcast, but it's reverse mentoring. Jack Welch introduced that term to us back in the '90s when he was leading General Electric, and he had his older executives that did not like computers back in the '90s. They were all weird and too new, but he had MIT grads that were loving these computers.

So, he put a, let's say a 60 year old executive with a 22 year old new rookie, and they would get together, they would swap stories, like I referred to earlier, find common ground. Then the older member of this pair would share, "Here's how this company works, that's going to be helpful to you," but then the younger member would say, "Let me explain this new technology that we're putting to use here," and it was a mutual value add. They learned to really love and appreciate each other, dare I say, love each other in a very healthy, appropriate way. I think we need to bring that back. I think I can learn from the younger generation, and I hope to God they would feel like they may have something to learn from me. Oh my gosh, does that create healthy businesses, nonprofits, churches, and boy, anywhere you go, I think it's just healthy to see reverse mentoring in action.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, the book is called A New Kind of Diversity, you can get it anywhere books are sold, and Tim, where can people find you these days online?

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Yeah. Well, I am still at [growingleaders.com](http://growingleaders.com), and you can get the book there or Amazon, or wherever. Actually, if they want to order the book, [newdiversitybook.com](http://newdiversitybook.com) is a place you can go and get a bunch of bonuses that comes up before. [Newdiversitybook.com](http://Newdiversitybook.com). Oh, Carey, I should share this. There's an assessment that's free that a person can take. I meant to mention this earlier. It's so fun. So if you go to [newdiversitybook.com](http://newdiversitybook.com), you can take the assessment, it's 41 questions, and you can see how fluent you are with Gen Z, with Millennials, with Gen X, with Boomers, and you get a score at the end on how well you are at connecting with each of these generations. So, that could be a lot of fun for people.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That'd be a lot of fun. We'll link to all of that in the show notes, and Tim, thanks once again for delivering so much value in this conversation. Appreciate it.

Dr. Tim Elmore:

Carey, I always love hanging out with you. Thanks for having me on the show.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Tim's always got so much research. One day, I'm going to have to sit him down and say, "So, how do you write 35 books?" It's fascinating. We have links to everything we talked about in the show notes. You can find it at [careynieuwhof.com/episode527](http://careynieuwhof.com/episode527), and we also have transcripts. I am a transcript reader, and if you are, you will enjoy those as well.

This transcript was exported on Oct 01, 2022 - view latest version [here](#).

We want to thank our partners for this podcast, Pro MediaFire. If you want to recession-proof your company, church, or business, go to [promediafire.com/recessionproof](http://promediafire.com/recessionproof). That's [promediafire.com/recessionproof](http://promediafire.com/recessionproof).

Get your congregation on board by helping meet a practical need for a child in poverty this holiday season, by implementing a giving tree in your church. Simply go to [compassion.com/givingtree/carey](http://compassion.com/givingtree/carey). That's [compassion.com/givingtree/carey](http://compassion.com/givingtree/carey).

Well, next episode, we got Les McKeown back, one of our most popular guests of all time. I think this is round three or four for him on the podcast, and we're going to talk about the difference between feeling like you're a failure, and being a real failure, what the difference actually is, two keys to leaders who make it over the long haul, imposter syndrome, and the problem with people pleasing leaders. He's one of my favorite leadership thinkers, and here is an excerpt.

Les McKeown:

Pivoting is not innovation. A lot of people thought they were going to get through this by doing something called pivoting. It became the keyword. In the church world, it was essentially go online, right? If you're not there, go online. That is not pivoting, it's not innovating, it's just doing what everybody else is now doing, and it's necessary, but it's just a hygiene factor. It's just, "Oh, that's the least we've got to do." The innovation is, "How do we do it in a way that differentiates us, and makes us relevant?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's coming up next time. Also coming up, Chris Anderson from TED Talks. Nancy Duarte is back, Rory Vaden, Lysa TerKeurst, Patrick Lencioni, Sean Cannell, Annie F. Downs, James Clear, Erwin McManus, and so much more. Got a great lineup coming for you, and well, thank you for listening. If you liked this episode, please leave a rating and review, and if you would, please join me for a free workshop that I'm having very, very soon, October 24th and 25th. It's not too late. If you're interested in growing your church next year, maybe sit on the board, you lead a church, you're on staff, you're a key volunteer, come. Go to [churchgrowthaccelerator.com](http://churchgrowthaccelerator.com). You can register for free. I will show you five different ways you can grow your church in the next 12 months, and you'll leave with a game plan to carry it out. So, check it out, [churchgrowthaccelerator.com](http://churchgrowthaccelerator.com). Thank you so much for listening, everybody, and I hope our time together today has helped you thrive in life and leadership.