

Do Parents Need To Rethink Parenting?

By [Dr. Tim Elmore](#) on February 14, 2012

During my book tour, following the publishing of [Generation iY—Our Last Chance to Save Their Future](#), I began hearing comments from parents in the audience.

When I would caution adults that we must rethink the way we parent, teach and lead this emerging generation of kids, at least one person would remark: “But haven’t parents always groaned about the laziness of kids?”

Haven’t parents talked about their lack of values or discipline or respect for their elders? It seems like grownups are always whining about teens.”

I will admit—it’s true. In fact, dating back to Socrates’ day, adults have complained about how pitiful their youth are.

Socrates said, “Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise; they no longer rise when elders enter the room; they contradict their parents, chatter before company; gobble up their food and tyrannize their teachers.”

Plato also complained about the lack of respect kids have for their parents, as did Hesiod, in the eight century BC. Sounds familiar doesn’t it?

Then, however, my audience members usually remark, “I mean, our own parents complained about our generation as we grew up, and look at us. We ended up alright. We are doing OK today, aren’t we?”

Really? Do you believe that?

That’s where I disagree. No doubt, parents can easily forget how unruly we were as kids. We forget that teen brains are still forming and they often cannot grasp the big picture. To say, however, that we are doing OK is woeful blindness.

May I remind you of how adults are running our nation today?

• Examine Our Leaders

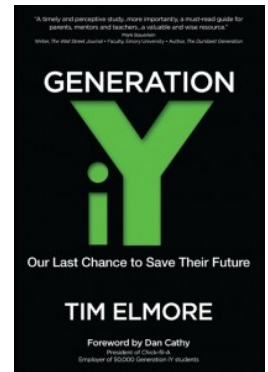
As Baby Boomers and Generation X became adults, most had never been equipped to be fiscally responsible. In fact, one reason we saw a dearth of presidential candidates over the last twenty years who were prepared to lead the nation, is because those Baby boomers weren’t being mentored in the 1960s as young people. They’d walked away from the establishment.

Today, our federal government is in shambles. There are few statesmen. We’ve failed to respond to a faltering economy and we’ve accumulated trillions of dollars of debt.

Several economists have compared our recession today to America’s recession in the 1920s. Our response then was very different than today.

Good business ethics and practices pulled us out of the quicksand in the 1920s. Today, we expect a federal government to do it. I believe that’s wishful thinking. So, what has happened? We’ve drifted.

As kids, we didn’t learn financial stewardship and now live our lives on credit, both personally and governmentally. Nope, I’d say were are not OK.



- **Examine Our Men Today**

Currently, 62% of children in America are growing up without their biological father. Let's face it. Most of the time it's not because Dad has died. It's usually because Dad reneged on his commitment to his family.

Certainly not all of us, but many parents are unable to keep long-term commitments. We find it difficult to control our hormones or appetites, even in midlife. I remember during the 1970s when divorce began to be accepted. In years prior, it was unspeakable in many circles. What is this drift that's happening?

I'd say we're not OK.

- **Examine the State of People in General.**

Psychotherapy is a huge industry today because so many adults are not emotionally healthy. I am thrilled that so many feel comfortable seeing a counselor, and perhaps many in our parents generation should have seen one, but, regardless, our culture has walked away from discipline and healthy relationships.

When the glitz and glamour fade, so do we. Our emotional intelligence is low. Our identity is often misplaced. We depend on prescription drugs, alcohol or some other stimulant to feel good. We may not perceive it, but there's been a slow drift. We grow older but often don't grow up. No, I'd say we are not OK.

- **Examine American Business.**

In a 2010 poll, corporate CEOs were named as the most mistrusted people in America. This was the result of Wall Street behavior and the mortgage banking fiascos over the last two years.

Even when companies were in bankruptcy, CEOs still received year-end bonuses. I recognize there have always been shady businessmen down through history.

Today, however, business leaders seek control and think little of ruining the lives of thousands along the way. Just ask the folks at Enron. Or Tyco. Or Worldcom. Or AIG. Or Goldman Sachs. Leaders seem more self-absorbed today. We're selfish, not sacrificial. No, we are not OK.

More Than Just OK

Please hear what I am not saying. I'm not saying we must return to life a century ago. I love the progress we've made with technology, communication and efficiency in our lives. Those advances have helped feed millions and prevent diseases from wiping out huge populations.

This is not my point.

I'm suggesting we have dismissed virtues and values that parents once held sacred.

We've allowed our timeless values to weaken as the culture has changed.

We value convenience more than commitment. The key for any civilization to survive is to make cultural progress while sustaining timeless values and ethics.

Those who think that yesterday's kids grew up just fine have their head in the sand. In reality, we have dumbed down our standards and expectations of normal—so we can feel OK.

The last three generations of kids were capable of so much more than parents expected of them. Sadly, both parents and our culture at large faltered and required so little of them as they became teens, then grew into adulthood.

Today—I am sounding a cry. Let's not drift any further. Let's not pretend everything is OK. Our children and teens are loaded with potential. Many of them are sharp and creative. We must not dilute our expectations of them.

We must not fail to mentor them and prepare them for work. We must embody strong virtues, ethics and values. We must commit ourselves to model the way for them. Remember—children do what children see.

Parents, will you join me?

Dr. Tim Elmore is the founder and president of [Growing Leaders](#), a non-profit organization created to mentor youth across the globe.

With more than 30 years of experience and expertise in generational leadership, he and his team train middle school, high school and college students on thousands of campuses in the U.S. and internationally.

He also holds parenting events across the country sharing insight and practical steps on how to creatively parent the Millennial generation.

Tim has written more than 25 books, including the best-selling book series Habitudes®—a leadership curriculum that has been translated into nine languages, and his latest, [Generation iY: Our Last Chance to Save Their Future](#).

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