

GENERATION 2.0

A MANIFESTO FOR CONNECTING WITH TODAY'S YOUTH

THE UNFULLILLED - OUR YOUNG PEOPLE DESERVE MORE

Whether you are a parent, an employer, a school or a concerned citizen, this manifesto is designed to change not only the way we act towards young people but the way we think about them and our relationships with them.

Isn't it about time that, as a society, we stopped crushing the spirits of the next generation and instead embrace them and encourage them for the change that they can effect?

Most interventions that aim to change the behaviour of the next generation place blame or shame people into change. I believe that we need to take a more integrated and restorative approach with our young people. We need to find solutions that will last beyond the immediate situation and help guide young people to grow into conscientious citizens of the world.

This manifesto aims to bring together thought leaders and change makers in a common purpose and set guidelines to connect, engage and mobilise the next generation. This manifesto is authentic, loving and compassionate, while recognising the need for firm guidance.

SO JOIN ME AND START A REVOLUTION ON HOW WE VIEW, THINK, RESPOND AND ACT TOWARDS YOUNG PEOPLE.

WE CANNOT REMEDY ANYTHING BY CONDEMNING IT!

By joining in my quest you are saying that you agree with and will do your very best to uphold the following.



1

FOCUS ON LONG-TERM, INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS RATHER THAN WORN OUT, FIX-IT STYLE APPROACHES THAT DAMAGE THE SPIRITS OF THE NEXT GENERATION.

Quick fixes will not fix the problem.

So many of the problems with our young people are systemic, yet we think that a quick intervention will “fix them”. We see a problem and we rush to fix the young person with a quick solution. People are so much more complicated than “quick fixes”. The first question we need to ask is actually does that young person need fixing? In fact, what gives us the right to say anyone needs fixing? If we want to improve the situations then we must realise that it may take as long to improve as it did to break down in the first place. People only change when they are ready to and most of the time, this is not quick! Our young people are not appliances, something cannot just break and you call in someone to repair it. It is like any exercise programme, it is painful and it takes time to achieve results.

A lot of these quick fix methods assume that we can control another and force them into change and most importantly, they only look at one aspect it takes to be human.

I can work with a young person and do everything and really change their view on life, their attitude and behaviour, but if that young person sits on the couch all day eating chocolate, the improvement in their behaviour will be minute.

We need to be brave and really take these problems by the horns, implementing long term solutions that take an integrated approach to supporting our young people. We need to look at diet, nutrition, environment as well as the traditional talking therapies and interventions if we want to produce long term success.

LONG TERM SOLUTIONS THAT INTEGRATE ALL THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS TO PRODUCE LONG TERM SUCCESS SHOULD BE OUR ONLY OPTION. ■

2

MAKE YOUNG PEOPLE PART OF THE SOLUTION RATHER THAN MAKING THEM A PROBLEM THAT MUST BE DEALT WITH.

I believe that we must make young people part of any solution.

There are so many interventions at the moment that do to our young people rather than with them. The problems we have with our young people in society will not be solved by us, the adults. How can we solve something that we know nothing about ourselves? No amount of research and statistics can really tell us what it is like to be in their shoes.

If we want to make society a better place then we need to make young people part of the solution and not part of the problem. They need to be engaged, consulted and included in any decisions that are made about them.

Participation is the key to societal change. Only through participation will we get a very clear understanding of the challenges and problems and be able to support young people to go about finding their own solutions. ■

3 ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW RATHER THAN GETTING THEM TO SEE THINGS MY WAY.

To engage with the next generation we must meet them where they are at, not where we are at.

When we reach out to young people to connect and engage them we cannot do this from our place, as an adult, by looking at what we would want or what is important to us. We cannot and must not try to make the young person fit into our view of the world. We must, to effect any change, embrace this generation and connect with them from there.

We must stop seeing the internet and social media, pop culture, etc. as an evil. We must delve into their world feet first and look at the world from their point of view.

Parents, employers and the education system need to learn how to embrace YouTube, facebook, twitter, etc. and use them to reach people who may otherwise seem unreachable. We must look at the lyrics of modern music and glean from it what we can when it comes to the thoughts and feelings of our children. We must stop making them wrong for all they do and for what they believe and start to work with them from that point of view. ■

4 CONCENTRATE ON THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE YOUNG PERSON OVER ANY MEASUREMENT, BEHAVIOUR OR RESULT.

I believe that relationships are the key to any long-lasting change. If we want to influence and impact the next generation then we must ensure that we build our relationships with them over anything else.

It is so easy for us to focus on measurement, behaviour and attitude. So easy for us to look outside and blame a young person for a result that we find undesirable. It takes a strong, courageous person to look inside and say, "What am I doing that is not allowing this person to shine?"

Our interactions should not be based on how to get this person to do what you want but by asking whether what you are about to do is going to harm or damage the relationship.

To influence a young person we must be in what is known as a sphere of influence. As a teacher, a parent or employer, we need to be in this sphere if we are to effect any change and support this young person to be who we know they can be. We can only do this if we have a strong relationship with them. A strong relationship can do ten times more than any rewards or punishment can.

Our relationship with them should be based upon seeing a real human being and all the potential within, not just what they do. We should see the qualities in them and not just the behaviour in front of us.

These relationships must be based on trust, understanding and equality. So often, adult/young person relationships are based on the adult having power, no trust and the adult having little understanding. How can we expect our young people to grow up as conscious, giving citizens if we treat them with mistrust and contempt?

Change only happens when someone cares enough about themselves and others to want to change. And that can only happen when we care about a young person more than they hate themselves. We show this by putting the relationship with them above all else. Abolish petty grievances, minor conflict and selfish wants and needs.

Claim an end to petty grievances and worn out, control-style methods that have for so long strangled our young people and choose above all a relationship with them, a relationship that will raise a socially conscious, responsible and independent new generation. ■

5

ACCEPT THAT CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE AND ALWAYS AIM TO RECONCILE RATHER THAN BLAME OR PUNISH.

We need to accept conflict as a part of life. So often, we try anything to avoid it or ensure it does not happen, however I think that in order to move forward we need to accept that it is inevitable. Young people are, by their very nature, challenging. That is what helps society change. When we get different generations together with different ideals, conflict will happen; get over it!

I think we shy away from conflict because we don't know what to do, or believe we can handle it or we just don't want to make anyone feel bad. Conflict is a positive - we so often view conflict as a negative and to me it is a great thing as it is a chance to learn, grow and develop. Without conflict we would never learn to change anything. Conflict is merely someone saying to us that something is not working and we need to try another way of doing it. It is not someone breaking the rules or insinuating that we are a bad parent, employer, teacher or anything else. It is merely a reflection that we need to change something.

Managing conflict is about repairing harm, it is not about winning - enough said really!

The best way to repair harm is through a collaborative process including everyone involved. When conflict with a young person happens our aim should be to re-connect - whatever the situation.

We should:

- Aim not to blame or make the other wrong, it is simply to connect at a very human level.
- Accept responsibility for harm we have caused and encourage them to do the same
- Apologize for harm we may have caused and acknowledge the feelings of others. We
- Look for beneficial solutions. We do not look for what we want and how to fix, we look for beneficial situations that will work for the family as a whole. ■

6

PROBLEM SOLVE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE RATHER THAN ESTABLISHING GUILT OR APPORTIONING BLAME.

I believe that as adults we must take full responsibility for ourselves and our actions.

So often we blame our young people for the state of the country, for the way we feel for the problems within our homes and schools. We try to change that behaviour with rewards, punishments and correction programmes. We never look at ourselves as the adults and take responsibility for the part we played.

As a parent perhaps it is our reaction, as a teacher our need for compliance, as an employer our need for results that drive us to blame another rather than looking inwards and asking what we are responsible for.

As a society we are running around like headless chickens, trying to change our young people when the absolute truth is that the only person we have complete control over is ourselves. Think about it - can anybody (without force) really control another's behaviour? Can anyone really make you do something you do not want to?

We have no right to control another person through rewards, punishment, blaming and shaming and these practices will not produce long term success.

We need to love rather than hate, be firm and compassionate over blaming and shaming and above all, set clear agreements and boundaries in participation with the young people themselves. We need to start doing with them rather than to them. ■

People do not fail, systems fail.

I really believe that when we see failure in our young people it is down to a weakness in a system be it a school system, a family system or a societal system. As people we want to succeed and to succeed we need to find the right system and environment for us to do that.

As a society we are all too keen to blame the person rather than looking at the system, the how of how we are doing things and asking if perhaps there is something in that that needs to change. Families argue because their communication and organisational systems could do with some work. Employers fail because the systems set up to monitor performance, train or recruit need some work, students fail because they have not found their own way of studying or applying relevance to their studies.

So many people I work with get so wrapped in how that young person is making them feel rather than just looking at the facts of the system and putting a system in place that better deals with those facts.

In any organisation this might mean better training and a more effective performance management system, in families this might mean more clear agreements and for a student this could mean a more effective study plan. Where you see failure, I urge you to think system failure not people failure. Remember, people do not want to fail, it is just that we have just not found the conditions/systems yet to help them succeed. After over 14 years of working in this field I have yet to find a situation that could not be made better by tweaking an existing system or putting a new one in place. These systems may need to be tweaked, revamped and changed constantly and this is part of the process.

Everyone cannot fit into the same system and be successful and there is a system for everyone. ■

ON A FINAL NOTE

I believe that this generation of young people are engaged, motivated and have so much to teach us. As a society we need to shift and change to accommodate them, not alienate them.

As Pliny the Elder said, "What we do to our children, they will do to society."

So if we do not like what we are seeing them we must change what we are doing.

What can you do today to change the future for the next generation?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Newton, **Your Gen-Y Guide** is here to demystify the world of the next generation. Having spent the last 14 years immersed in the culture of the millennials, Sarah helps parents, schools and companies to connect engage and motivate young people in a way that gets long lasting results. A recognised thought leader in this field, Sarah is passionate about presenting her thinking and ideas in practical and useful ways that allow people to guide the behaviour of the next generation without crushing their spirits.

Regularly appearing in the media, Sarah is best known for her 8-part TV series, **'My Teen's a nightmare – I'm moving out'**.

Her first book, **"Help! My Teenager is an Alien - the everyday situation guide for parents"** was launched in March 2007. This book has now been translated into Polish and Chinese, so the alien has truly landed!.