

STAR Series

For Congregational Leaders

GENERATIONAL LITERACY

TASK: Today's twentysomethings face all the typical newness of early adulthood—new jobs, homes, relationships—but with an added layer of complexity: an ever-present online world, daily crisis news, and unprecedented instability. **Generational literacy** is key to supporting them effectively.

Cracking the Generational Code: Understanding Twentysomethings

1 SEPARATE AGE FROM GENERATION

Before diving into generational traits, distinguish between age-related behaviors and generational characteristics. Twentysomethings naturally focus on themselves—figuring out careers, communities, and life direction. This isn't selfishness; it's a normal developmental stage that deserves grace and empathy rather than judgment.

2 UNDERSTANDING GEN Z'S FORMATIVE EXPERIENCES

Five major influences shaped today's twentysomethings: They've had technology since birth, growing up inside the internet rather than just with it. Their school years included intense academic pressure and regular lockdown drills due to mass shootings. They witnessed their parents struggle through the 2008 Financial Crisis, making them financially cautious and institutionally skeptical. Online access exposed them to global injustices earlier than previous generations, fostering strong expectations for inclusivity. Finally, COVID-19 disrupted their critical developmental years, heightening mental health awareness and future uncertainty.

3 PRACTICAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

To connect with Gen Z effectively: Be authentic and transparent—they spot "fake" instantly. Prioritize mental health by offering safe spaces for discussing anxiety and identity struggles. Embrace digital ministry through platforms like Instagram and TikTok with short-form, engaging content. Offer purpose-driven opportunities that link faith to real-world impact through service and justice initiatives. When possible, make worship interactive and inclusive, allowing space for creativity and meaningful participation.

4 ADAPT YOUR COMMUNICATION STYLE

Gen Z operates differently than previous generations. Most prefer texting over phone calls, which can trigger anxiety. When phone conversations are necessary, send advance texts explaining the topic and timing. They're accustomed to instant gratification and shorter attention spans, so give them clear, actionable steps and avoid long-winded explanations. Start with your main point immediately rather than building up to it.

5 STAY CURIOUS, NOT CRITICAL

Remember that not every Gen Z person is anxious, and not every Boomer resists change. See people as individuals shaped by, but not confined to, their generation. Stay generationally literate by talking to people of different ages, paying attention to their communication preferences, and approaching differences with curiosity rather than criticism.

Generational literacy means understanding unique experiences across age groups so you can connect and serve more effectively across generations.



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ROADMAP

Curriculum Domain, Competency and Task Constellations

STAR Domain:	Listening
Associated Competency:	Relationship building and Compassion
Associated Task:	Equanimity
STAR Domain:	Young Adult Leadership
Associated Competency:	Resourcefulness and Communication
Associated Task:	Recruiting
STAR Domain:	Faith Journey
Associated Competency:	Creating Trust
Associated Task:	Spiritual formation
STAR Domain:	Culture
Associated Competency:	Adaptability
Associated Task:	Embracing failure
STAR Domain:	Intergenerational Connections
Associated Competency:	Mentorship
Associated Task:	Generational literacy and Digital literacy
STAR Domain:	Community
Associated Competency:	Authenticity and Inclusivity
Associated Task:	Managing conflict
STAR Domain:	Church Leadership
Associated Competency:	Influence and Purpose
Associated Task:	Creating buy-in
STAR Domain:	Frameworks, Programs, & Events
Associated Competency:	Learning
Associated Task:	Sticky programs and Measure and assess



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FOR YOUNG
ADULT MINISTRY