

The Next Health Crisis?

Mental Health Issues Among Millennials and Gen Z—Part 1



Serving Leaders in Life

This article was written by Dr. David Ferguson of Intimacy Therapy Network and hearthewhisper.com.



Pastors: The COVID-19 Pandemic has brought death in staggering numbers, economic collapse, widespread fear, and additionally another “invisible enemy” may soon take center stage, especially among NextGen youth and young adults. This enemy attacks the mental/emotional health of its victims bringing likely increases in violence, suicide, depression, anxiety, and other disorders.

Drawing from the *Intimacy Therapy Model* of our “Emotional Cup,” the Amygdala portion of our brain and related neuro-connections which link our cognitive and emotional pathways, we would anticipate that among these mental health issues, first to surface would likely be violence and suicide ideation, followed by longer term impacts from this “invisible enemy.” Some initial reporting during this COVID-19 crisis indicates a 30% increase in **domestic violence**.

The coronavirus and the ensuing social isolation is making it more likely that people will experience a greater strain on their mental health, leading to in some unfortunate cases to suicide and in others to domestic violence.

“We are seeing an increase in the number of survivors reaching out who are concerned with COVID-19,” says Katie Ray-Jones, the CEO of the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Ray-Jones told media outlets that those reaching out are describing how *“their abusive partner is leveraging COVID-19 to further isolate, coerce, or increase fear in the relationship.”*



In future Care4Pastors Strategy articles on this topic of NextGen mental health we explore other key topics such as:

- Some of the “Why” behind these somewhat unexpected and under-reported findings from the Barna/Gloo surveys
- Practical Care Strategies for parents, children’s and student leaders, teachers and clinicians



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“Of the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do...” (1 Chronicles 12:32).

“If you know anybody with a history of depression and suicidal ideation, this isolation is so likely to increase those feelings and those tendencies that that makes it all the more important to stay in touch.”

“We don’t want the church or families to be the one place that young people aren’t talking about their mental health.”

Without survey data addressing impact on children and teens, it could be anticipated that these even more vulnerable aged NextGen populations may be experiencing similar disruptions as millennials.

BUT our eyes are upon Thee: Let’s believe God together as King Jehoshaphat of Judah did, that even though at times in this battle we seem powerless before this “unseen enemy,” *“...nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You” (2 Chronicles 20:12).*

Matt Schroeder of the Great Commandment team is helping our friends at WHISPER provide excellent training and equipping in practicing connecting conversations. Below are a few tips from his recent WHISPER training videos. [\(click here to watch the video\)](#).

- The vast majority of the connected generation feels the impact of broad, global trends (77%) more than they feel loved and supported by others close to them (33%).
- Connecting conversations help remove aloneness and social isolation.
- Shift conversations from head-to-head to heart-to-heart.

Below is one simple actionable “how to” strategies for hope-filled conversations. Everyone has a story, and we need to first listen for it.

You might say for example: *“When this COVID crisis passes, what are you looking forward to? I know I’m looking forward to a night out with a couple of friends at a nice restaurant, where they actually wait on you! What about you?”*

Next, we listen for how we respond heart to heart. We listen, so we can care! In this case, we practice responding to what we have just heard so:

We can celebrate!

“Matt, I’ll look forward to you being able to do that.” [air high five]

