

The Next Health Crisis?

Mental Health Issues Among Millennials and Gen Z



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

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 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.”*



“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 makes it all the more important to stay in touch.”

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.

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]

We can find common interests.

“I’m also looking forward to seeing more of my family. Let’s plan to compare stories about our time of reconnecting with family.”



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View the full WHISPER training videos by clicking [here](#).

We can express compassion.

What if we asked a friend this question, *“What are you looking forward to when this crisis passes?”* and he says: *“I’m looking forward to getting out of the house to see other family members. My wife, special needs daughter, and I have been quarantined at home with the virus!”*

Neither celebration, nor finding common interest is appropriate in this situation, so how do we respond?

There will be times when we ask about hope, but the conversation uncovers people’s pain and heartache. We are still called to give a heart-to-heart response in these moments. We’re called to respond with compassion. Here’s what compassion might sound like:

“I’m very sorry you’re going through that, and I’ll be praying for your safety and getting to see your family soon”

“I’m so sad for you and your family. I can’t imagine how hard these times must have been. I’m looking forward to hearing about things you get to do with family.”

Now is a great time for hope-filled conversations at home or with friends. Our heart-to-heart connecting through hope-filled conversations means: you’re not alone, and I care!