

Kids, I don't know what's wrong with these kids today  
Kids, who can understand anything they say?  
Kids, they are disobedient, disrespectful oafs  
Noisy, crazy, sloppy, lazy, loafers  
And while we're on the subject

Kids, you can talk and talk till your face is blue  
Kids, but they still do just what they want to do  
Why can't they be like we were, perfect in every way?  
What's the matter with kids today?

That's from the musical, *Bye Bye Birdie*, first produced on Broadway in 1960. Even in the 1950's, when this musical was set, it was quite normal to do something I call *Generational Bashing*. This is when the adults of a particular era take a good look at the next generation of children and say, "We are doomed. These kids are lazy, stupid, and without morals." Here's another quote about these kids today:

"The children now love luxury; they have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs, and tyrannize their teachers."

Who said this about these millennials today? Socrates (469–399 B.C.).

It seems the right, nay, the duty, of the folks in their 40's and 50's to point out how terrible this new generation is compared to themselves. I'm in my late 40's now. When I was a kid, Tom Wolfe called me and my contemporaries the "Me Generation," totally self-absorbed and conceited. Those who know me now might agree with Mr. Wolfe, but I don't know if that counts for all of us in Gen-X.

So, when I read articles and see items in the media about these millennials that we at the College work with every day, saying that this generation is made up of "precious snowflakes" that melt easily, or weak because, "every kid gets a trophy now" I like to remind them that somebody said some pretty awful things about them once when they were young. And I'll bet in the end they turned out just fine. Or at least fine enough to write mean quotes about the next generation.

Recently I saw a video of a coach giving a press conference after a particularly hard loss. In the video he basically blamed the loss on "these kids today" and their mental weakness – that weakness due to the "everybody gets a trophy society." There were many comments affirming this with many "likes" on social media, as adult after adult said, "Yes! This generation is terrible!"

Maybe the coach and the commenters were right. But, here is something that crossed my mind when I saw that video. I'll bet the opposing team that just beat that coach was made up of the same generation as his team. The winning coach must have found a way to turn those "precious snowflakes" into an effective team, something that the losing coach failed to do.

Here, then, is the crux of this article. Each generation is different, true, but that doesn't mean that this difference is wrong or bad. I submit to you that what we perceive as being terrible about the next generation instead is just how adults view youth. And that it has been this way for hundreds of

generations. So, instead of generational bashing, the adults of this generation must adapt to the next generation to achieve the results we are after.

At NCCC we are attempting to adapt to these millennials and the way that they learn. Millennials live on their electronic devices so we web enhance every course so that instructors can offer a variety of class materials electronically, from presentation materials to the entire textbook. Students can see live updates of their grades, communicate directly with each other and the instructor, and even take their tests – all with their cell phones. We even offer online tutoring for many classes.

Wi-Fi is an incredibly important commodity to them, right up there with electricity and clean water. To that end NCCC added a Wi-Fi node, or connection point, to every single residence hall room so that only you and your roommate share a connection.

These kids today want flexible schedules, not just the Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes of the past. We offer fully online classes so that students can complete class assignments on their own time, within the overall schedule of the instructor, of course. We have “hybrid” classes that blend online class materials and some face-to-face meetings for those who want some flexibility but still want to see classmates and the instructor. Laboratory learning and some testing happens in this hybrid setting.

We recently went to 24 hour access to our library. This generation keeps very odd hours. They can come to the Chapman Learning Center, use their personal swipe card to unlock the door, and study the night away. One of our most popular login times for our learning management system is 1:00am.

This generation is achieving great things. Our student success scores are among the highest in the state. NCCC’s millennials are passing certification exams and getting jobs. Our students have one of the highest average salary for the first year out of college in the state, including the universities.

I have two millennials at home, my girls Abrielle and Alayna. Looking at them, I see how hard they work, their moral values, and how much they want to make a difference in the world. Jen and I could not be more proud of the wonderful women they are turning out to be.

So when I think about turning over the world to the next generation, I don’t see these weak-willed precious snowflakes. I see our wonderful graduates and my incredible daughters.

Fellow adults, I think the world will be just fine in their hands. Maybe it will be just a little bit better.

If you have any questions or comments about this column or anything else at the College you can email me at [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu). If you are a millennial, you can check me out on Instagram, Snapchat or Twitter.