

Reflection #3 for Pick-up #2 (Eng I and Eng IV)

READ THE ARTICLE AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS AT THE END

We Raised A Generation Of Narcissists? [Steve Chapman](#) | May 21, 2007

Growing older has many drawbacks and one unalloyed pleasure: passing judgment on the younger generation. Lately, people have been scrutinizing the members of Generation Y and finding them deficient.

What's wrong with the kids? A recent article in *The Wall Street Journal* reported that because they have been told since infancy that they were special, they believe it and expect to keep hearing it. "Bosses, professors and mates are feeling the need to lavish praise on young adults, particularly twentysomethings, or else see them wither under an unfamiliar compliment deficit," it said.

To critics, this generation is an army of self-absorbed narcissists with a swollen sense of entitlement. In my house, I have tried to prevent this outcome by reminding my kids, "The world does not revolve around you. It revolves around me." But apparently some parents didn't dispense that wisdom.

Jean Twenge, an associate professor of psychology at San Diego State University, reports that college students increasingly agree with statements indicating oversized egos, such as "I am an important person." Marian Salzman, a senior vice president at the advertising agency JWT, told *The Christian Science Monitor*, "Gen-Y is the most difficult workforce I've ever encountered," because they "are so self-indulgent."

But before Gen Y-ers start to feel bad about themselves, they should know that worse things were said about their parents. Back in the 1960s and '70s, it was universal wisdom that the kids of that era suffered from too much coddling. Vice President Spiro Agnew blamed student unrest and other problems on "spoiled brats who never had a good spanking." Best-selling author Norman Vincent Peale, author of "The Power of Positive Thinking," complained about youngsters whose parents felt a duty to "satisfy their every desire."

It's a hoot to hear modern kids described as self-indulgent by the generation that created its own culture out of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. Talk about a sense of entitlement: When the baby boomers came along, they (we) got the voting age lowered for their benefit. They also demanded that the drinking age be lowered, and it was -- only to be raised once they were safely into adulthood. Narcissism? Not for nothing were boomers dubbed the "Me Generation."

Most of the grousing is just what every new crop of kids hears from its elders, who forget that when they were young, they were equally infuriating. People who came of age during the Great Depression and World War II are known as the "Greatest Generation," but their parents didn't call them that when they were going through puberty. "Bye Bye Birdie," the musical that asked the question, "What's the matter with kids these days?" debuted during the Eisenhower administration.

The young people we accuse of being hopelessly self-satisfied are the same ones who have been told they had to score high on the SAT, get straight A's and cure cancer just to get into a decent college. Far from being hothouse flowers who wilt under pressure, they've coped with high expectations and intense competition.

This year, Harvard accepted only 9 percent of undergraduate applicants, the lowest figure in its history,

down from 18 percent in 1983. The same trend is evident at other selective schools.

You would think the epidemic of narcissism would translate into selfish, destructive conduct. But on most counts, today's youngsters comport themselves more responsibly than Mom and Dad did at their age.

In 1977, 29 percent of high-school seniors smoked cigarettes daily. By 2006, only 12 percent did. The number of high-school seniors who regularly use illicit drugs declined by 43 percent during that period, while the number who regularly consume alcohol dropped by more than a third.

Over the last quarter-century, the juvenile arrest rate has fallen as well. Teenage girls are far less likely today than before to get pregnant or to have abortions.

Maybe all that self-esteem has led modern youngsters to the conclusion that their lives and bodies are far too valuable to risk on reckless behavior. Maybe when they hold a high opinion of themselves, it's because they've earned it through diligence and self-restraint.

From all objective indicators, this generation is doing just fine. And if all they need to keep doing it is a steady supply of praise, I say give it to them.

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Narcissistic Personality Disorder

A pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts, as indicated by five (or more) of the following:

- has a grandiose sense of self-importance (e.g., exaggerates achievements and talents, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements)
- preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love
- believes that he or she is "special" and unique and can only be understood by, or should associate with, other special or high-status people (or institutions)
- requires excessive admiration
- has a sense of entitlement, i.e., unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations
- is interpersonally exploitative, i.e., takes advantage of others to achieve his or her own ends
- lacks empathy: is unwilling to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others
- is often envious of others or believes that others are envious of him or her
- shows arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes

I am a part of the Baby Boomer generation, but I did not drink, smoke, take drugs, or have pre-marital sex, and neither did 90% of those I knew. And I was born and raised in Miami and part of the popular group. Most of us also became responsible contributors to society (even those who were part of the 10%). So...the generalities of my generation are not true of most of that generation. Are the generalities of your generation true of you? Of most of your generation?

After reading the above article and definition, do you feel that members of your generation are narcissists? Are you self-absorbed, or just self-aware? What about others your age? Are you part of the norm, or apart from the norm? What is the norm for your generation? Do you feel that you are

more important than others, or just aware of your uniqueness? Do you do “community service” for the points and the “look good” value on your resume’, or because you want to give back to society? Do you work for the good of the whole, or just your good? Are you honest and honorable, or do you just look out for #1- no matter what you have to do to do that?

Are you thankful to those who have contributed to your life or do you feel entitled? Do you take personal responsibility for your actions, or do you blame others for your failings? Are you living the way that you hope your children will live? Are you treating your parents and elders the way that you want to be treated when you are a parent or elder? If not, why not? How do you feel about your choices? What do you feel you need to change? How do you plan to make any needed changes?