

MILLENNIALS VS. GEN Z: *The Dating Game*

It doesn't matter if you're an Echo Boomer or a Zoomer, finding love seems to be the ultimate mission impossible

WORDS BY
THUVESHNIE GOVENDER



PHOTO: GALLO/GETTY IMAGES

Real talk, I cannot be the only one who still gets confused over which age groups belong to Millennials and Gen Z. I mean, I still get shocked when I learn of people born in the 2010s! Like, wow, y'all exist? So, here's a short recap before I dive into the turbulent dating lives of both eras.

THE *great* DIVIDE

Even though Millennials sound like they lived a millennia ago, they're actually not that old – being born from 1981 to 1996 (so, the Thirty-Forty-somethings). Gen Z follows directly, born from 1997 to 2012 (the Twenty-somethings). So why the divide? How can someone born in 1996 be so different to someone born in 2001? The answer lies with technology and how it impacted society and the lifestyles in which we were raised, including how we pursue and view love.

Millennials were the first generation to have smart phones, to use instant messaging platforms (anyone remember BBM?) and social networking. However, not to the extent that Gen Z experienced these. Now, tech has boomed to the point where you can meet potential lovers on dating apps, social media platforms and other digital networking in a way that makes you feel like you have limitless options. A potential lover is just a click away, for better or worse...

LONG *versus* SHORT-TERM

According to Cape Town-based counsellor and dating expert Shelley Lewin, a major difference between the two groups is that Millennials may prefer direct communication and deep conversations, while Gen Z leans towards quick, informal messaging on

platforms like Snapchat or Instagram. "Millennials focus more on finding long-term relationships, while Gen Z prefers casual dating and keeping options open, influenced by hook-up culture and changing societal norms."

However, that does not mean that Gen Z doesn't value authenticity and transparency – they do, and that is something they share with Millennials. In fact, one may argue that since they have more access to information and are a generation that prides itself on being freer emotionally, and therefore have more self-awareness, that having DMCs (deep meaningful conversations) is incredibly important. It also increases vulnerability and raises the stakes of possible rejection, and therefore Gen Z prefers to keep things light and fun at first. Which may lead to other issues...

FEAR OF *the unknown*

"Gen Z exhibits a greater desire for instant gratification in dating – influenced by growing up in a time of instant access to information and entertainment – potentially resulting

FOR DATING & RELATIONSHIP CONSULTATION

Contact Shelley Lewin,
The Relationship Architect,
counsellor, coach and author
of Uncomplicated Love.
tracoaching.com

in a shorter attention span and quicker turnover in relationships," explains Shelley.

We all know the dreaded terms 'ghosting', 'situationship', 'Netflix and Chill' and other similarly non-committal terms that have taken over the dating realm. Key word: 'non-committal'.

Gen Z struggles with commitment because of FOMO from, ironically, having too many options; not knowing what a 'red flag' actually is; having a problem with communication due to hyper-individualism; as well as a general fear of rejection.

Millennials have similar fears and issues, except they are more likely to shut down any signs of non-commitment, which alas still yields a similar result of not finding the right relationship quick enough.

There are many similarities and differences between Millennials and Gen Zs, mostly because we have connected experiences one way or another. The Covid pandemic levelled the playing field for most singles out there, whatever their age, with the effects of self-isolation and the giant migration to online socialising.

So, don't take it too personally if you haven't found 'The One' yet. Dating is hard. The only way to find someone is to be true to yourself, be open to meeting people, know what you want and set those boundaries! **X**

SOME MEET-CUTES:

- "I met my girlfriend on Tinder. We've been together for almost two years now, going strong." – L, 25, CT
- "I met my girlfriend in high school." – T, 30, PMB
- "I met my boyfriend at a reunion party." – S, 25, PMB
- "I met my boyfriend from Ireland on Bumble." – G, 25, CT
- "I had a long-distance situationship with a great person I met on Instagram. It didn't work out and now I am determined to meet someone in person." – Anon.