

"A timely and perceptive study...more importantly, a must-read guide for parents, mentors and teachers...a valuable and wise resource."

Mark Bauerlein

Writer, *The Wall Street Journal* • Faculty, Emory University • Author, *The Dumbest Generation*

# GENERATION



**Our Last Chance to Save Their Future**

# TIM ELMORE

**Foreword by Dan Cathy**

President of Chick-fil-A

Employer of 50,000 Generation iY students

*“Those adults blessed with the privilege of programming our next generation of leaders should read this book right now! Dr. Tim Elmore’s research into the iY phenomenon provides insightful information why many young adults are struggling with their transition to adulthood as well as offers strategies to help them acquire the necessary tools for success.”*

**JOSEPH R. CASTIGLIONE** • Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics, University of Oklahoma

*“In my experience as a mother and senior corporate executive, I know the importance of bringing along the next generation of leaders. Dr. Tim Elmore outlines a solid plan of action. To date I have not found another book that equips a parent, employer, or educator to accomplish this task. This one gets it done! A must read for anyone in the position of growing future leaders.”*

**TAMI HEIM** • Mother of a 23-year-old daughter,  
Former president, Borders Inc.  
Partner, The A Group Brand Development

*“I have admired the work of Tim Elmore and his passion to train future leaders. He has incredible insights into the unique challenges of the iY generation and we’ve benefited from them at the University of Alabama. This book will help you understand their worldview and how they live, think, and learn. If you are a teacher, parent, coach, youth worker or employer, this is a must-read for you. Tim’s honest approach will help identify alarming concerns with practical solutions.”*

**KEVIN ALMOND** • Associate Athletics Director – Support Services  
University of Alabama

*“Dr. Elmore has committed a lifetime to the development of young leaders. He models passion, intelligence, creativity, discipline, and a relentless dedication for this cause. His recent work, Generation iY, is both profound and thought-provoking. Tim challenges all of us to be more engaged with the youth of our world to produce a fulfilling future not only for their generation but for generations to come.”*

**DR. JOHN GREEN** • Area Superintendent, Gwinnett County Public Schools

*“Dr. Tim Elmore’s insight into this generation is mind-boggling. The statistics are clear and sobering. This is a must-read for any adult with influence in the lives of today’s youth. Every parent, teacher, youth leader, coach and influencer should take a hard look at this study of the next generation. The game plan outlined in Generation iY will leave you motivated and encouraged to impact this unique group.”*

**CRAIG GROESCHEL** • Senior Pastor, LifeChurch.tv and Author, The Christian Atheist

*“This book is a clarion call to adult leaders to think critically about the environment in which a new generation is developing, to create teachable moments for engaging these students, and to courageously call them to leadership—living beyond themselves and for the common good. For more than a decade, Tim Elmore’s relevant, well-researched concepts on leadership, and his practical and sustainable solutions for influencing the next generation, were a tremendous resource for me as a student affairs leader working to develop students.”*

**WAYNE BARNARD, PHD** • *Director of Student Ministries, International Justice Mission*

*“Our children are our future leaders. My wish is that all children would be provided a strong foundation so they could grow up to be responsible adults who love who they are, care for and respect others and enjoy what they do. This journey starts with helping children develop good character. I see so many parents starting well with their children, but as they grow, some begin to play defense, rather than offense. Tim Elmore helps us understand what young people need today—from parents, teachers, coaches and employers. This book will reveal what we must avoid and what we must embrace to enable our children to become little leaders that mature into adult leaders.”*

**JO KIRCHNER** • *President and CEO, Primrose School Franchising Company*

*“Tim Elmore understands Gen Y. He also understands what our role is in leading and shaping this next generation of leaders. A cultural shift is taking place, and we must be educated, aware and prepared for our role. Generation iY provides the insight we all need.”*

**BRAD LOMENICK** • *Executive Director, Catalyst*

*“Tim’s mission has always been to grow leaders—when I was on a campus, I often called on him to facilitate leadership development training for my staff, so that they could provide the appropriate balance of challenge and support for university students. In my role with the CCCU, I’m on campuses throughout the nation, meeting leaders who are tasked with developing and educating the iY Generation—this book is a terrific resource for those interested in equipping this generation of students to their fullest potential.”*

**DR. MIMI BARNARD** • *Vice President for Professional Development and Research  
Council for Christian Colleges & Universities*

# Generation iY

*Our Last Chance to Save Their Future*

Tim Elmore

# 1

## A Peek into the Future

*A Letter from a Father to His Son  
in the Year 2030*

June 21, 2030

Dear Son,

*Congratulations on your baby-to-be! I remember the feeling your mom and I had when we discovered you would be born, way back in 1992. I know, I know—it was another century. But I remember the anticipation and the angst we felt knowing we were about to introduce another child into this world.*

*I've intended to say something to you for a long time but never found the words. I guess it's easier for me to write them than to say them to your face. I know it sounds cliché, but you'll be raising your child in such a different world than the one you grew up in. Everything's changed. In your early years, life seemed so easy; you were on top of the world. We hovered over you, intending to pave the way for your college and your career. We wanted you to know we believed in you; that you were special and could do anything you set your mind to. We wanted your self-esteem and self-confidence to be rock solid.*

*Looking back, I realize that in our efforts to help you, we actually hurt you. Please know, we meant well. As I ponder your situation now, with your marriage contract ending this month, I can see you're in a difficult spot. What's more, because we let you move back home with us after college, you weren't prepared for the world that awaited you. We just didn't know what to do. You depended on the meds to get you through each week, you lacked a realistic plan (what with the economy in 2014), and you were as addicted to video games then as you are today. We couldn't seem to find a way to prepare you for the future you now face. Now it's too late to change things.*

*Son, I feel I have failed you. With all the help your mother and I tried to give you, we ended up doing just the opposite. We hindered you from becoming the best version of you possible.*

*All of this hit me like a ton of bricks last night. I watched a documentary on culture change, and I was shocked to see the impact my generation (parents, teachers, coaches, youth workers, retailers, and employers) has had on yours. The program painted an all-too-familiar picture of you and so many of your friends:*

- Adults living in isolation because they can't stick with their marriage contracts—even those short-term contracts that have become so popular.*
- Social media junkies with little to no emotional intelligence or people skills.*
- Obese adults who are stressed and don't have the discipline to eat right and exercise.*
- Nearly an entire generation addicted to "happy pills" because of chronic anxiety and depression.*
- A generation of adults we allowed to pass through school without really learning.*
- People confused about their gender and identity because of the BPA you all consumed.*
- Midlife adults who are in a "love you hate you" relationship with their parents. (I keep wondering if that's true of us.)*

*All this saddens me because it's so unnecessary. With the baby coming, now it's your turn to lead, and I fear you aren't ready. We let you down.*

*What scares me most is the violence today. In 2010, we all began to read about the youth bulge. Your generation worldwide is huge. Remember what I told you then? When a nation's population of young people is over 30%, violence almost always follows. I'm afraid the terrorism you've seen in the last twenty years will only get worse due to the sheer size of your generation.*

*Son, I hope you can forgive me—forgive us—for not leading you better. But more important, I hope you can somehow make up for our mistakes. You're about to become a dad and make me a granddad. Please lead this little one well. Do better than we did in raising the next generation. It may be our only chance to save our future.*

*I love you,  
Dad*

IS THE LETTER YOU'VE JUST READ FICTION?

Maybe.

It's a product of my imagination—but it's an informed imagination. The ideas aren't far-fetched. They represent a future that could well be a reality if adults today don't do something different to engage the generation of kids now coming down the pike.

A few years ago, I had a hunch. I met with adults and young people to talk about the year 2030. I talked to parents, educators, youth workers and employers as well as futurists who have been studying the next generation. I also met students in focus groups and wrote to thousands via Facebook, blogs, and e-mail. I especially wanted to hear what young people foresee as they peer into the next twenty years. From all those interactions, I have gotten a glimpse into the possible future of the kids who are approaching adulthood right now.

To be honest, I'm worried about what I've seen.

I have worked with young people for more than thirty years now—as an educator, a parent, a mentor, and an employer. Until fairly recently, I have remained quite optimistic about their future. But these days I'm feeling something different. I am frightened about what the world may look like in years to come and angry at how we have failed the generation who will be running that world.

They are your kids. They are your neighbor's kids. They are your students. They are your athletes. They are your young employees. They are your future. Our future.

They are Generation iY.

And I believe they're in trouble.

## Introducing Generation iY

The people I'm talking about are the latest wave of what is commonly called Generation Y, or the Millennials, generally defined as those born between 1984 and 2002. The younger Millennials, born after 1990, resemble their earlier Gen Y counterparts in many ways, but in volumes of other ways they stand in stark contrast to them. (I'll discuss this later in more detail.) More than any previous group, this younger population has been defined by technology—which is why I believe it's accurate to call them Generation iY.

Why this title? It's because of the tangible impact of the “i” world (the Internet) on their lives. This population, born in the 1990s and afterward, has literally grown up online. Theirs is the world of the iPod, iBook, iPhone, iChat, iMovie, iPad, and iTunes. And for many of them, life is pretty much about “i.”

### The Future in a Word

What will Generation iY's future be like? After talking with thousands of students about what they think, I've come up with twenty-six phrases we could hear from adults in the year 2030. Some are tongue-in-cheek, some more likely than others, but together they paint a sobering picture of what life will be like for Generation iY unless something changes.

1. "I'm really tired."
2. "I'm distracted."
3. "I'm obese."
4. "I'm on my fifth career and ninth job in a decade."
5. "I'm overwhelmed, but I'm dealing with it."
6. "I'm impatient. I make short-term commitments."
7. "I'm finishing a marriage contract of three years."
8. "I'm reinventing myself constantly."
9. "I have no innocence."
10. "I'm seeing a therapist."
11. "I love and hate my parents."
12. "I'm bored."
13. "I'm spending money out of control—a quarter of a million each month."
14. "I'm depressed."
15. "I'm self-absorbed."
16. "I spend much of my home time online."
17. "I'm living in a greener world."
18. "I'm passionately following the reunion tour of Beyoncé and Lady GaGa."
19. "I'm stressed. I have little time to rescue my soul."
20. "I pursue instant pleasure and entertainment and will spend to get it."
21. "I'm medicated."
22. "I'm living in a virtual world. (I plan to try a virtual marriage.)"
23. "I've learned to do things faster. My pace of life is accelerated."
24. "I experiment with preferences in gender and religion."
25. "I still want to change my world, but I'm cynical about the possibilities."
26. "I'm a leader in society now, but I'm ill-prepared."

On Earth Day in 2009, you may remember a new automobile was introduced to America: the Peapod. It was, in essence, an iCar. You start the car by plugging in your iPod or your iPhone and begin interacting. It's a new world—an iWorld—and it belongs to young people who have grown up in the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first. They are connected not only by age, but by shared music, shared tragedies and crises, shared Web sites and TV programs, shared heroes, shared technology, shared wars, and shared media icons.

Ready or not, they are now entering the adult world. And unless we wake up and make some adjustments in the way we interact with them, I predict rough

waters ahead. We can already see several of the unintended consequences of this new world we've created for them—a world that allows for high speed, constant connection, sedentary lifestyles, pitiful relational skills, and a large dose of narcissism.

I can't say for certain that my fictional letter will come true. If current trends continue, however, the picture I've painted might just become a reality.

But it's not too late. The future of Generation iY has the potential to change for the better if we act now.

That's why I've written this book. It's for parents, teachers, coaches, youth workers, retailers, pastors, employers—anyone in the position to lead Generation iY. Although it contains some bad news—some honest indictments about the way this generation of kids is being raised—it's primarily a book of hope. It's full of practical ideas for understanding iYers, engaging them effectively, and leading them wisely.

We've got to do it.

Their future—our future—depends on it.



### **LINKING UP**

For a mini-novel that tells the story of a high-school reunion in the year 2030 and vividly portrays the potential lifestyles of Generation iY, see [www.SaveTheirFutureNow.com/2030](http://www.SaveTheirFutureNow.com/2030).