

Millennials Are Looking for Happiness in All the Wrong Places

The divide between my millennial generation and older ones is stark.

While millennials are [better educated](#) than prior generations, we are also the least happy. Millennials have [higher rates of anxiety](#), are generally [disengaged at their jobs](#), and [are deeply fearful about the future](#).

Some would argue that these feelings are the natural consequence of a world filled with greater uncertainty. But are we truly living in a more uncertain time than the Cold War, the Great Depression, or other traumatic periods in American history?

With unprecedented wealth and prosperity levels and general global stability, the evidence seems to suggest otherwise. Something else must be causing the worrisome downward trend in millennial emotional health. I have an idea of what that cause might be.

In college, my classmates and I were constantly encouraged by fellow students, professors, and speakers to “pursue our own truth” and to “do what makes us happy.” Even at my *alma mater* Georgetown, a Catholic University, morality and truth were little more than relativistic tools to be used at our disposal and justify immediate gratification.

Universities were once intended to be bastions of academic freedom in which young scholars grappled with big ideas, pursuing truth with a capital “t.” Today, we’re encouraged to dive into any field of study we care for, with little guidance or constructed hierarchy when it comes to valuable knowledge.

Our professors told us we could find purpose in temporal affairs, yet we somehow lost the sense that we were a part of something greater. We substituted a wholehearted pursuit of

“the truth” for “our truth.”

The dominant philosophy today is built on a self-focused worldview that everything we need to know can be found on our own. The idea of pursuing one’s own truth requires a great deal of pride. It gives a false sense of comfort to the individual that he or she can look within to determine all that is right or wrong and needs little beyond that. Those who do so, however, find themselves disappointed by the shallowness of the world, lacking answers to difficult questions, and grasping for deeper meaning to no avail.

Perhaps it is time for us to seek alternatives.

[Declining rates of religiosity](#) correspond with millennials’ growing disenchantment with the world. [Studies consistently show](#) religious participants to be happier and more engaged members of society, but millennials are largely missing out.

Religion provides an individual with a community of people who care about one another’s well-being. Those involved in organized religion show a [greater likelihood to](#) vote, engage in charitable giving, and volunteer for service organizations. Religion also provides a foundation and worldview through which to interpret the events of the world and process tragedy and grief.

Those who join a religious community have access to a rich history of thinking. Rather than each individual assuming the burden of defining their own moral code, crucial to most faiths is the willingness to humble one’s self at the doorstep of history and recognize the thoughts and ideas of those who have gone before.

Man’s search for meaning continues. The question at hand is whether young people will continue to cut themselves off from the institutions which offer the deepest opportunity to discover the greater truth which exists beyond our own selves, or instead continue to find themselves persistently unhappy.

We must reject the moral relativism perpetuated by our current culture and education system. Instead, we need to recognize that the greatest truth is only found beyond our own selves.

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