

An Observation Contrary to the Millennial Stereotype

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Over the past ten years or so I have often read reports by people with lots of letters after their names regarding the short attention span of Millennials. I could cite quite a few of them that report that a Millennial can only pay attention for 6 seconds before the mind wanders off to something else. And I believed it. I had to. I had children and saw it with my own eyes. Today I realized that 'seeing it with my own eyes' was actually a big part of the problem.

Because I had been predisposed to the existence of the pervasive short attention span syndrome, I accepted what I saw without question. When I was in my classroom, teaching (or trying to teach) Millennials, I often saw the eyes wander to the screen of their cell phones, followed by a quick tap-tapping, and then back to the ceiling, the person in the next seat, someone's hair, a bug, or a piece of dust – but seldom back to me and my lecture.

In conversation with Millennials, I was often given the index finger (wait) while they answered a text from someone else. Dinner time was almost without conversation unless the cell phone was silenced. Of course that meant that the dinner conversation was limited to the topic of how mean the parents were for taking the phone away.

In a brief, but clear, fit of cognition, today I realized that I was unconsciously sorting the data to meet a preconceived notion. I had totally forgotten that those same intellectuals who had written about the short attention span often wrote lengthy analyses of the psychoses associated with the incessant playing of video games. Of course, I had accepted that as an addiction and sign of societal decay just as I was supposed to have done.

Today, I realized that the two syndromes are mutually exclusive. after all, I asked: *How can a person with a 6 second attention span spend 6 hours playing a video game?*

The answer came to me as I listened to the news. Trump did this. Hillary did that. Paul Ryan harrumphed. Mitch McConnell grumbled. Ferguson was investigated – again. Rand Paul stood proudly atop his sometime shaky claims to being a constitutionalist and Nancy Piloni snickered. Elizabeth Warren claimed poverty from her mansion but was overshadowed by the same claim from Hillary. Iran wants to nuke Israel. North Korea wants to nuke the White House but will settle for Seoul. China is building islands in the ocean to expand their territorial waters and Putin is posing for the next Kremlin calendar.

The Millennials aren't suffering from a short attention span at all. They're hiding. They hide in video games. They hide in their wandering. They don't want to learn, through conversation or through classroom lecture, because it's a crazy scary world we're leaving them.

Fortunately, there are those who face the future with a firm stare and a resolve to not give in to the insanity that we are leaving to them. Unfortunately, many of those are reacting emotionally to current

events and not philosophically to the cause of the upheaval. Their solutions, the emotional ones, will serve their children no better than ours have.