

*My*  
**MILLENNIALS**



*A bridge between two generations*

Nisreen Khalaf

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Permission should be addressed in writing to Nisreen Khalaf at P.O. Box 11772 Burke, VA. 22009.

#### Editors:

Sigrid Macdonald  
Book Magic, <http://bookmagic.ca>

Dave Falle  
[dave@hasmarkservices.com](mailto:dave@hasmarkservices.com)

#### Cover Designer & Layout Artist:

Anne Karklins  
[annekarklins@gmail.com](mailto:annekarklins@gmail.com)

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## **DEDICATION**

*To my three beautiful millennial children:  
Dena, Tarek, and Natalie.  
I learned from you more than you could have imagined,  
and you heard me more  
than I could have expected.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

So many people played an essential role in my life and inspired me to write this book. I never thought of being a writer, although I wrote in journals to myself often as a way to release stress, anger, or frustration. However, I always had a passion for the young generation, whom I not only raised but also mentored, coached, and befriended throughout my career. I always understood millennials and felt young at heart around them. I commend the millennial generation, and I am very grateful for the things I learned from them. Without this innovative generation, I would not have come out of my box and written this book.

I am thankful for my children, Dena, Tarek, and Natalie, who supported me in writing this book and shared their perspectives openly. It is not easy for a child to be interviewed by his or her mother, but my children wanted me to interview them to help me get the message across.

I have been a student of Bob Proctor for more than a year. I attended a number of his seminars and took a 13-month course with him that taught me how to believe in myself, how to set a goal and go for it with no fear, and how to go after my passion. The material that I studied in that period, and the coaching the Proctor Gallagher Institute provided me, changed my life and my children's. I would not be the person I am today if I had not been introduced to this mastermind person.

I am particularly thankful for Peggy McColl, whom I met at one of the Proctor Gallagher Institute events. The moment I heard her speak, I knew that I wanted to be connected to this talented woman. Peggy guided me and supported me in my writing through a fantastic course she provides online. Peggy is a mother who struggled to be the successful woman she is today. She generously shared her experience on how to be a successful writer with her excellent course, which made me just want to write, when I had almost given up.

A special thank you to every millennial, manager, baby boomer, and parent who allowed me to interview them and were generous enough to share their perspective. I also had the pleasure of interviewing and chatting with organizations working with millennials that opened doors and ideas for me beyond my expectations. Thank you, Linda Staheli and her team from Global Co Lab Network. You are doing fantastic work for millennials, which shows how millennials can be committed to a cause they have a passion for and excel at it.

I hope you enjoy reading my personal experience as a mother of millennials and that you get to see what a phenomenal generation we have today, which will lead us to a better future.

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## INTRODUCTION

As a parent of millennials, I want to start by saying to millennials: I get you. It is difficult to raise children regardless of what generation they come from, but the more the world develops and advances, the more parents have to race to keep up. I do not necessarily enjoy today's social media, but I am curious to know what today's generation is up to and why they are obsessed with it. I also want to be modern and minimize the gap between my children and me as much as possible. The only way I can do that is to be part of their daily technology. Honestly, I met many parents who are more hooked on social media than their children are, especially on Facebook. I also know a few parents who decided to create accounts on different social media platforms to monitor their children. One friend of mine said, "I know where my daughter is and what she is up to through her Facebook. She never shares anything with me when I ask her, so I had to sneak up on her." Of course, her daughter ended up limiting her mother's view of her posts, which made the mom go through other family members' Facebook accounts to check up on her daughter. Unfortunately, millennials do not have much of a private life through social media. They tend to overshare with their postings, which enables the world to know what they are up to and judge them accordingly.

Social media stresses me out, and I find myself bored following people who post too much. I am not referring to millennials only. I am also referring to older generations who became very active on social media. When I first started participating in social media, I enjoyed connecting with old friends whom I hadn't seen for decades. It was nice to see where life had taken them and how their children were doing. Then it became an addiction and an obligation. In my generation, friends often gathered: played, talked, socialized, cooked and did many things together. Today, we hang out through social media, and ironically, if we do meet in person, the older generation appears to criticize social media—even though they are so active on it. I started wondering: if so many people are active on social media, yet they do not like it, why the heck are they on it? Once I noticed how much today's technology was affecting me and taking me away from doing better things with my time, I decided to cut down on its use.

Then my experience with millennials and their use of today's technology started to confuse me. I found myself dumbfounded when my child was in middle school. Her friends would come over and spend their social time chatting together on their phones while sitting next to each other. What happened to playing with Barbie dolls and cars? I struggled to understand and accept this situation, but I also knew it was not under my control. This was a trend that I could either accept, and hope to God that it was only a phase, or work around it without criticizing it. As a parent, the more you criticize, the more your children want to do the forbidden to get back at you. At a certain point, the gap between our generation and our children's makes us the enemy. How can we avoid becoming the enemy and become a friend, without compromising our integrity and beliefs? I don't have a magical answer, but I did a number of experiments until I came up with some tips that might help parents and parents-to-be. I also hope that I can help my children and their generation because they will be in our shoes soon; the gap between them and their children will hit them at one point. Isn't this how it goes: "history repeats itself"?

My intention with this book is to share my outlook on millennials. I do not intend to criticize a generation or a workplace. This is why I do not mention the real names of the people I interviewed or the places where they work. I am interested in the millennial generation, and I believe I can speak about them with a modest understanding. At the same time, I do not plan to mask millennials with perfection. They are not perfect; no generation is.

My relationship with millennials started with my three children: Dena, born in 1988; Tarek in 1989; and Natalie in 1998. Raising my children as a single mother was not an easy job, but a parent's job is never easy. I always say: parenthood does not come with a manual. We have to figure it out as we go. In addition to learning firsthand about millennials from my children and the young colleagues I worked with, I also interviewed about twelve millennials from different age groups for this book. I wanted to hear directly from them and represent their thoughts. To bridge the gap between the two generations, I interviewed parents of millennials.

I am sure my parents found similar difficulties raising my siblings and me, but life during my childhood was different from my children's. We grew up more in the streets than sitting in front of a computer or a TV. We were innovative children creating games out of our imagination, and we would play out with the neighbors' kids all day until our parents called us in because it was getting dark. I give credit to my father, who believed strongly in education and always made sure we were on top of our studying. However, my parents and their generation were more concerned about providing for their family than spending quality time with their children. Mothers, at that time, did not do much outside the house; they were mostly stay-at-home moms. Men were the breadwinners; they needed to have jobs and secure incomes to raise large families at that time.

While growing up and becoming a teenager, I had questions and needs. I didn't have the relationship with my parents to discuss any sensitive issues I was facing, let alone to talk about puberty. Often, I wished I had better parents, and used my imagination to picture the ideal parent I wanted to be. Then, I made a promise that when I grew up and had children, I wanted them to feel that they could talk to me and trust me. True to my word, I established a relationship with my children where they always felt they could discuss any topic with me without hesitation.

My relationship with millennials has continued throughout my professional life. Many of my coworkers, who are considered of the millennial generation, have come to me for professional advice. Despite their lack of experience, they have asked the right questions, which one would expect their managers to have already informed them of. They are basic—yet crucial—matters. For example, millennials have asked me many times how to better manage their time and multitask. Also, they were unsure if they were doing the work properly because their managers were not providing them with positive or negative feedback. Consequently, the millennials had to work under stress, with uncertainty and frustration when their work-related issues could have been easily solved. I tried personally—not as part of my portfolio—to give them feedback and answers to their questions to the best of my ability. I realized that all millennials want, in starting their careers, are mentoring and feedback. Then, they will give their best.

Unfortunately, our organizations and companies are not always that invested in their staff, especially in the younger generations. I do not want to see the young generation burnt out at a job they do not like or where they feel unhappy, as I experienced. If, thirty years ago, I had this awareness, I would have

been retired by now. My head convinced me that it was too late to fix what time had damaged for me, but my mind told me that I am not damaged. I just lived life until I figured it out. Now, I can provide a shortcut for those around me who are heading toward a promising future by sharing with them what I have learned.

My children are now adults who have joined the workforce. They have no previous work experience and are relying on the knowledge they gained throughout the fourteen or fifteen years of their education. While they were in high school and college, they didn't realize that they were not taught the skills that they needed for the workforce. Today, my children call me to complain about their work, and the young staff at my job complains to me about similar issues. I came up with the idea of helping the young generation by advising them, "Don't allow life to drag you down until retirement." By this, I mean that millennials need to figure out solutions and better ways to create a future, rather than simply to accept life as it is. I urge millennials to continue to grow, develop, have adventures, and retire when they want, rather than leaving the workforce at some specific "magical age" embraced by my generation.

The United States Census Bureau states that there were 83.1 million millennials, and there were 75.4 million baby boomers by 2015. That comprises a large section of the American population. Imagine when both generations, hand in hand, build a bridge to the generation coming after: Generation Z, or Boomlets.

Let me share with you this beautiful poem by Will Allen Dromgoole, entitled **“The Bridge Builder.”**

*An old man going a lone highway,  
Came, at the evening cold and gray,  
To a chasm vast and deep and wide.  
Through which was flowing a sullen tide  
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,  
The sullen stream had no fear for him;  
But he turned when safe on the other side  
And built a bridge to span the tide.*

*“Old man,” said a fellow pilgrim near,  
“You are wasting your strength with building here;  
Your journey will end with the ending day,  
You never again will pass this way;  
You’ve crossed the chasm, deep and wide,  
Why build this bridge at evening tide?”*

*The builder lifted his old gray head;  
“Good friend, in the path I have come,” he said,  
“There followed after me to-day  
A youth whose feet must pass this way.  
This chasm that has been as naught to me  
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be;  
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;  
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him!”*

This is my objective for writing this book: I want to build a bridge for the millennials to cross to the other side successfully. I hope that millennials, their parents, and those working with millennials, will learn a great deal from reading this, and find it useful in their relationships and in dealing with social media, applying to colleges, and finding good jobs.

## About the Author



Nisreen Khalaf is a mother to three millennials, whom she has raised to challenge the status quo and go after what they want in life, believing that they each have too much potential to settle for an "average" job and lifestyle.

Nisreen has worked in nonprofit organizations for over twenty years in development and humanitarian aid. Her passion for people and desire to see a world full of hope and love compel her to focus on her career working for refugees. Currently, Nisreen works for an American organization as the Director of Humanitarian Aid and In-Kind providing various health, education, economic development and emergency responses to refugees in the Middle East region.

Nisreen is a Thinking Into Results facilitator and coach, who guides her client to achieve the success they so crave and to fulfill their dreams. Nisreen, who is intensely growth- and goal-oriented, helps individuals, groups, and companies discover their deepest goals and desires, reach their potential, and achieve their personal and professional goals.

She is particularly interested in working with millennials and has many years' experience coaching them to be their best selves. Be sure to follow Nisreen on [www.mymillennialsbook.com](http://www.mymillennialsbook.com) and at [www.nisreenkhalaf.thinkingintoreresults.com](http://www.nisreenkhalaf.thinkingintoreresults.com).