

Bonni: [00:00:00] Engaging millennials and the higher ed classroom. This is Teaching in Higher Ed, Episode 13.

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Bonni: [00:00:19] Welcome to this Episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. This is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to increase our personal productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Bonni: [00:00:43] Thanks for joining us on Episode 13 of Teaching in Higher Ed. I am so pleased to be able to welcome a friend a former colleague and someone I still treasure being able to be in touch with.

Bonni: [00:00:57] Today we are joined by Chip Espinoza. Chip is the director of organizational psychology at Concordia University. He is an author. He is a trainer. He is a speaker. He is. I love this description on your Web site. He is someone who helps organisations become worthy of human habitation.

Chip: [00:01:20] Yeah that's something worth doing.

Bonni: [00:01:22] I love it. And so today we're going to talk about not just to help organizations become worthy of human habitation but help classrooms and higher ed be worthy of the students who join us there. And today we're going to be talking about a generational cohort called the millennials.

Bonni: [00:01:39] But I'm going to encourage you to keep listening even if you don't necessarily have the largest population in your program as millennials so. So Chip tell us a little bit about what the millennials are, but also why we need to care about that generational cohort even if perhaps our students are a bit older.

Chip: [00:01:58] Well millennials are people born basically between 1980-2001/2002. If you look at demographers they'll put them all the way as early as 78 and as late as you know being born in 2000. I mean you know 2003 at the end.

Chip: [00:02:16] So you'll find that since you have boundaries so it's not hard to fast. You know whenever we talk about generational analysis we're doing a lot of generalization and so one thing I want the audience to know right up front is that we're not saying that all these people were the same just because they're the same age.

Chip: [00:02:33] But perception of them creates a reality and a lot of faculty have a perception of what a millennial is that creates the way they interact with them and that's not always a good thing. And so I'm looking forward what I always like to say about this topic is my desires not to have a conversation about millennials but I want to have a conversation with millennials.

Chip: [00:02:56] I don't want to have a conversation about teaching what I want to have a conversation with teachers in the sense that we understand each other.

Bonni: [00:03:02] I really love that. Thank you so much. I think about there was a book called Quiet: The Power of Introversion in a World That Won't Stop Talking. Susan Cain is the author and my husband Dave is a self described introvert and he read that book and just loved so much that he was able to really identify

Bonni: [00:03:22] And no we can't divide the entire group into extroverts and introverts but to the extent that when we have noticed patterns and trends then that does help us think a little bit differently perhaps about our teaching and speaking about teaching differently.

Bonni: [00:03:38] You have the unique experience of having taught with people before we had this designated general generational cohort called millennials. And then after. So I wonder if you might just snap a little picture or maybe a video of your classroom in the early 90s and then tell me about your classroom right now today.

Chip: [00:03:57] OK well one of the things that got me interested in writing and managing the millennials I so much loved my students and I thought boy they're

they're having kind of a burn entry into work culture shock feeling like it wasn't all that they wanted it to be. And so I thought how can I help them.

Chip: [00:04:17] I thought one of the best ways to do it was help managers to understand them because what I noticed in the 1990s when I had a student walk in the class and many of you will relate to this out there is you to hand out a syllabus.

Chip: [00:04:29] Nobody would even look at it. They would just throw it in their backpack and you would start by talking. In the 2000s you hand out a syllabus - they have a red pen in their hand they're going line by line. They've got their attorney on speed dial and they're saying, "Is it 10 to 12 page midterm is 10 pages a C and 12 pages an A?"

Chip: [00:04:49] One thing that millennials think is that the quality and quantity are equal. Another thing is because they've been raised in a participating kind of society particularly at home with a pendulum shift I think from training to nurturing from a parenting model. I've got Dr. Spock you can read him and I think he's he's the one who created all of it. But one of the things to them...

Bonni: [00:05:15] And by the way - he's not talking about Star Trek. [laughter]

Chip: [00:05:17] Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. That dates me a little bit.

Bonni: [00:05:21] No it doesn't. I came in late to parenting so its funny.

Chip: [00:05:27] There you go. There you go. But the thing is the difference between 2000 and 90s is that in the 2000s my students felt everything was negotiable that a syllabus was a starting point. It's signed three books and 3 three books us too much reading for two units back in the day when you have 2 unit class and so you would find that they really felt like. Now for me I love that dialogue and that interaction.

Chip: [00:05:54] In kind of one of the transferable things that I learned in my research for managing that correlates to teaching is that the real effect of people engaging in this population - invite them to challenge them - and question them. OK?

Chip: [00:06:08] And if you're a person that's put off by that like many of my colleagues to sit around and listen in the faculty room to what they think and

how they feel. Many of them say things like, "I got to get out of this. Things have changed. I'm not having fun. I don't get these [people]."

Chip: [00:06:22] You know all that kind of stuff but rather than really step back and say What do I need to do to be more effective. Where do I need to adapt or what is it about them that bothers me today?

Bonni: [00:06:35] And I think one thing that can be helpful to Chip is to say that it isn't like we necessarily ourselves are so evolved that we're immune from those frustrations. Let's just get on the table what are some of the frustrations of students coming in today?

Chip: [00:06:50] I got to tell you this is the best. I'm teaching a class where my book is the textbook. You talk about a perfect gig right? And we're going around the table now. I have a mixed audience now for many of you out there that you may have people that aren't millennials in your class you may be teaching cohort style or whatever.

Chip: [00:07:08] I had a class that was mixed from baby boomers Gen Xers and Millennials. And so I asked the question the second I had a class about what did you think of the book that you had to read? And so it goes around everybody.

Bonni: [00:07:21] "Remember this guy. My picture's here."

Chip: [00:07:22] Yeah exactly. And I get to this this one young lady and I love her dearly and she goes, "Well I think it's a bunch of hogwash." Well you should have seen the body language of everybody around the table particularly the baby boomer and the Xers to go how could you ever do. So they start defending, "you know why I loved it."

Chip: [00:07:44] And I started laughing and I said I asked her a question and she answered it honestly she felt like I was asking an authentic question and she gave an authentic answer. Now for us we all know that we're supposed to kind of you know "juice each other" tell each other what we want when you know when the boss says "What do you think of that idea?"

Chip: [00:08:03] "Oh, love it boss!" But this generation when they're really asked a question they'll respond authentically. It's refreshing. I like it now by the end of the class here's where I challenged her in the end for you pros out there you'll relate. I said OK so what's your theoretical framework for saying it's hogwash.

Chip: [00:08:22] As she goes I don't have one. And I said well then by the end of this class I want you to have one. I see now I've got two or three but I want you to go find out what they are.

Bonni: [00:08:32] Yeah I had I had sort of thought of this until you just said that but I had a tend to be very sensitive to remarks that are I mean racist. So there was this was a small group setting with an individual. It was his third try through my class he had not passed two times prior.

Bonni: [00:08:54] At one point he had dropped out before the drop date whatever this was. And so. So definitely not comfortable with a woman in a position of power either. There were some issues there but he was trying to get them in the principal's a marketing class to be comfortable speaking in professional terms about people of different ethnicities.

Bonni: [00:09:14] And so I'm trying to teach them the proper words to use and the proper descriptors and so we're going to say things like tend to purchase more or attend those kinds of things that will help us be able to speak about different demographics in the marketing profession.

Bonni: [00:09:32] And I don't mean to repeat what he said because it's just not worth it. But he said a very extremely rude thing about why a particular population of people was growing having to do with them being lazy and they just lay around in bed all day. That's why they're growing I wink wink nod nod.

Bonni: [00:09:46] I mean it meant there were a couple dynamics going on. I'm furious. But I also know he wants me to be furious.

Chip: [00:09:54] Right.

Bonni: [00:09:55] And then the other thing that's going on is the the couple of students who were with him to present the project are just horrified and waiting to out. So I said I said, "So do you have any evidence to support that? I mean where's the. So laziness. Do you have anything to back that up" I ignored the other remark. "No I don't."

Bonni: [00:10:15] "Well my recommendation would be in a professional setting. That's not something that you're going to want to say because it's going to be offensive whether or not the person is that particular race or ethnicity. So we took it that way. So I think I mean we're sort of talking about two different things

here in terms of I think he was just trying to get a reaction. I don't think the woman maybe was trying to necessarily get a reaction.

Chip: [00:10:34] No not at all. She was being authentic she was saying you know I don't like it. And so it was great by the end then we had a lot of fun with that. And she understood the point at the end of it is to understand that you know to just simply disagree with something

Chip: [00:10:51] Which is is a thing that I think puts people off in particularly academics where we have this pushback or this why do we have to do this when we have to learn this like this. This book is old. Yeah you know we're saying OK well this is poetry. You know the book may be old. This is ancient literature. The book's got a be old.

Bonni: [00:11:10] That is sort of the nature you were talking about your classroom in the early 90s in your classroom. Now you're teaching this very semester so because one of the other things is that when someone has a question they're not necessarily going to look to you.

Bonni: [00:11:25] Although the boomers will but it will tend to be that the millennials will just pop out the smartphone right. So talk about access to information and where subject matter experts come in.

Chip: [00:11:34] Well it's so interesting because I think a lot of faculty feel devalued maybe ignored maybe not respected in the sense that Millennials are the first generation that has not needed an authority figure to access information.

Chip: [00:11:52] So they'll exhaust themselves looking everywhere for an answer. And so when they get in the classroom when they're not asking a faculty you know what about this. Tell me about this. Tell me about your experience.

Chip: [00:12:06] It almost appears as if they don't value that faculty or they don't you know they don't think that they know as much as what the student already knows

Bonni: [00:12:14] And they really candidly don't I mean they're not looking to us as I value you because you're an expert because expertise is seen as at least informational expertise is a commodity.

Bonni: [00:12:28] I can get the information anywhere. But what do they look to us? How do we get their higher regard and respect that that is helpful in the classroom to gain?

Chip: [00:12:37] Well I tell you we talked earlier in the greenroom about this in the sense that you know we talk early about faculty are professors. We had the sage on the stage metaphor. You come with all the information the knowledge you lecture and then they tell you back with what you told them and you determine whether they got it or not.

Chip: [00:12:58] And then we moved a paper was written in 1990 1991 by Alison King and Alice and said that we're moving 21st century education is moving away from the sage on the stage to guide on the side. And I think now being in the 21st century we're moving from going on the side to learning with.

Chip: [00:13:22] Now everybody grab your dentures because I don't mean that anybody can be in the classroom and teach. There's a value to our expertise our preparation I understand that's the price of admission to what we do. But I think to really connect with this generation is to learn with them.

Chip: [00:13:37] Be curious with them investigate with them challenge with them. But the minute that that you get in and you don't participate in that process. And it's they are not as engaged.

Bonni: [00:13:53] I love that you talk about that because I was thinking that last semester when I was teaching a class I had I talked about how business ideas are formed from problems and all of this and then we started looking at how to businesses get started.

Bonni: [00:14:09] And so I was sharing with them about the website called Kickstarter which I understand you have a kickstarter by the way which I will put a link to in my show notes. Absolutely. So put you put the Kickstarter there.

Bonni: [00:14:19] But you know some students haven't yet heard of Kickstarter but it's probably not going to be you're going to have zero students in the class today that won't have heard of it. I mean I think even if it's just as silly as those that guy that was making the mac and cheese or the potato salad and got 30 grand for that but I had a student in there and he starts oh did you see the one about this.

Bonni: [00:14:41] I said No I didn't see it let's go look together. So actually embracing the fact that we can bring the technology into the class but we can do it together. I tend to in most classes not allow laptops not because I don't like technology but my classes are blended so their laptop type of learning would happen at their own pace.

Bonni: [00:15:02] More independent learning. And when we come together face to face I want us to be engaging more face to face. But I mean if if we're doing research together then we bring the laptops. But if what we're doing together is being curious learners together case studies that type of thing then we're going to engage more face to face.

Bonni: [00:15:19] So at any rate it was so fun though. I hadn't seen it. Let's go look on Kickstarter and we brought such life to that classroom. That young man feels so valued. The other students get their interested now. I had students emailing me later Oh I found this other one that was up there which just it's so neat when we can be curious together and I have to know every campaign that's on Kickstarter.

Bonni: [00:15:40] How could a person? And they get to go follow their own passions and interests. Because up there there were albums that were being launched and they could go if they're interested in the music industry that kind of thing and independent movies that are being produced up they are getting funded. So it was just one.

Chip: [00:15:55] And I like that you brought that example because you know it's not about never forget this. You know our university got a multimillion dollar grant back in the day to get Wi-Fi and in the faculty meeting the week after we're all having the discussion about turning it off and it was this either you know this this on off conversation

Chip: [00:16:19] Rather than let's discuss where it's value is in our pedagogy and and so in some cases it's totally appropriate to have it and others you may not want to have. It's not a matter of whether it should be there or not should be. It's about what is the purpose what are we trying to accomplish.

Bonni: [00:16:34] I think back to we talk about our frustrations. Part of why I do have that as my most of the time rule in the classroom is out of just that feeling of complete disrespect. And even I mean even for myself are you kidding me if I sit in a faculty meeting and this particular agenda item is not interesting to me and I've got something in front of me.

Bonni: [00:16:53] You think I don't go browse anywhere I mean we're we're all susceptible to it if we have one of those in our hand.

Chip: [00:16:58] Its ok if we do it.

Bonni: [00:17:00] Exactly. But so that frustration of just feeling disrespected and disconnected and it is a way to disconnect and some other colleagues who may not teach. And they even say a guide on the side kind of format are reinforcing that it's OK to remain detached because they're pretty detached too.

Chip: [00:17:19] Right.

Bonni: [00:17:19] So that frustration of feeling that disrespect I used to in my earlier teaching I would kind of meet that with anger and that rule would be a little bit more about I'm going to show you who's in charge and I'm going to control you into doing things my way.

Bonni: [00:17:35] And I have found that students had me as a professor or still connected with me. "You are so different as a parent now. You're so much more mellow than when you had us." But it really did kind of mellow.

Bonni: [00:17:50] I mean it's silly as that sounds it did mellow me out I think in a good way because now I still have the same rule but I just a much more cheerful to go oh Johnny we're not going to meet a laptop today because today we're doing this but actually to explain to them why and actually show them a little thing about the brain.

Bonni: [00:18:06] We talk about brain synapses and what is actually going. I value your time so much that I don't want you to have to do all that learning outside the classroom. Let's actually learn in the classroom.

Chip: [00:18:15] And that is perfect. You're talking about because for them what they think a high value for them where they think their brains are different than ours they really think they've evolved you know. So a 20 year evolution here that their brain is better that they're better multitasker.

Chip: [00:18:30] And you're explaining to them that's great. You're showing big picture. But but they don't see it as being disruptive. They don't see it as being

disrespectful they're just saying hey I can do it all at once. And you're complaining maybe because you can't. And that's what becomes problematic.

Bonni: [00:18:44] One of the other things I love too is that we can use that Japanese form of martial arts called Aikido that says instead of matching force with force we use the force.

Chip: [00:18:55] Yeah. Perfect.

Bonni: [00:18:55] That was a Star Wars reference. We have got Star Trek check, Star Wars check. But we use the force of the opponents not to win but actually the it's moving a foundation in creating more peace.

Chip: [00:19:09] Right You don't want your adversary to be harmed.

Bonni: [00:19:12] Yes. So that's why I love - I just use a lot in classrooms - Poll Everywhere, which is a great text based thing so instead of trying to get you to put your phone away I go get your phone out.

Chip: [00:19:23] Right.

Bonni: [00:19:23] All right. So we're going to ask you this question What do you think. And you can see them all. And so it's using something that to me used to be the enemy and creating it to a powerful force of learning because then I get real time feedback.

Bonni: [00:19:37] And also they get real time because I know actually you have something to talk about with the value of that more immediate feedback. So talk a little bit about the millennials their tendency toward feedback and some of the things that come up in the classroom.

Chip: [00:19:50] But first I have to say I always envy you that you are so far ahead of me in technology. I used to love what you were doing. But anyway so the feedback part of it that we're talking about is and you'll notice is if you've been in the classroom in the sense of you know a student may say hey I need next for three days on this paper extra four days you know mom's the hospital.

Chip: [00:20:11] You know my dog got laid off or whatever excuses. So you go OK I'll give you three or four days they turn it in at midnight on that fourth day and then they text you or they call you or not call you. Never were they call you but they would e-mail you at 7:00 am going have you grade my paper yet.

Chip: [00:20:29] You know so on one side what they want is immediacy of feedback. They want tons of feedback in one of the things I think is difficult for us. Is it the feedback they want is positive. You know it's hard for any of us to get negative feedback

Chip: [00:20:45] And once again that's one of those places where you say you know I see value in your work you know and I'm giving this feedback because I think that you can really do more. You know a lot of students I'll tell them you know if you don't get a lot of comments in my paper it's you know could be just because I don't think you can do better. So and sometimes maybe it's because it's perfect

Bonni: [00:21:08] A research area of interest for me that I'm not sure if it'll go anywhere is the idea of either written or typed feedback versus the voice feedback.

Chip: [00:21:18] Yeah I think that's great.

Bonni: [00:21:19] A lot of places of technology whether it's I annotate or inside of Turnitin.com is the ability to add your voice. And I've had so many students say that that kind of feedback and not just me I'm ever I've heard it from other professors too who use that word that the students it really resonates with them because you can be very direct and blunt but they hear the care in your voice is what they tell me

Chip: [00:21:44] And the intonation. I have a colleague who does that and it Yeah I agree with you. I think that be a great research topic.

Bonni: [00:21:52] So this is the time in the show when we normally do recommendations but I'm watching the clock and I'm going to make my recommendation all about you. Would you just for our recommendations just tell us about your books?

Bonni: [00:22:03] Tell us about what resources are available both to professors but also that they could recommend to their students who are millennials or leading millennials. Tell us a little bit about what resources will well make this the recommendation portion of the show.

Chip: [00:22:17] Great. I'm going to start with my most recent book Millennials at Work. There's a website www.millennialsatwork.com. You can get the book there

you can get at Amazon.com as well but Millennials at Work has a quiz on it for millennials to take.

Chip: [00:22:30] That's kind of fun. And you can direct your students to take that to see where they are you know they raid on that. We also have the Kickstarter campaign and that is really looking at trying to get the book in his hands as many millennials as we can. Some that may not have the wherewithal to be able to purchase the book.

Chip: [00:22:46] And also we found that one of the biggest buyers right now are career centers career development at universities are recommended it and in buying them to give to their students they're working in the mentoring programs and those kinds of things. So that's where I would send you in if you're really interested in trying to understand the intrinsic value use of millennials a kind of drive them from just overall in their interaction.

Chip: [00:23:11] My book Managing the Millennials probably for most any educator you could pick it up and you could see it clearly and make your own kind of application of it.

Bonni: [00:23:21] Yeah that's great. And is there anything else that you wanted to share in the recommendations before we close off the show.

Chip: [00:23:27] Well I bought a Roomba that vacuums your house because I adopted a Labrador retriever that seems to shed more hair than oh boy. My goodness. So but that the only problem is it kicks on like at 1:00 a.m. and just get stuck against the door.

Bonni: [00:23:44] You're the only person I've actually met who owns one and that I'm so intrigued by them but I've only ever seen them on video I've never seen them in person so.

Chip: [00:23:52] You have come over

Bonni: [00:23:54] You already know that are two and a half year old son has taken to eating dinner like a dog under the table without getting your table scraps so you have to set the table for them under your table.

Chip: [00:24:03] Maybe he could ride it around the house.

Bonni: [00:24:05] Oh he would love that.

Bonni: [00:24:08] Thanks so much for listening to today's Teaching in Higher Ed podcast. If you would like to get the show notes and comment and engage in this conversation about engaging millennials in the classroom. You can get to the show notes at teachinginhighered.com/13.

Bonni: [00:24:25] And also I encourage you to sign up for our weekly updates because you don't have to then remember to download the notes with all the great links for today's podcast. They will come into your inbox. So go to teachinginhighered.com/subscribe. You'll get the show notes and you'll also get a weekly article about teaching and you'll get a free educational technology essentials ebook.

Bonni: [00:24:50] All of that I feel like you will not however get a free Roomba. That's where we have to draw the line. But it's a good idea. Thanks for listening. Thanks Chip for being here.

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