

**WORK/LIFE**

# **HOW TO HELP GEN Z FLOURISH & FIND BALANCE:**

Tips & insights from our  
report on work, life, &  
everything in between



**Springtide™**  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE



## INTRODUCTION

Structural changes in the economy over the last 40 years mean that people spend more time than ever at work. This is true across the board: whether the work is rural or urban, entry-level or expert. But this uptick in working leaves workers less time and fewer resources for outside pursuits: hobbies, passions, leisure, and more. In effect, more time doing work means work has to do more.

Striking the work/life balance doesn't necessarily mean leaving one's workplace at 5 p.m. to be home for dinner. It doesn't even necessarily mean leaving the night shift at 6 a.m. or the school building at 3 p.m.

**We know that work extends beyond those designated times, and “life” slips into working hours.** Even looking for work—filling out applications, arranging for transportation, preparing whatever materials are requested, interviewing, following-up—can be a full-time job in itself.

**So what does “work/life balance” look like amid these blurry lines?**

For Springtide, it means that both a young person's work and their life outside of work contribute to personal and professional flourishing and well-being. **We mean that they are doing their best work and being their best selves.**

Flourishing and finding balance will look different depending on the circumstances of a young person's home life and work situation, as well as their age, race, gender, and socioeconomic status.



But young people do have some basic needs in common. All young people need and deserve environments in both work and life that include opportunities for *mentorship, meaning, and growth.*



### **WHAT IS MENTORSHIP?**

*Mentorship* is about relationships that model what's possible and encourage the potential in young people.



### **WHAT IS MEANING?**

*Meaning* is about grasping for more, moving beyond what's expected, pursuing the big questions, and living them out.



### **WHAT IS GROWTH?**

*Growth* is a disposition of curiosity and learning as well as a capacity for flexibility and adaptability.



## FLOURISHING & FINDING BALANCE. . . AT WORK

It's knowing that you're not just working to make money for the rest of your life and then die. I think that you need to have some fulfillment in your work, because if you don't, I mean, that's what you're spending the majority of your time doing. That just seems really sad. It's a very short life and if that's all that you've got, it's pretty depressing.

—Sophie, 23

### MENTORSHIP at work. . .

As someone committed to helping young people flourish and find balance in the workplace, you must connect them with mentors—or be a mentor yourself. When surveyed, 82% of young people say that it's important that their supervisor or future supervisor helps them set performance goals and achieve them at work and relate to them as a person. That starts with building trust.



**TIDE-TURNING TIP:** Be transformational, not just transactional. In order for Gen Z to flourish at work—and therefore do their best work—they have to know that you care about them, not just the organization you work for or represent. *Relational Authority* is a data-driven framework for forging bonds of trust with Gen Z today, especially amid shifts in the cultural landscape.



## MEANING at work. . .

Anything that helps Gen Z contextualize their daily tasks in light of the bigger goals and mission of the company—especially if those goals align with *their* values—will help them feel that sense of meaning at work. How can you do this? By communicating clearly about your company’s mission and values. . . a lot.

As John Kotter writes in his book *Leading Change*, the prevailing management research holds that executives, especially, under-communicate mission and vision by a factor of 10! We have to find a multitude of creative ways to communicate mission and vision across the organization, especially with Gen Z. It is not simply a value-add. Our data show that without a distinct and compelling source of meaning at work, young people will not be drawn to your organization and will not perform their best for you.



**TIDE-TURNING TIP:** Communicating a clear sense of mission and vision is a critical way that you can impart as much meaning for the entry-level employee as for the highest-paid executives.



## GROWTH at work. . .

Young people ages 13–25 are in a life stage of full of growing and learning about who and how to be in the world. It’s a time of exploring, experimenting, and experiencing new things, whether in school, work, relationships, or at home. So it’s no wonder Gen Z expects work to facilitate growth.

Betty, 18, notes that, growth is about feeling stimulated and stretched through opportunities at work. “That’s my biggest thing: I refuse to be bored in whatever career I choose. I’m aware it’s going to end up being a job, but I want something I’m going to find interesting that I’m going to want to go to work and do.”



**TIDE-TURNING TIP:** Employee engagement—the kind that fosters company loyalty and helps young people do their best work and be their best selves—can start with a conversation to discover what employees perceive as boring and what they’d be really excited to do. You might be surprised!



## FLOURISHING & FINDING BALANCE. . . IN LIFE

When I think of future work, I'll ask: Will it take me away from my family, in terms of location? If so, can I travel and get time off work to visit family and spend time with family? That would be a big factor. Just like—work/life balance, and how much work you do outside of work. Are you ever able to turn work off? Things like that.

—Rachel, 24



### MENTORSHIP in life. . .

Seventy-four percent of young people feel more connected to the things they do outside of work to enrich their lives when they can do them with the people who support them. Life outside of work depends on sharing enriching experiences with trusted, supportive people.



**TIDE-TURNING TIP:** If you want to effectively mentor a young person in their career choices, you may have to encourage them to venture beyond their established networks.

A significant number of young people choose future career paths based on the jobs that are held by the people they know. **Emphasizing bridging social capital**—that is, the parts of a network that are made up of acquaintances rather than close friends—can get a young person exposed to more types of people and more types of jobs so they can imagine and consider a broader array of careers.



## MEANING in life. . .

Trusted adults can set young people up to flourish in all parts of their experience by helping them find and make meaning in their lives. Psychologists have long understood that the best way for a person, especially an adolescent, to find meaning in life is to pursue causes and connections that are bigger than themselves. Researchers like Michael Steger, among others, have shown that even the act of searching for meaning can be highly beneficial for young people.



**TIDE-TURNING TIP:** More than four out of five young people who report they are “flourishing a lot” also say they have powerful moments when they realize they are making a difference. **You can help young people feel like they are making a difference by regularly inviting conversations and activities that help young people both search for and reflect on meaning and purpose.**



## GROWTH in life. . .

Opportunities for growth don’t just teach young people about the world. When trusted adults help young people gain experiences that lead to growth, they are also encouraging self-discovery, which can impact flourishing in every aspect of life. Young people know this too. Nearly 70% of young people say the more they learn about themselves, the better they become.



**TIDE-TURNING TIP:** Encourage a growth mindset in young people with these two basic strategies:

- 1 Praise processes and effort as opposed to outcomes.** Research by Carol Dweck and other social scientists demonstrates that acknowledging when someone works hard—regardless of the outcome—makes that person more likely to work hard in the future.
- 2 Appeal to a young person’s character.** Research summed up by Adam Grant in *Originals* shows an overwhelming trend among both young children and emerging adults to do the right thing, even if it is harder, when there is an appeal made to their character rather than to the activity.

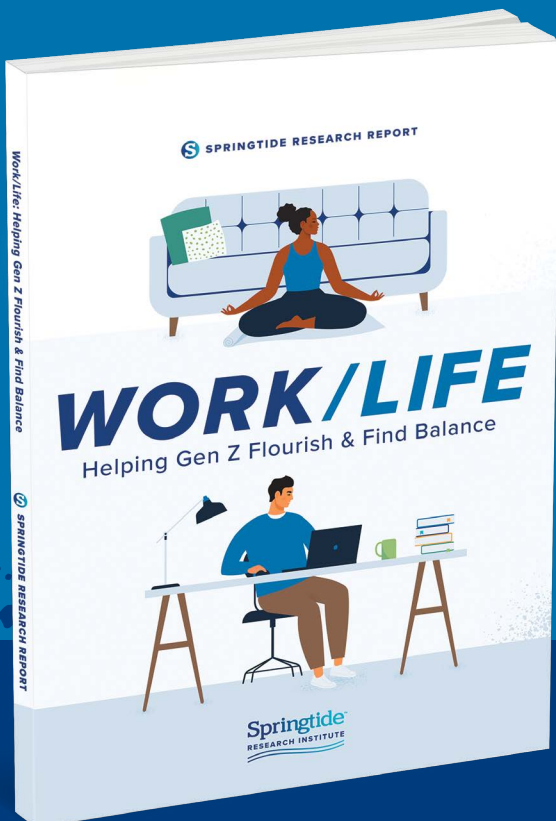
**Let's get Gen Z engaged  
and doing their best work.**

**Get the report:  
*Work / Life: Helping Gen Z  
Flourish & Find Balance***

[Learn More](#)

[Find it on Amazon](#)

**[springtideresearch.org](http://springtideresearch.org)**



**Listen. Read. Learn.  
Resources to help you  
support the young  
people in your life.**

Join the conversation, and connect  
with us on social media.

Follow [@WeAreSpringtide](#) and use  
the hashtag [#WorkLifeBook](#) on  
Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

**Springtide™**  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE