

# Youngsters in Hong Kong now facing a whole set of different challenges

PUBLISHED : Wednesday, 06 July, 2016, 4:43pm

UPDATED : Wednesday, 06 July, 2016, 9:23pm



Dispirited, unmotivated, unaccomplished – these are just some of the terms that we hear about our young generation, often said to be characteristics of the “post-90s” and beyond.

In the past two years, the term *fai tsing* – literally translating to “rubbish youth” – has emerged to widely describe our young generation in Hong Kong.

Young people today are facing a whole different set of challenges than in the past. From an industry-based epoch to knowledge-based economy, Hong Kong’s social infrastructure has rapidly evolved over the years.

The differences in the challenges young people face exist in social interactions, even down to basic communications. Cyberbullying, an issue widely affecting our young people today, for example, was not something that happened in the past.

Speak to any young person today and they will tell you their frustrations, stress, and hopelessness do not only stem from the academic stress, a lack of resilience or coping ability – perhaps it is this and more.

Before we dive into fixing systemic issues, we have to drop the labels and listen to what they have to say.

Where do these frustrations, stress and hopelessness stem from? Could it be our society’s inability today to

reconcile the speed and differences between generations? Surely success today looks very different from the past.

Last month, organisations worldwide and locally involved in drug prevention work were acknowledging the United Nations International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (on June 26).

For us in Hong Kong, more so than ever, we need to respond by making every effort to understand young people's situation and think from the current perspective, and not in a prescriptive, black-and-white attitude.

In order to protect the youth from drug-related harm, we have to first speak to them, not just about drugs, but listen and process their thoughts, assess their needs and be empathetic.

By working with them to provide support, we will be able to help them build self-awareness and self-esteem to increase resilience and coping skills to deal with adversity.

If we are able to embrace campaigns like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's UNODC #Listenfirst initiative launched this year, we can bring big ideas right into all our doorsteps to influence and change unrealistic, traditional societal expectations by starting a conversation within schools, family and friends.

Growing up is never easy, regardless of the era we live in. So let's take time, be proactive and #Listenfirst.

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This article appeared in the South China Morning Post print edition as:

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