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# Gen Z Spirituality/Religious Worldview: Accompanying Young People Through, With, and In-Spite of Technology

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# In this session we will:



Name the *thresholds* youth are already crossing in digital spaces—and discern which ones we are invited to cross with them



Explore how emerging technologies (social media, AI, online spaces) shape identity, belonging, and meaning-making



Practice an Ignatian posture of accompaniment that is attentive, reflective, and rooted in interior freedom



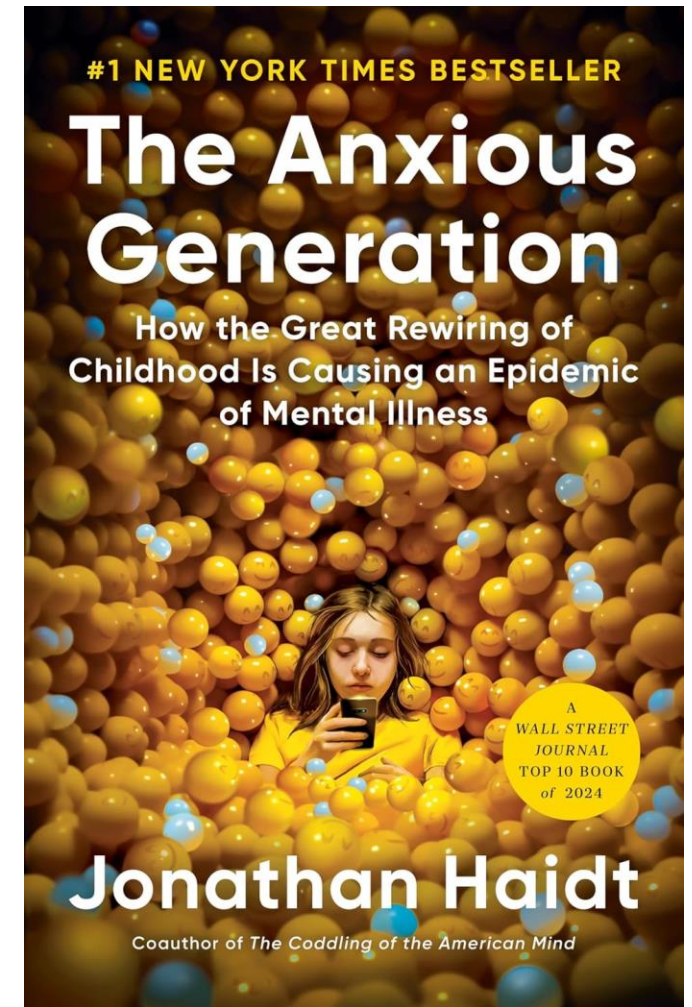
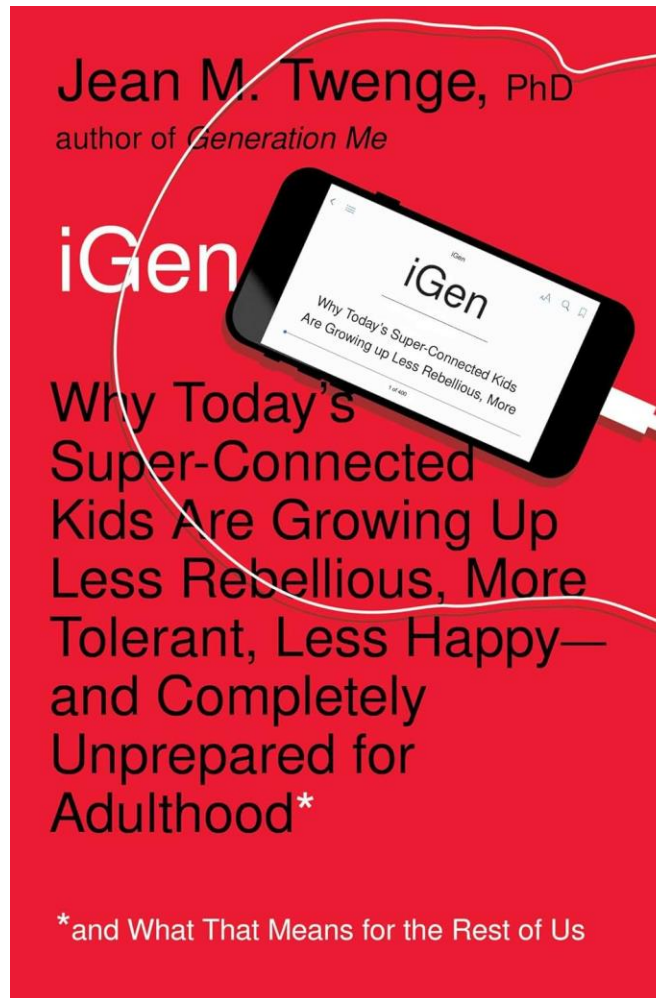
Identify healthy, mission-aligned boundaries that foster formation, relationship, and trust rather than fear or withdrawal



Consider how community, authority, and participation are mediated through technology today



# Some Conversation Starters



# What Young People Tell Us

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# RELATIONSHIPS MATTER MOST

## ● Feel completely alone

Youth with more trusted adults in their lives have decreased feelings of loneliness.

## ● No one understands me

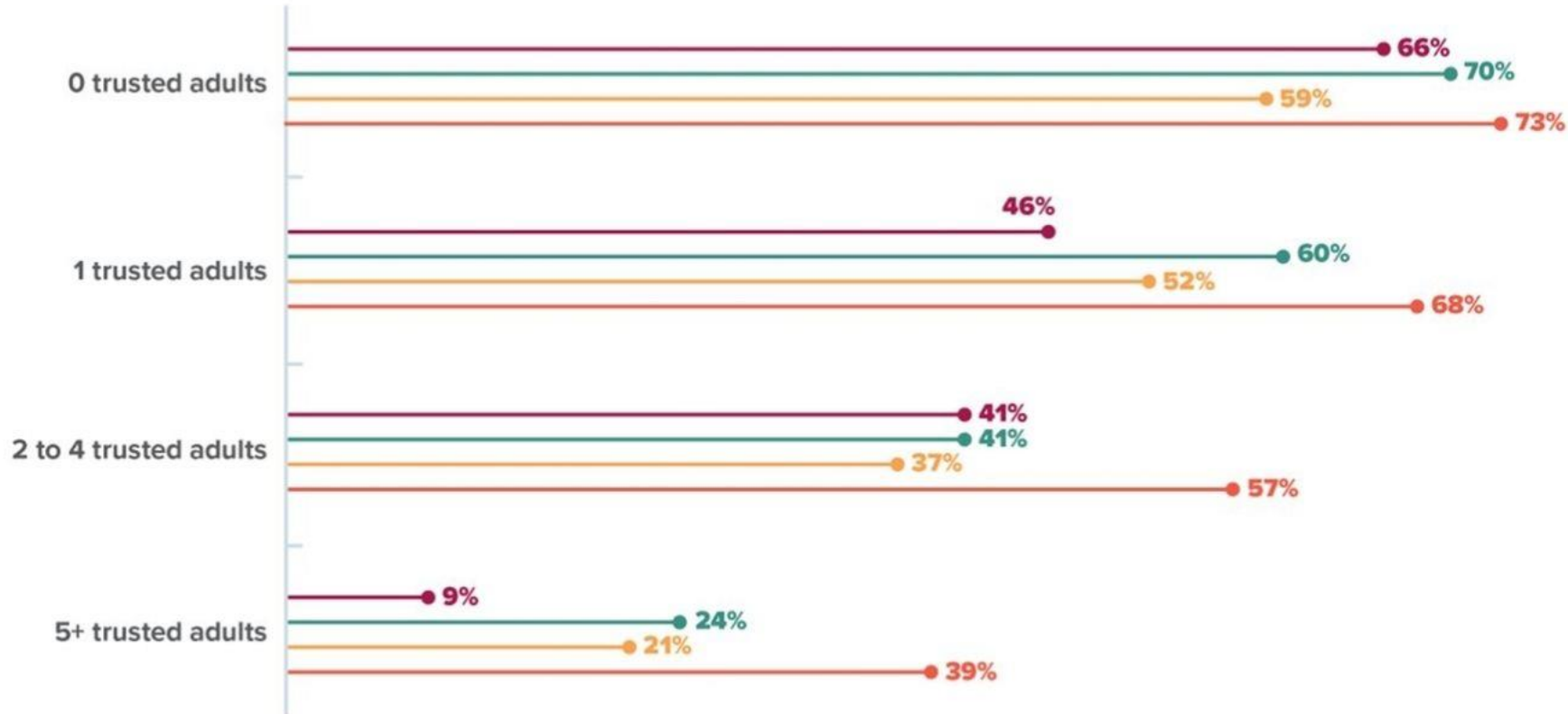
Youth with more trusted adults in their lives have decreased feelings of not being understood.

## ● I feel left out

Youth with more trusted adults in their lives have decreased feelings of being left out.

## ● I feel stressed and overwhelmed

Youth with more trusted adults in their lives have decreased feelings of being stressed.



As the number of trusted adults in a young person's life increases, their reported feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and stress decrease.

Percentages of 13-to-25-year-olds who AGREE with each statement.

● **0 Trusted Adults** ● **5+ Trusted Adults**

I feel completely alone.



I feel as if no one understands me.



I feel left out.

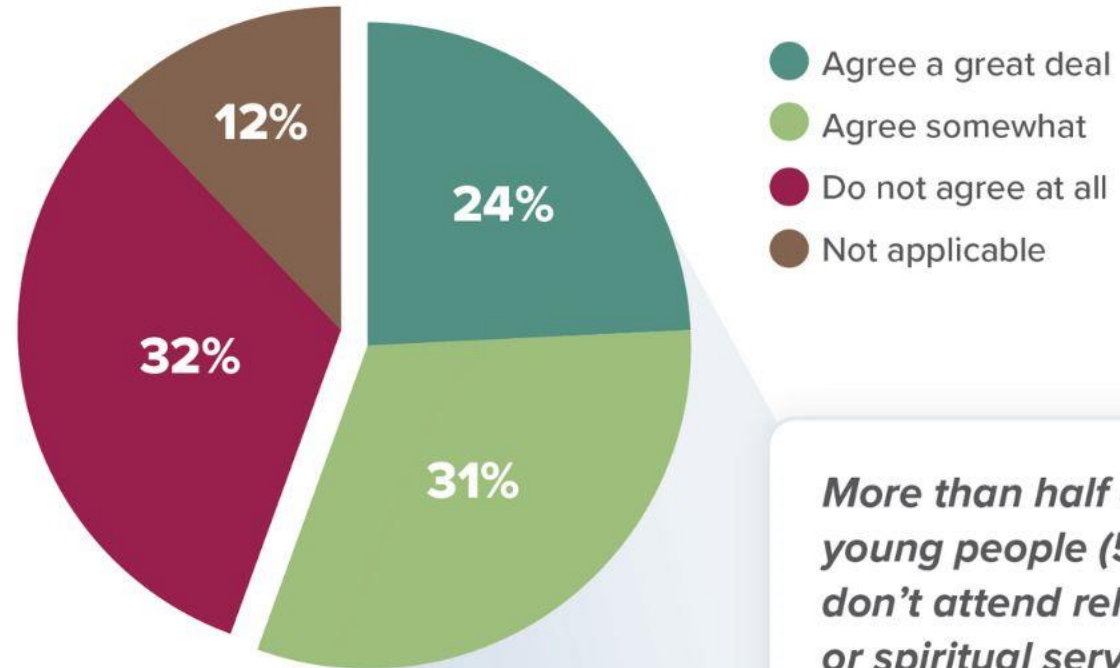


I feel stressed and overwhelmed.



# AGAIN, AUTHENTICITY MATTERS

*“I do not attend religious or spiritual services because I am not free to be who I am at religious gatherings or worship services.”*

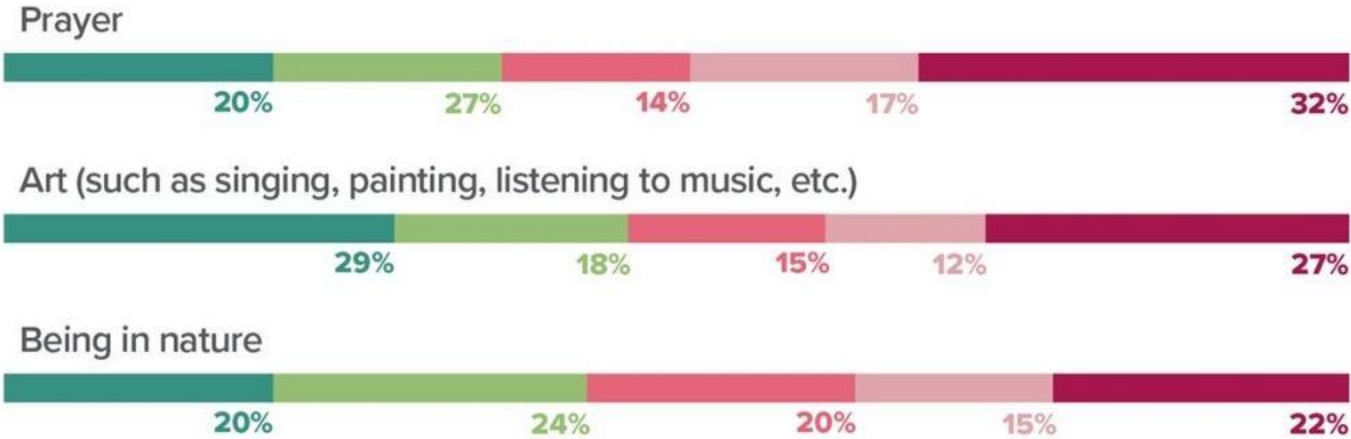


*More than half of young people (55%) don't attend religious or spiritual services because they don't feel free to be who they are at those kinds of gatherings.*

# IT IS DIVERSE & EXPLORATORY

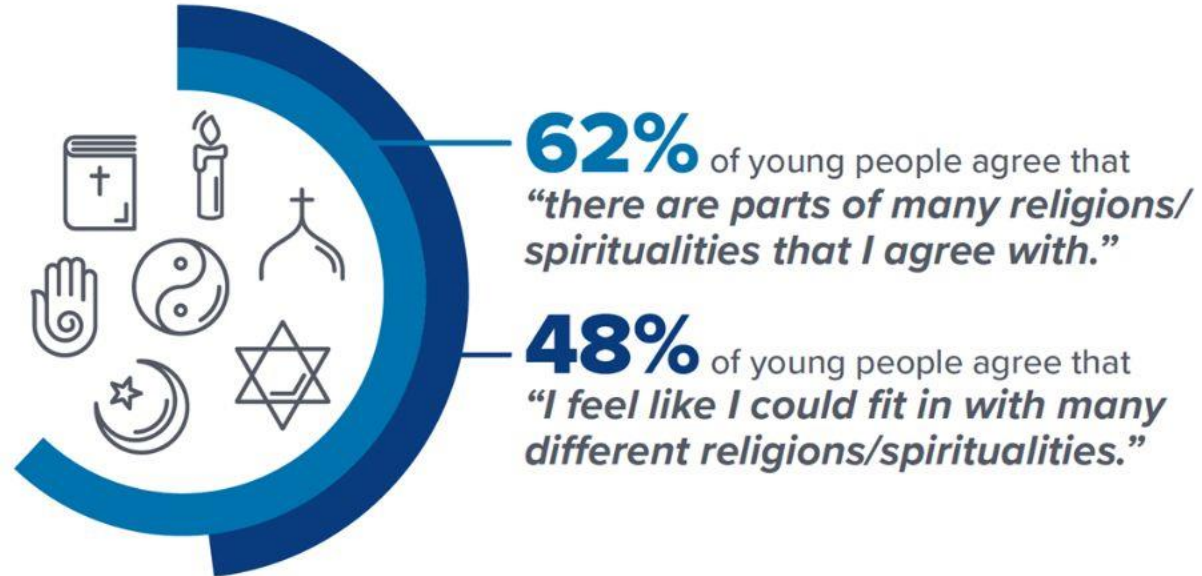
*How often do you engage in the following as religious or spiritual practices?*

● Daily ● Weekly ● Monthly ● Less than once a month ● Never



# GEN Z'S UNBUNDLING & REBUNDLING OF FAITH

Instead of strict affiliation, young people see the value of many religious traditions.



# IMPORTANCE OF ADULTS WHO LISTEN

84%

of young people ages 13–25  
say they will **trust someone**  
**who remembers things**  
**they've shared.**

82%

say they will **trust someone**  
**who takes the time to hear**  
**what they have to say.**

78%

of young people say they  
feel listened to when people  
**show they understand what**  
**they've been through.**

80%

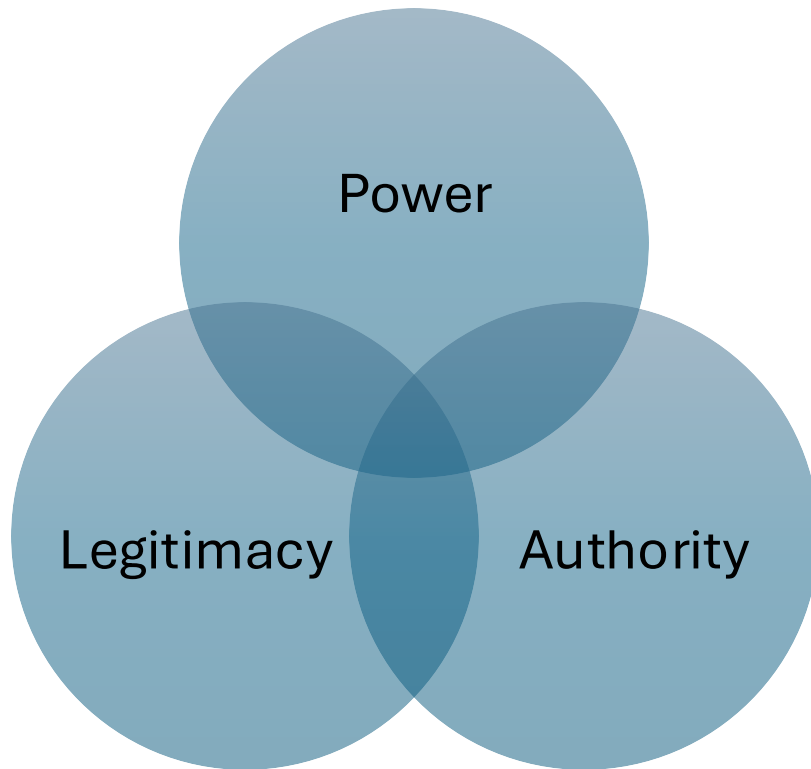
say they feel listened to  
when people **show they**  
**care about them.**





Integration

# Lonergan's Dialectic of Authority



- Power:
  - Cooperation carried (mediated) through communities
- Authority
  - As power is mediated by the community, “authorities” are those “officials to whom certain offices have been entrusted and certain powers delegated "can be a person, theory, idea, symbol, sound or anything by which the community “mediates”
- Legitimacy
  - Being Attentive, Intelligent, Reasonable, Responsible
  - Grounded in Interiority

# Vignettes



GEN Z IN HIGH  
SCHOOL



MINISTRY IN THE  
PANDEMIC



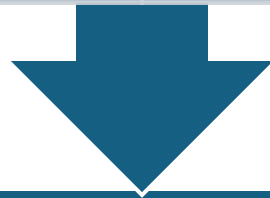
ADULT TECH AS  
COPING...

# Interior Work

The role of our own interiority....

inauthenticity “is realized by any single act of inattention, obtuseness, unreasonableness, irresponsibility” (Lonergan, 2017)

As well, given the relationship that power is mediated by authorities... inauthentic subjects correlate with inauthentic authorities...



**TAKE AWAY:** Our own (our colleagues, our teams, our departments) authenticity is paramount in genuinely accompanying this generation if we want to meet them where they are at (integral whole selves)...And our own legitimate authority only comes through a depth and appropriation of our interior lives... **AND GUESS WHAT...**

# Authentic Ministry/Authentic Accompaniment



**Meeting young people where they are  
at...journey toward better relationships**



**Igantian discernment**

For ourselves first and then modeled  
Never offered as corrective or compromising their  
interior freedom



## On AI

- Horizons in ministry
  - Known knowns
    - Creedal statements, language interpretation
  - Known unknowns
    - Creation of the cosmos
  - Unknown Unknowns
    - AI?
- Back to interior life...back to the disposition necessary to explore, without fear, alongside young people

# For Reflection

What boundaries make sense for you and technology?

As you explore different and new ways of working how do you preserve space for your interior growth?

Showing up for young people means showing up however they are...how do you spiritually prepare for those encounters?

How do you give yourself time to “learn” about emerging tech as opposed to “adapt” or “resist”

What are your known knowns/known unknowns/unknown unknowns?