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# TALKING YOUTH WORK PODCAST





## Youth Participation with Gen Alpha, Andrés Falk and Marcela Guerrero, season 4, episode 6

In this episode, we explored youth participation and democracy, and how children and young people are engaging with public life in new and challenging ways. We talked with Andrés Falk and Marcela Guerrero, Executive Director and Project Manager, respectively, at [CoGlobal](#), whose work across Spain focuses on creating meaningful participatory spaces for children and young people.

CoGlobal has implemented methodologies such as school-based participatory budgeting, youth councils, and citizen assemblies. One of their initiatives is [Ágora Infantil](#), an approach that involves entire classrooms over several months, empowering children to influence real local decisions - while ensuring they learn what it means to participate in practice.

The conversation addressed key challenges to participation with Gen A, including rising expectations for quick feedback, the impact of disinformation, and increasing polarisation around issues such as gender equality and climate justice. Despite this, both our guests were hopeful for the future of democracy and the role that Gen A can have. Their keen sense of justice, digital savviness, creative problem-solving, and rapid learning through exploration are powerful tools for participatory democracy, provided they are nurtured in supportive environments.

Finally, we reflected on the importance of rethinking youth work and participation altogether. What if we could redesign our democratic systems from scratch, unburdened by centuries of tradition? Andres suggests that such a radical reimaging might be necessary, especially considering the limitations of current institutions in engaging youth authentically.

## Rethinking Gen Z with Alena Tomanová, season 4, episode 5

In this episode, we talked to Alena Tomanová, Youth worker, innovator and researcher, currently the chairwoman of [YouthWatch](#).

In our conversation, we explored what makes Generation Z, and the emerging Generation Alpha, so distinct from the generations before them. We reflected on how digital culture, instant access to information, and shifting social norms are influencing how young people learn, communicate, and imagine their futures.



Today, young people are surrounded by images, videos, and short-form content that can be consumed in seconds. This shift toward visual and fast-paced media has a real impact on how young people engage with the world. We talked about how this challenges educators and youth workers to move beyond simply delivering information and instead create spaces that encourage exploration, reflection, and curiosity, places where young people can leave and re-engage without judgment.

Flexibility came up again and again in our conversation. Young people today live in a world shaped by immediacy, where interests and commitments can change quickly. Rather than seeing this as a lack of commitment, we can see it as a natural response to the fast-moving digital environments they navigate every day.

We also spent time reflecting on intergenerational relationships. Misunderstandings and assumptions exist on both sides; adults can feel confused or concerned about youth culture, while young people may carry stereotypes about older generations.

Finally, we talked about how, in particular, Generation Z is questioning institutions and demanding change on issues like climate action, governance, and social justice. Rather than viewing this as disruption, we can see it as engagement. Their readiness to question the status quo holds enormous potential to drive innovation and create more inclusive futures—if we’re willing to listen and respond constructively.

## Learning Trends in Generation Alpha with Ashley Fell, season 4, episode 4

In this episode, we talked with [Ashley Fell](#), a social researcher, TEDx speaker, and the Director of Advisory at [McCrindle](#), an Australian-based research firm renowned for its work on generational trends. Ashley is also the author of two insightful books: [Work Wellbeing](#) and [Generation Alpha](#), and she hosts [The Future Report](#) podcast.

Together, we explored the unique characteristics of Generation Z and Generation Alpha—two generations growing up in a world that is non-linear, visual, digital, and virtual. Ashley also explained how global events like 9/11 and the pandemic, have deeply influenced how these generations see the world, learn, and relate to others.

One key takeaway? These generations need trustworthy adults more than ever. In a noisy, uncertain world, full with information and misinformation, the role of youth workers, educators, and caring adults is critical. Ashley shared how we can support young people by encouraging them, equipping them, and entrusting them with opportunities and responsibilities that build confidence and agency.



We also talked about how Gen Z and Gen Alpha are deeply concerned with the environment. They're connected, cause-driven, and eager to contribute. But to do so meaningfully, they need learning environments that make space for authentic connection, autonomy, and safety.

Ashley brought fresh insights into how technology is shaping learning behaviours - often in unexpected ways - and challenged us to think about how we can design balanced learning spaces that resonate with their digital realities while still offering opportunities for meaningful human connections.

## Psychological Safety in Learning Environments with Romy Alexandra, season 4, episode 3

In this episode, we talked with [Romy Alexandra](#), an expert in psychological safety and experiential learning. Her work with NGOs on youth leadership and human trafficking prevention highlighted the need for engaging, effective learning methods, leading her to experiential learning and psychological safety as its foundation.

Romy defines psychological safety, drawing from Dr. Amy Edmondson, as a shared environment where individuals feel safe to take interpersonal risks without fear of punishment or humiliation. This environment fosters vulnerability, inclusion, and innovation, which are essential for learning spaces. She emphasises that it's not about comfort but about creating trust to navigate discomfort, enabling youth to contribute authentically.

We explored some of the misconceptions around these topics, such as assuming humour indicates safety. Romy cautioned that sarcasm or inappropriate humour can alienate participants, while humour often masks discomfort. Another pitfall is forcing vulnerability too soon, which can shut down the learning process. Instead, facilitators should offer choices and gradual engagement to build trust.

Romy also addresses generational shifts, noting that post-COVID attention spans are shorter, and younger generations use technology as a safety net. She advocates for new conversations to address these changes while grounding youth work in the core principles of experiential learning. In response to the common critique that younger generations are "too sensitive," Romy suggests approaching conflicts with curiosity, fostering dialogue to repair relationships rather than shutting down in the face of discomfort.



## Spaces of Unlearning with Juan Camilo, season 4, episode 2

In this episode, we begin exploring the idea of unlearning, joined by Juan Camilo, a youth worker from Colombia who has been living in Iceland. Juan has a background in international education, cultural media communication, and religious studies. He is also an artist and educator who uses transformative pedagogy and non-formal education to promote human ecology and holistic human development.

Unlearning is the process of questioning deeply ingrained beliefs and assumptions. We discuss what unlearning means, how educators can approach it, and how we can create safe spaces for it—both for young people and ourselves.

In the context of Western civilisation, climate change, and social unrest, Juan suggests that unlearning can help dismantle harmful systems. He believes it is essential to recognise our interconnectedness with life and the environment rather than centring ourselves as humans.

Unlearning involves exploring different perspectives, letting go of ingrained assumptions, and using creative and playful methods. It requires courage to navigate uncertain spaces and emphasises the importance of community support. Juan also highlights the need to integrate ancestral knowledge into contemporary youth work to foster deeper connections with ourselves, our surroundings, and the larger community.

## Holistic Trainer with Katya Sherer, season 4, episode 1

In this first episode of our fourth season, we talked with Katya Sherer about youth work trainers' wellbeing.

Katya is a trainer, active in the youth sector since 1998. She began her journey as a volunteer and peer-to-peer trainer, later advancing to roles as a trainer and project manager for initiatives in youth work and human rights education. Currently, she works as a freelance trainer and consultant and serves as a board member of the International Youth Work Trainers Guild.

Trainers usually come to the field with a mission mindset and, sometimes, what started as service becomes sacrifice, at least on some area in their life, and it doesn't have to be like that.

Trainers' wellbeing is something that the [“Holistic Trainer Project”](#) addressed by looking at different areas that impact trainers' lives.



- . Physical Health - Through expert advice and practical tips, it helped trainers prioritise their health and vitality.
- . Mental Health and Well-being - Mental health and emotional well-being is essential for resilience and success. The project offered resources to support trainers in managing stress, maintaining balance, and fostering mental wellness.
- . Life on the Road - A big part of the life of international youth work trainers is on the road! We provide insights and resources to facilitate smooth experiences while travelling and working abroad.
- . Legal Matters - The project offered guidance on navigating legal issues and ensuring trainers' work is safe, recognised and respected, by exploring contractual matters, taxation regulations, insurance, intellectual property laws, and other legal and financial matters
- . Self-Management - The project supported trainers with strategies for personal branding, networking, and professional growth.

The [International Youth Trainers Guild](#) with other partners, created a lot of resources that can help trainers to have a more fulfilling and sustainable lifestyle, providing more impactful learning experiences and adding longevity to their careers.