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Dialogue must cross our divides

MY VIEW

Sep 21, 2025



Joe Kreuz thinks real dialogue must take place across generations.

I often find myself telling my kids, "When I was your age." Back then, the news came in a very different form. Three networks delivered the nightly headlines, and the newspaper was dropped on the front step every morning.

I was a paperboy, doing the dropping and then the reading once my route was finished. High school teachers and professors were the closest thing we had to search engines. When I had to study, I drove to the library and found a nook.

My college years were shaped by that slower rhythm of information. It gave me time to digest and reflect late into the night after my pals and I finished our restaurant shift. Those conversations, sometimes heated, sometimes humorous, helped us process information.

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I realize that the influences of that time, teachers and professors who pushed me to study and question, still echo in how I see things today. For my generation, trust was often placed in institutions: the newspaper, the university, the church. They anchored us with a shared foundation of facts.

Fast-forward to today. I now have what I call my "built-in focus group": my children and their partners, nine voices in total, ranging in age from 27 to 43. Their perspective gives me something my professors never could: a generational mirror.

Their world of news and information looks nothing like mine did at their age. They scroll headlines on phones while I still unfold the print edition. They rely on podcasts and YouTube, while I turn toward books and editorials. Their fact-checking often happens in real time, while mine requires a slower dive.

When we gather, these differences are on display. My contributions often begin with something I've read, only to be met with, "Dad, that's not what I've seen," followed by a flurry of posts, clips and links.

Over time, I've learned to see these moments differently. What my kids are really offering me is perspective. Their lens sharpens mine, forcing me to question not just what I believe but why I believe it. In turn, I remind them that not every trending headline is the whole story, and that time-tested sources still matter.

The give-and-take has become less about who's right and more about how truth is pursued in an age when information has never been more plentiful – or more contested. I write to process my own thoughts and invite others to do the same.

What makes the writing richer is the feedback loop with that younger generation. They remind me that wisdom isn't a one-way street.

Each generation is shaped by the questions it asks and the tools it uses to find answers. For me, those questions were shaped in a library under fluorescent lights. For my kids, they unfold in the palm of their hands. Both paths have merit, both have flaws, and together they remind me that learning is never finished.

So when I say, "When I was your age," it isn't to dismiss or diminish. It's to acknowledge that my age gave me one vantage point, while theirs gives me another. Side by side, those perspectives complement.

The conversations we have across those differences remind me that truth, like family, grows stronger when shared.

And that, I suppose, is the lesson I wish I had learned sooner: every generation has something worth hearing, and every age has something worth teaching.

My View is a first-person column open to all Western New Yorkers. If your article is selected for publication, a photo of you is required. Email submissions to **editpage@buffnews.com**.



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