As a child I dreamed of being famous. Sometimes I was a high-profile defense attorney or an adventurous journalist. More frequently I was a leggy backup singer for a musician I had a crush on.

We incorporate fame and fortune into our fantasies because it's glamorous, fun and shows a life full of possibilities. However, a recent trend has developed where fame and fortune are not mere distracting fantasies, but are seen by many as their natural rights. A culture of expectation has taken a firm grip on us and we can't seem to shake it.

We are saturated with images and stories of opulence and success and beyond the celebrity "glitterati," we've developed an intense fascination for real people making it big. Pop icon-making programs like Canadian and American Idols make achieving stardom look so easy. A spot of talent, the right winning personality of the moment and the viewing public makes you a star.

Reality TV shows like Survivor and the Amazing Race make stars of seemingly average people, with or without talent, whose prowess at making alliances gets them fame, a million-dollar payout, and subsequent talk show appearances.

All of this filters into our impressionable minds and while we may not think we deserve to win the title of Canadian Idol, we internalize the hype of fame and its companions--wealth and privilege--and come to expect those things in our lives. Often we feel a sense of failure without them, and few of us are immune.

While we all can get caught up in this, there is a group of people who seem to have cornered the market on lofty expectations: the millennials.

The millennials are the most recent generation of kids, born after 1982. Yet their perception of entitlement isn't simply learned from pop culture. This generation of kids heard their parents tell them for 20 years how special they were, how they deserved the best grades, the best parts in the school play, and the best jobs. While I am not significantly older than some of these kids, many of us are baffled by their sense of entitlement and feel resentful when we bump up against it.

Parents of millennials have felt immense pressure to provide meaningful, enriching experiences for their kids in order to make them highly successful and engaged citizens. Not building your child's self-esteem and expectations constitutes the grave offence of lackluster parenting, and in some circles this is tantamount to neglect.

These parents raised bright, inspired and team-oriented kids but they didn't want their kids to miss out on anything. Consequently, they didn't make them work very hard for what they got.

These kids had "helicopter parents" who constantly hovered over them, driving them to school, to soccer, to ballet, to drama camp, to their friends' houses. Many had cellphones as preteens, so their parents could readily get in touch with them. Like all parents, they wanted their kids to be safe and do well, but some were prepared to go to great lengths to ensure it happened.

Got a bad grade? Your parents booked a meeting with the teacher to renegotiate the mark. Some kids were mean to you? Your folks called their parents to ensure it didn't happen again.

Working at a university, I've heard tales of parents lining up to pay tuition with their kids in tow, speaking on their behalf, parents calling professors to ask for an assignment deadline extension, and even parents calling employers on behalf of their job-searching kids.
Those may be extreme cases, but generally the results are the same. Kids have learned their parents will take care of things for them and will work exceptionally hard to ensure their success. So why wouldn't they be ultraconfident and have developed a profound sense of entitlement?

The tricky part comes when those with that sense of entitlement interact with others. People often interpret those lofty expectations as arrogance and few of us deal with arrogance well. It ticks us off and makes us feel less worthy, and that ticks us off even more.

The reinforced message these kids have learned is they are the most important thing in the world, but that's faulty. It's not all about "you," it's all about "us," and together we need to find a way to work together well.

Let's just keep it all in check. Success has to be earned and a lifetime of being handed small successes without much struggle creates a place where a culture of expectation thrives. Whether learned from our families or perpetrated by popular culture, nobody responds well to another's sense of entitlement.

So let's knock it off, as we're all in this together.

Jude Doble, of Kitchener, is a communications specialist at the University of Waterloo.

**Prompt:** Using the article, your own reading and research, and your own experience come up with a reasoned argument that takes on this proposition: that the millennial generation, as a whole, an "entitled" generation that hasn't "worked very hard" for what it has gotten. Feel free to agree, disagree, or come to some sort of middle ground, but create a **solid thesis**, well-developed subtopics, and use specific examples to make your points.

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