

The Gen Z guide to building a life outside of work

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Gen Z stepped into adulthood during a time when everything felt accelerated. Careers began early. Opinions formed publicly. Identity unfolded online. We learned quickly that waiting for life to begin after milestones felt unrealistic. Meaning had to be built alongside responsibility, not postponed for later. For our generation, a full life feels expansive rather than impressive. It includes curiosity, relationships, rest, boredom, creativity, and contribution. It unfolds through small choices repeated over time. We design lives that feel inhabited, where days carry texture and seasons leave memory behind. Let's take a look at how Gen Z can quietly build that fullness.

Build a private inner world that belongs only to you

Gen Z lives visibly. Thoughts, reactions, and moments often take shape with an audience in mind. Building a private inner world creates balance. This space holds unfinished thoughts, evolving opinions, and experiences that exist without explanation. A private inner world forms through journaling without structure, long walks without documentation, or reflections kept personal. It allows curiosity to wander freely. Over time, this inner space strengthens intuition and emotional clarity. It offers grounding during moments of uncertainty, and life feels richer when part of it remains untouched by performance.

Let your weeks have personalities, not just schedules

Weeks often blur together. Gen Z brings clarity by assigning emotional tone to time. One week feels reflective. Another feels social. Some weeks encourage exploration. Others invite rest. This approach prioritises energy awareness. Planning aligns with emotional capacity. Activities match mood rather than forcing consistency. Calendars become expressive tools that reflect lived experience. Time feels intentional rather than mechanical. Weeks with personality become memorable. Life feels structured through feeling rather than obligation. This practice builds self-trust. Pressure reduces naturally. Fullness grows when time carries character and rhythm.

Treat friendships as ecosystems with many forms

Gen Z friendships thrive through diversity.

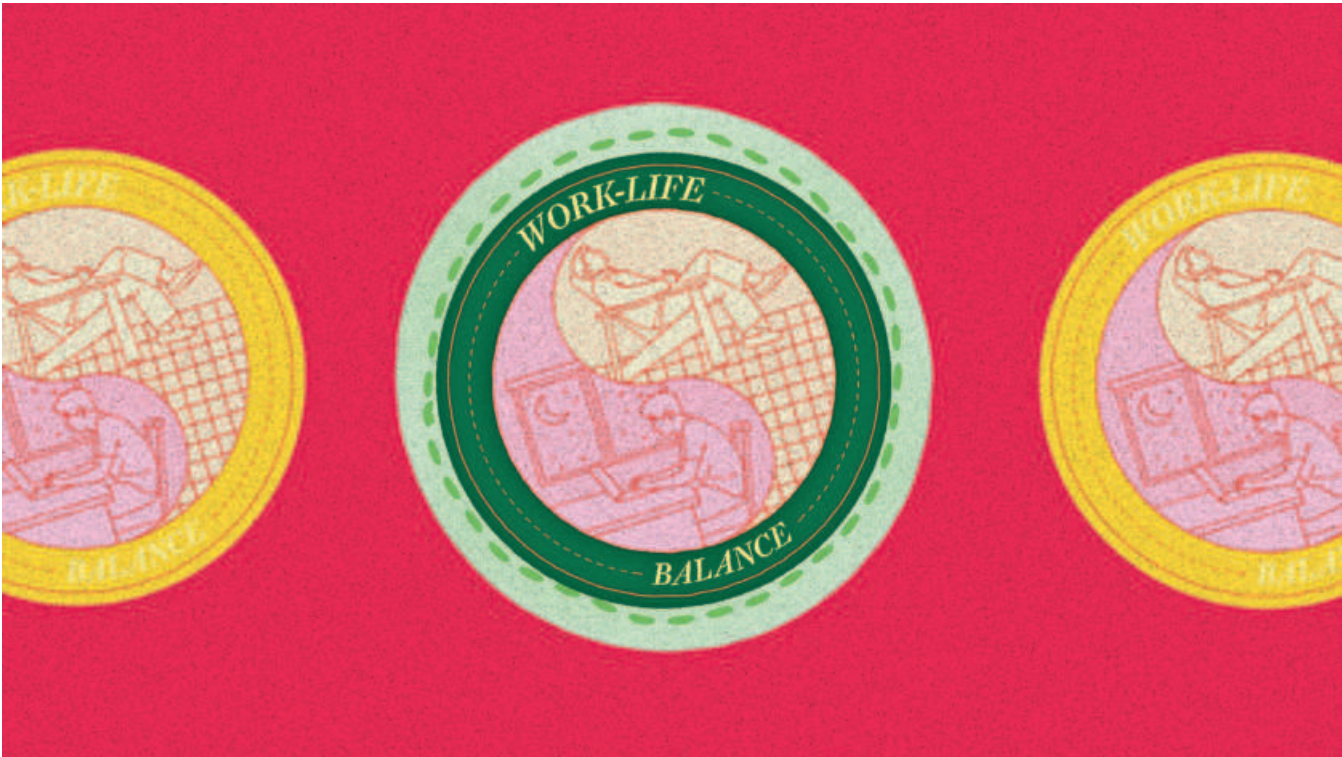


ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

Each connection holds a different role. One friend offers intellectual curiosity. Another brings humour. Another provides a calm presence. This ecosystem approach removes pressure. Relationships feel freer and more sustainable. The community becomes layered and resilient. Each bond adds texture without expectation overload. Emotional needs distribute naturally. A friendship ecosystem supports balance. Life gains warmth through shared moments across varied connections. Fullness emerges through collective belonging rather than intensity.

Learn how to enjoy being alone with yourself

Solitude becomes a tool for clarity and self-awareness. Gen Z cultivates alone time intentionally. Sitting with thoughts, exploring ideas quietly, engaging in reflective walks, or practising focused creative activities develops comfort with personal presence. Alone time strengthens emotional literacy. Preferences, values, and perspectives surface naturally. Ideas develop without interruption or influence. Decision-making becomes more deliberate, and

confidence grows because presence does not depend on external validation. Solitude also enhances social experience. Relationships gain depth when alone time reinforces personal boundaries and emotional stability, and your life feels intentional and centred.

Collect small joys that repeat

Small, repeated pleasures create lasting satisfaction. Gen Z notices routines that generate quiet delight. Favourite beverages, walking routes, playlists, or casual rituals provide repeated opportunities for joy. Attention to these moments transforms ordinary days into emotionally rich experiences. Protecting these rituals within routine ensures continuity and stability. Over time, small joys accumulate, forming a baseline of contentment that supports engagement with larger experiences. These repeated pleasures shape memory, identity, and emotional resilience. They create consistency without rigidity, so life feels coherent, meaningful, and textured.

Protect slow mornings or evenings

Slow moments cultivate clarity, presence, and awareness. Gen Z designs mornings

or evenings that honour unhurried pace. These periods allow reflection, creativity, and emotional reset. Slowness anchors life rhythmically. It provides a counterbalance to fast-paced obligations, reducing internal friction. Observing the world calmly strengthens attention, intuition, and emotional stability. Life feels spacious when stillness is integrated intentionally. Gen Z values these practices as identity markers and moments of renewal. Fullness emerges from consistency in creating and protecting slow, reflective intervals where mind, body, and surroundings are harmonised.

Ultimately, building a life outside of work is about giving yourself permission to exist fully, to explore, and to connect on your own terms. It is about noticing the rhythms of your own energy, honouring the seasons of your interests, and recognising that meaning grows through consistency, curiosity, and care. Gen Z understands that fullness is cultivated in the everyday, in moments that quietly add texture, memory, and depth to life. The work of living fully is ongoing, evolving, and entirely worth the attention it receives.

Gen Z leads workforce anxiety over AI, survey finds

NEXT STEP DESK

Younger workers are the ones most concerned about AI affecting their jobs, according to a global survey by recruitment firm Randstad. The report found that four out of five workers overall expect AI to impact their daily tasks.

The annual 'Workmonitor' report, based on a survey of 27,000 workers and an analysis of job postings, revealed a generational divide in attitudes. Members of Gen Z expressed the highest level of concern, while Baby Boomers showed the greatest self-assurance

about adapting to the technology.

The data also showed a rapid rise in AI-related hiring, with job postings requiring 'AI agent' skills increasing by 1,587%. Randstad notes that AI and automation are increasingly replacing low-complexity roles.

Nearly half of all workers surveyed believe AI will benefit corporations more than the workforce. The report also highlighted a significant optimism gap: 95% of employers forecast business growth this year, compared to only 51% of employees.

The future of work is not automation; it is supervision

SHAMS RASHID TONMOY

For much of the past two years, the conversation around artificial intelligence and work has been dominated by a single fear: automation. As AI tools grow more capable, many workers have wondered whether their roles will eventually disappear altogether. But the 2026 Agentic Coding Trends Report by AI company Anthropic points to a more complex reality. Rather than removing humans from the loop, the next phase of AI adoption may make human judgment more central to professional work.

One of the report's key findings is that "human oversight scales through intelligent collaboration". In practical terms, this means AI systems are becoming better at recognising when they need human input, while people are learning to intervene only when their attention has the greatest impact.

The shift is most visible in software development. AI agents can now write code, run tests, debug failures, and generate documentation. Yet Anthropic's internal research shows that while engineers use AI in roughly 60% of their work, they report being able to fully delegate only 0-20% of tasks. Most AI-assisted work still involves active supervision, validation, and decision-making by humans.

This means that instead of reviewing every output line by line, engineers are increasingly relying on agentic systems to surface issues that genuinely require human judgment, according



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to Anthropic. These include architectural inconsistencies, security risks, or decisions with business consequences. Routine checks are handled automatically, while uncertain or high-stakes situations are escalated to people. This is a clear shift from reviewing "everything" to reviewing "what matters". An important distinction.

This pattern is not limited to engineering. Anthropic documents similar dynamics emerging across legal, operations, and design teams, where AI is used to automate repetitive work while humans retain control over interpretation, risk, and final approval. AI reduces busywork, but responsibility and accountability remain firmly human.

That conclusion echoes findings from outside the technology industry. In a 2024 editorial by Ekkehard Ernst, Chief Macroeconomist at the International Labour Organization, argues that debates about AI have focused too narrowly on job losses

and gains. Instead, Ernst and his collaborators highlight how AI is reshaping job quality, managerial control, autonomy, and working conditions. Their analysis of labour markets across 23 OECD countries finds no clear link between AI exposure and overall employment loss, but significant changes in how work is organised and supervised.

In particular, Ernst points to evidence that AI often increases autonomy in supervisory roles while intensifying control over execution-level work. In other words, as machines take on routine tasks, human roles increasingly shift toward oversight, coordination, and decision-making, rather than direct execution.

A similar conclusion emerges from a 2025 article, 'Understanding Human-AI Augmentation in the Workplace', published in the journal Information Systems Frontiers, which examined human-AI augmentation across business and management research. The

authors describe AI adoption as a "double-edged sword" whose outcomes depend heavily on how collaboration between humans and machines is designed. Their review finds that there is no one-size-fits-all model for AI integration, but that successful adoption consistently relies on clear human roles in supervision, judgment, and accountability.

Anthropic's report highlights a related paradox. Despite dramatic productivity gains, AI has not reduced the importance of human experience. In interviews cited in the report, engineers say they trust AI most when they already know what the correct answer should look like. One Anthropic engineer notes that this intuition comes from having learned software engineering "the hard way", i.e. judgment cannot be automated without first being developed by humans.

As AI systems generate more output than ever before, the bottleneck in many organisations is no longer execution, but attention. Across industry research and academic studies alike, a common theme is emerging: the scarcest resource in AI-driven workplaces is skilled human oversight. Deciding what to prioritise, what to trust, and when to intervene is fast becoming a defining part of professional value.

As AI takes on more tactical execution, human work is shifting upward: toward supervision, judgment, and responsibility for outcomes. The future of work, it seems, is not about stepping aside for machines, but about knowing when, and how, to step in.

Most companies can't control their own AI, survey finds

NEXT STEP DESK

Most large companies lack visibility and control over the artificial intelligence systems operating within their networks, according to recent findings from the 2026 CISO AI Risk Report by Cybersecurity Insiders.

The report, based on a survey of 235 CISOs (Chief Information Security Officers), CIOs (Chief Information Officers), and senior security leaders across the US and the UK, found that AI is often deployed without approval. 75% of organisations have discovered unapproved 'Shadow AI' tools running in their systems, many with access to sensitive data. According to the data, 71% of CISOs confirm AI has access

to core business systems, but only 16% govern that access effectively.

The survey highlights a critical visibility gap: 92% of organisations lack full oversight of their AI identities, and 95% doubt they could detect malicious activity by an AI agent. Only 5% feel confident they could contain a compromised AI system.

Security leaders cited the rapid, decentralised adoption of AI tools like copilots as a key challenge. These systems act autonomously, making them difficult to track with traditional security tools designed for human users. The report notes 86% of leaders do not enforce access policies for AI, and just 25% use monitoring controls built specifically for AI.



IMAGE: PEXELS

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