**[Epic Overuse Symbolic of Me-Now Generation](http://jaymenard.com/2010/12/13/epic-overuse-symbolic-of-me-now-generation/)**

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By Jason Menard

Fed up of the word epic? Join the club. Unfortunately, we’re only going to see more of it as it’s the perfect word to illustrate the narcissism of today’s youth – a narcissism that we’ve created and nurtured.

Nowadays, everything’s epic. It was bad enough when Web hipsters coined the term ‘epic fail’ to describe whatever pseudo-hip meme they posted on the Internet showcasing someone screwing up. What we used to call badly voiced-over Bob Saget-era America’s Funniest Home Videos and brushed off as mindless, now lives on in the Internet bestowed the same categorization Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.

And lately the word epic has been conscripted to describe anything that exceeds the mundane – no matter how minor the achievement. Epic meals, epic TV shows, epic evenings out… We used to call them good times, but now nothing’s just OK – it’s all epic.

I thought it was just me. I thought I was the only one noticing the overuse of the word, but there’s a growing backlash amongst those of us of a certain age (generally above the 20’s). And while we’ve taken to Facebook to vent our frustrations and to mock, our generation is greatly to blame for this situation.

I grew up in the Me Generation – the decade of excess that was the 80’s, where greed was allegedly good, and Alex P. Keaton was the symbol of then-youth’s hunger for materialism. Today, we live in what I like to call the Me-Now Generation.

Not to go all amateur psychologist here (although, that one first-year university psychology course does give me the right), but our youth have grown up in a self-congratulatory society where nothing they do is wrong – it’s all just different shades of right. They don’t fail anything, we just redefine success; they need constant encouragement and simple success, and any criticism is simply harming their fragile psyches.

And when you combine the immediate gratification that social media provides with the regular teenage delusions of grandeur and their strongly held beliefs that nothing that came before them mattered, it’s clear that we’ve set ourselves up for this hyperbolic reaction to mundane life.

Thanks to Facebook, MySpace, texting, Twitter, and the like, today’s youth have grown up believing that everything they do doesn’t just matter (well, except proper spelling and adherence to grammar conventions), but that it’s the most important thing ever. With attention spans rivalling that of hummingbirds and goldfish, yesterday’s achievement is long-since forgotten, replaced by whatever monumental achievement’s been accomplished today.

Tweet, post, get immediate response. Epic!

There are Web sites dedicated to defining what is epic, yet a casual glance shows that they’re things that are, at best, cool. Captain Caveman allegedly is epic. Listen, I loved that show, but it didn’t redefine the way I see the world – it was just something that passed the time while I was eating my cereal.

Of course, my generation is that of the dinosaurs. Nothing we did or saw could compare to what today’s youth are experiencing RIGHT NOW! Today is greater than all of the yesterday’s combined. Tomorrow? Well, it’s going to be epic, right?

Honestly, should we expect anything less? We’ve raised a generation of kids who have grown up believing that their thoughts, feelings, and experiences are to be valued above all. We’ve sheltered them from criticism so as not to stunt their creativity and growth. Yet, by doing so, we’ve created a situation where greatness is not something to be strived for – rather, it’s something that’s just assumed.

In doing so, we’ve leveled the playing field to the point where average is exceptional. So is it truly a shock to find out that anything just a couple of ticks above the mundane is classified epic by a group that’s so long been celebrated for mediocrity?

There are two simple meanings of the adjective of epic: denoting, relating to, or characteristic of an epic or epics; and of heroic or impressive proportions. Yet we’ve allowed the bar to be set so low that our youth’s perspective has been skewed to the point where true greatness is overshadowed by our children’s need to be validated every moment of every day. Creativity, cleverness, humour, intelligence? Overrated. Being random is celebrated with a greater vigour than true talent or skill – after all, it takes less effort to be odd than to be exceptional.

And if anything’s an epic fail, it’s that we’ve created this monster ourselves.