

The Futures Effect

The Futures Effect

Change Your Story, Change Y'our Future!

Tom Meyers

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Words fine-tuned by Graham Buik www.idisambiguate.com

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After today, you'll never be the same again.

TESTIMONIALS

Tom Meyers, in his new book *The Futures Effect*, provides an engaging and highly practical approach to transforming your consciousness and your way of life.

Written in a clear, direct, and easily understandable style, Meyers' book highlights the critical importance of understanding and guiding your life from the perspective of your envisioned future. Instead of following the habits and mindsets of the past, the key to a better life is to become more conscious of the future and its possibilities and opportunities—to infuse the future into the present. For Meyers, the future should become a way of life.

The Futures Effect examines the essentials of personal empowerment and taking a proactive, rather than reactive stance toward life's challenges.

Embracing the concept of self-directed purposeful evolution—we have the power to personally evolve ourselves—Meyers discusses how to successfully prepare for the stress-provoking rapid changes of modern life, creating a “resilient future,” and how to envisage a “future self” to serve as a guiding light for navigating and understanding the present.

Meyers addresses human emotions and feelings, decision-making and planning, knowledge and thinking, and purpose, self-narratives, and self-identity in outlining his futurist philosophy.

Filled with illuminating examples from his own personal history and experiences—of difficulties and successes and insights—Meyers' *The Futures Effect* is an enthusiastic and constructive roadmap for heightening one's future consciousness and re-energizing one's life.

Thomas Lombardo, Ph.D.

Director of the *Center for Future Consciousness*

Executive Board Member and Fellow of the *World Futures Studies Federation*

Author of *Future Consciousness: The Path to Purposeful Evolution, Essays on the Future of Psychology and Consciousness*, and numerous other books and publications

As an osteopath and an autodidact futurist, Tom links the most important skills from futures thinking to learn how to feel with your whole being.

His vision is not so much about shaping your vision about the future; it's about shaping your feelings about the future and using that as an instrument to choose directions. It is not a book that is made to be read at one time. It reads like it is simple, but it is not. It's a book that you should read chapter by chapter and think through and let the content make sense for you before passing on to the next chapter. You need to take time to digest.

In his writing, Tom takes you by the hand. Sometimes the text seems to repeat but then it comes to another point for which you still had to go back to what was told before. He teaches us personal futures thinking through his own experiences and underpins them with lots of research from other futurists, (mental) health experts, philosophers, and scientists.

My greatest learning from the book is that a lot of things are uncertain but there are also a lot of things you can count on. I love the insight that "...certain feelings I longed for were constant in life, like feeling content, fulfilled and healthy... I knew I would not always experience those things, but I would always be striving for them".

Working with Tom on GREAT futures is not about knowing; his futures effect is about wisdom with all your body, mind and soul.

Linda Hofman MSc.

Senior lecturer & futures researcher, Fontys Academy for Creative Industries

This book is all about inspiring you to think constructively about your future. By providing a straightforward and useful framework based on unwavering principles, it fosters the development of a guiding narrative for the future, for one's life.

By using that framework, we can define and design a preferred scenario of the future that is better than one left up to chance. Everyone can easily follow the steps suggested by the book to progress, live a meaningful life, and assure a "GREAT" future in this fast changing and challenging world. It teaches us how to analyse, develop, and pursue our preferred plans using language that is simple to read and understand.

The clever use of "Y'our" rather than "Your" by the author serves to remind us that our choices, decisions, and actions influence more than just our own lives. We must thus construct our future based on that awareness to be responsible people who care about the future.

For readers at all educational levels who want to live a purposeful life in our volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment, this book is highly helpful.

Alireza Hejazi, Ph.D.

Analyst for Leadership and Futures Studies and author of a.o. *Responsible Foresight* and *Becoming A Professional Futurist*

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PREFACE

What do you want the future to be like?

What do you aspire to achieve, feel, create and be remembered for?

Don't answer immediately, even if you know the answer.

For now, just take a deep breath, close your eyes and step inside yourself. Slowly breathe in and out, feel within and connect with your inner being.

How do you feel? Don't think, just observe.

Now, imagine you are travelling to the future – to your last day on Earth – and look back. With an overview perspective, look at yourself – your life – like an astronaut would look at the Earth when they arrive in an orbit around our planet for the first time. Look back on your life with the same awe and connection astronauts feel when they see the Earth from this cosmic perspective. Look back at what has come and gone but also your outlook on life, your desires and aspirations. Do this without judgement but with a thankful, open heart, an open mind and curiosity.

You are now a time-travelling astronaut who is looking back from the future. Observe – don't judge or use words to describe what you see. Let the feelings flow in and out at the rhythm of your breath, and let the images that emerge unfold like a film in front of your mind's eye. Feel and observe with wonder and awe all the steps you took, the decisions and choices you made and the actions you took, and all the experiences and learnings of the years that have brought you to this, your final day on Earth.

How do you feel viewing yourself from this future perspective? Whatever feelings come rolling over you, acknowledge them, be grateful, and say "Thank you". Don't let yourself be overwhelmed by the feelings or realisations, but let them help you raise your awareness.

Keep your eyes closed for a moment longer. With your mind's eye, keep looking back – but now, expand your awareness. Expand your field of vision and start seeing around you. You are not alone. You are of one with more than 8 billion souls. Souls that are having the same experience as you and, like you, are travelling on Spaceship Earth that is moving at a speed of 107,000 kilometres per hour around the Sun.

You are, of one, moving together in a fast-changing and ever more complex world, as you can see from this perspective. Zoom in and you'll see that you are of one, connected through decisions, choices, actions and more.

Observe and see how what you say or do influences others and how others, in turn, influence the many and shape your behaviour, as you are one. Hold on to that insight.

Now, refocus your awareness back to you and ask yourself: "If this was indeed my last day on Earth, am I content and fulfilled with what I have achieved? Was I good to myself, my health and wellbeing? Was I able to adapt and self-manage myself in what has become a fast-changing world? Was my life meaningful? Did I become a better person? And now, leaving this world, am I leaving it a better place than it was when I entered it? Will I be considered a good ancestor?"

What say you?

Would others agree with your conclusions? Or...

Change Your Story, Change Y'our Future!

It's time to go back, until we meet again.

But before you go, tell me: What do you want your future to be like? Or, as I like to put it: What "the future" do you want?

It is time...

Be good to you and y'our future, always.

And then, I wake up.

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Introduction

It's up to you to change your story, to change y'our future.

Tom Meyers

Envisaging your future self

The future is the act of creation and we are all participating in it.

Thomas Lombardo

Have you ever considered or taken the time to think about your future self? I mean, really taken the time to reflect about who you ideally would like to be, how you want to feel, what your ideal day would look like?

What “the future” do you want 10, 20 or more years from now? When I was asked to envisage my future self and describe a perfect day 10 years into the future – that was more than 20 years ago now – I was really taken aback and even a bit dismissive about what I was being asked to do.

What was the point of thinking about the future when my business was failing and I along with it? How was it possible to imagine beauty when there was nothing but darkness all around? How was it possible to hypothetically think of a bright future in 10 or more years’ time, when I wanted change today? My situation was dire, and it needed to be fixed now! Depressed and wallowing in self-pity, it felt a preposterous task and a waste of time to think about the future while faced with so many problems in the here and now.

However, luckily, I did as I was asked. Now, with hindsight, I know that contemplating what the future I wanted and conceiving a preferred future was exactly what I needed and the best strategy to pull myself out of my misery.

Who would have thought that what seemed preposterous, even impossible, would become the key to the mindshift I needed in my time of crisis? I didn’t. Nor did I imagine that it would become the starting point for what I so much longed for

– to feel content, fulfilled and healthy. The primary feelings that lie at the basis of health and wellbeing.

But not only that: every aspect of my life has benefited from “futurizing” myself, as I’ve come to refer to the process of designing and living one’s life on purpose. A process and mindset where, instead of leaving life and your future up to chance, you design the future you want based on self-defined unwavering principles and proactively pull it towards you through the decisions and choices you make and the actions you take.

In this book, I’m introducing two new words: **“y’our”** and **“y’ourself”**.

“Y’our” is an amalgam of “your” and “our”, and **“y’ourself”** is the combination of “yourself” and “ourself”. (“Ourself” is different from “ourselves” and refers to people in general rather than a definite group of people.)

As we focus on the future, I’m convinced it is vital for us to understand that we are not alone, never were and never will be, and that our decisions, choices and actions have an impact on others and vice versa.

In many ways, this accords with the Golden Rule, the principle of treating others as one wants to be treated – but what I want to emphasise here is the importance of being mindful that, whatever you do, your decisions, choices and actions are going to have an effect on others.

So, when you see “y’our” and “y’ourself” used in this book, I hope this will help you (= you, the reader as an individual!) to keep this important aspect in mind.

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So I'd like to ask you: What sort of future are you creating for y'ourself? Are you actively creating the future? Or do you face it day by day, leave it up to chance, and find yourself being pushed towards an unknown destiny?

Contrary to what you might think, you can have a say in what kind of future will ensue by choosing a future before a future is chosen for you. **You can have a say, as every decision and choice you make – every action you take – steers the course of y'our future.**

The future as a way of life

If you don't have a strategy, you're part of someone else's strategy.

Alvin Toffler

Today, we are living in a fast-changing and ever more complex and ambiguous world. A world that is trying to cope with and navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating effects of climate change. At the same time, every aspect of our life is being influenced by automation, robotisation, datafication and so many other changes and challenges due to technological advances that have outpaced our own evolution.

In other words, we are living in a time with many seemingly uncontrollable changes and challenges which can induce a feeling of uncertainty and insecurity. This often leads to stress, anxiety and indecision due to fear of making the wrong choices.

Change itself is changing, and it is doing so very rapidly. How you handle this is key to y'our health and wellbeing – even y'our existence. Change is inevitable, and rebelling against it will not change anything but will only make it worse for you in the long run. However, it is also not enough to just accept that everything changes or that change is a constant. You need to embrace change and change yourself or, as I prefer to say, evolve with it on purpose.

As an osteopath and body-centred stress coach, I often think about the question of how we will cope with all these changes. What we need and what you can do to evolve on purpose to stay healthy in body, mind and spirit in this fast-changing

world. There is so much at stake.

I know it is normal for us, for organisations and policymakers alike, to concentrate on the immediate threat(s) we are facing. It is normal to react, in the present, to the changes which have already occurred and which are affecting us now. When faced with a fire, you have to react and tackle it straight away in order to safeguard yourself and others.

However, preventing a fire is better, and this requires proactivity, the conscious decisions where you work out possible scenarios and take action to prevent them from occurring. At the same time, thinking about scenarios on how to handle a fire is also crucial for being able to react better when a fire actually breaks out.

We invest too little time thinking about scenarios for the future. Rarely do we ask what the future we want and/or how we will cope with the multitude of changes ahead. Rarely do we want to see too far ahead; this is often due to fear, as thinking about the future can be very scary. We'd rather hide behind the premise "what will be will be...". So we're inclined to refuse to think about unpleasant facts, and we prefer to wait and see.

This kind of reactive thinking strategy has become as problematic as not having a strategy at all. It makes me think of the words of American polymath Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790): "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!"

At the moment, when it comes to the future it's as if we are walking across a busy street aimlessly and without first looking left or right to see if there is any oncoming danger. We are not even looking ahead.

Then we're surprised when we're in the middle of the street

and faced with an oncoming car.

In many ways, a part of futurizing yourself is like crossing a busy street. First, you need to decide where you want to be on purpose. Then, before you make any decisions or choices or take any action, you look ahead and anticipate possible challenges or obstacles you will need to deal with or overcome. Only then do you make your way and navigate the road ahead towards your preferred future. This works most of the time, but now and then something unexpected happens, as no plan is perfect and the future is and remains unpredictable. Thus, you can still find yourself in the path of an unexpected trend or event that wasn't on your radar and to which you need to react to. However, with the future as your ally, you'll know how to react to any unexpected events.

"The future hasn't arrived yet. Do your best to try to shape it in the present moment, but always remember some things are just out of our control, and that's fine."

Robert Washington

Unexpected events will always happen, but when you futurize yourself you will always have a strategy to fall back on.

The future is y'our future

Today, neither past nor present but the future has become the key to y'our existence.

Tom Meyers

The future is y'our future, and the likelihood that the future will become a continuous distressing battle against the odds is significantly increased if you and we leave it all up to chance. Already today, most of the significant problems we battle against exist because we left things to chance, didn't think ahead about the consequences, or left it up to others to decide.

Be aware that the future arrives more slowly than you think and more quickly than you can imagine. However, even though we are switched-on all the time to the point of distraction, we are not so switched-on when it comes to seeing what is in plain sight.

Today, in the midst of turmoil, where short-term pressures are up against medium and long-term uncertainties, humanity is at a precipice and its future is at stake (Stansberry et al. 2019).

Today, we are living in what is considered by the United Nations as "The Decade of Action" (2020–2030). We have 10 years to reinvent ourselves and find sustainable solutions to all the world's biggest challenges – ranging from poverty and gender to climate change, inequality and closing the finance gap.

We have to reinvent ourselves, which isn't easy, but we can make it a lot easier when we learn to use our mental time-travelling potential to look up and ahead and envisage the reality of the catastrophe that awaits if we don't do anything.

"The Earth is at a tipping point and we face a stark choice: either we continue as we are and irreparably damage our planet, or we remember our unique power as human beings and our continual ability to lead, innovate and problem-solve. People can achieve great things. The next ten years present us with one of our greatest tests – a decade of action to repair the Earth."

Prince William, The Earthshot Prize, 2019

Yesterday, while watching the film *Don't Look Up*, I also watched – by coincidence (or not) – an extract from the programme *28 minutes* on Arte (6 January 2022). In the extract, journalist Salomé Saqué tries to warn the panel and audience about the climate catastrophe. The reaction of the panel was... laughter and ridicule. It was like a scene straight out of the film.

The problem is so big and overwhelming that I think we don't want to see it and would rather bury our heads in the sand or laugh it off, hope for the best and believe it won't happen so quickly. But deep down, we know the truth. Deep down, you know.

It's a classic trap that the future arrives more slowly than we think and more quickly than we can imagine. Just look around and you'll see that the future is already here.

The question now is: how do you secure y'our future and the future of the future? How do you overcome your fear and possible short-sightedness?

The future of the future

The events that will or are likely to happen in time to come are changing in the time that is (as yet) still to come.

You overcome it by designing y'our future on purpose, and to pull y'our future towards you through the decisions and choices you make and the actions you take. You overcome it one step at a time with a GREAT future for yourself and humankind in mind.

(Over the next few pages, I will explain exactly what I mean by "**a GREAT future**".) Your steps, even small ones, matter, in the bigger scheme of things.

To quote the words of Queen Elizabeth II spoken in a video message for the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (Glasgow) evening reception (1 November 2021): "Of course, the benefits of such actions will not be there to enjoy for all of us here today: none of us will live forever. But we are doing this not for ourselves but for our children and our children's children, and those who will follow in their footsteps."

Futurizing yourself is adopting a futures mindset

You cannot create the future using the old strategy tools ... The big challenge in creating the future is not predicting the future; instead the goal is to try to imagine a future that is plausible, that you can create.

Charles Handy

It's time to learn from y'our past but think back from y'our future history that you envisage and create on purpose. It's time to stop being too focused on the now, and adopt a new mindset that looks to the future in a bid to overcome y'our fears. It's time to create a GREAT future, a future in a way that best suits and assures y'our health and wellbeing and the wellbeing of our planet on which we depend.

In a GREAT future, we have a common cause and the necessary anchor points to create the stability and clarity we need to overcome our fears. A GREAT future is where we become the best version of ourselves and where, to quote Douglas Rushkoff, author of *Team Human*, "We can be fully human without being in complete control of our world."

A GREAT future, i.e., a GREAT life, requires an open mind and some thought. It's time to start living on purpose. When you live on purpose, you're adding meaning into your life and moving in a preferred direction. It's time to believe that y'our individual actions matter. It's time that you act like y'our future and the future of the future depends on it. Because it does.

We can cope with and navigate the global changes and challenges that lie ahead by using the future. You can drive the changes needed to pull y'ourself out of this crisis facing humanity before it is too late. I know you can, because I have

experienced not only how futurizing myself has changed me but also how its benefits have rippled through my environment.

I'm not saying futurizing yourself is the solution to all y'our problems. However, I do believe that, at the core, futurizing yourself is an important contribution to the change in mindset that is needed to start the "Great Reset" needed to tackle some of the biggest personal and global challenges we are facing.

The future is a collective endeavour, for everybody, by everyone. The future needs you. In these unsettling times, with everything changing so rapidly and so extensively, there is a great need to find stability and clarity, something to hold on to while everything changes.

The benefits for y'our health and wellbeing

Once your future self becomes alive in your mind, you may find it much easier to make the small personal sacrifices that are essential to preserve your wellbeing. And in the years ahead, you'll thank yourself for that forethought.

David Robson

Futurizing yourself is something that everyone can do and benefit from. However, what will be different for each individual is where you start the process of defining y'our future on purpose and proactively incorporate futures thinking into your decisions, choices and actions to "change forward" and create a GREAT future for y'ourself.

It depends on where you find yourself, the stage of life you are in, the baggage that you are carrying along and/or whether or not other essential needs are met. There are 8 billion different starting points, so to speak.

Futurize Yourself

Futurizing yourself is living your life on purpose. Instead of leaving your life and the future up to chance, you use images of your preferred future as a starting point to change your behaviour in the present.

It is a conscious process and mindset where you proactively incorporate futures thinking into your present-moment decisions, choices and actions that are consistent with the future you want, and it contributes to better, more meaningful living and a GREAT future for y'ourself.

This process is based on a narrative for your future that you have taken the time to envisage and develop by means of three steps.

The first step starts with creating a new narrative for the past when you have, for example, limiting beliefs about yourself and/or about the way the world works.

The second step is to uncover and define your potential (i.e., the talents you were born with) and in addition define how you want to feel (innate expression of wellbeing) on any given day and your aspirations (hopes for the future) that don't change over time (unwavering principles).

The third step is to create a narrative for your preferred future based on steps one and two. A narrative that is agile enough to cope with changes including your personal evolution, changing demands of the world of work, the changing environment, megashifts and megatrends.

My own three-step process started at a time when life had become meaningless and a never-ending uphill battle. Tired of fighting against the odds and emotionally drained, I remember waking up one morning in my cold, damp bedroom thinking: "If this is what life is about, this continuous struggle to survive, I don't want it." But what did I want?

That said, I am still futurizing myself. It is an ongoing process. The approach is very different now than when I started 22 years ago, but the essence and what the future I want haven't changed.

What I want is what I believe you and we all want. It is something we have in common, no matter at what stage of life you find yourself. What you/we want at y'our most intrinsic level is to feel content, fulfilled and healthy, and what you/we want to have is a future that is **Good, Resilient, Evolvable, Actionable and Transcendent**, i.e., **a GREAT future**.

Why do you/we want this? Because we all want to flourish in the flow of evolution and thrive in this ever-evolving, fast-changing world. We want to **flourish** – to grow or develop in a healthy way the non-material part of us that goes beyond the confines of simple happiness or wellbeing. We also want to **thrive** – and by that, I mean to succeed in material terms.

I wish I had come up with the words “flourishing in the flow of evolution”. However, all praise goes to futurist, psychologist, educator, philosopher and author of *Future Consciousness – The Path to Purposeful Evolution*, Thomas Lombardo. A book that speaks to my heart which addresses “How to create a good future by developing a core set of character virtues, most notably and centrally wisdom.”

We want this because this is what we innately strive for. Life needs a sense, a direction in which we can excel and expand our feeling of belonging and wholeness. Just imagine a GREAT future – a life where you feel content, fulfilled and healthy, while making a meaningful impact on the lives of others by growing into the best version of yourself in a purposeful way.

Do you want this?

Maybe you’ve never looked at your life or your future from this perspective before. If so, let me encourage you to give it a go. I think you will be pleasantly surprised!

And while it makes sense that focusing on the moment can improve your wellbeing, so can futurizing yourself. Because futurizing yourself makes you more willing to look after yourself. It also gives your life a direction, makes it more

meaningful, makes you more responsible for your present-day behaviour, and makes making decisions and choices – and life in general – easier. Because creating and nurturing a vivid sense of your future self will increase the extent you feel more continuity between your present and your future self (future self-continuity), and the more likely it is that you will make decisions, make choices and take actions with your future self in mind.

Future self-continuity

Future self-continuity is the extent that people feel more continuity between their present and future selves, resulting in them being more likely to make decisions with the future self in mind.

“Focusing on one’s connection to the future self may help one realize the long road of repeated healthy decisions to improve long-term health, and perhaps this process would be further facilitated by shifting priorities, yielding a trajectory of self-reinforcing positive behaviors. Acting today for health benefits that may not be seen until far in the future may be easier to do when recognizing one’s connection to that future, specifically to one’s future self.”

(Rutchick et al. 2018)