



Dear {{ contact.FIRSTNAME }}}

Welcome to the twenty-fifth instalment of the serialisation of my upcoming book **“The Futures Effect - Change Your Story, Change Y’our Future!”** - the second volume in the **“Futurize Yourself”** series - that is scheduled for publication later this year or early 2023.

This week I’m sharing the fifth episode of Chapter Three: Not all challenges are signs to change.

Be good to you, be good to y’our future, always.

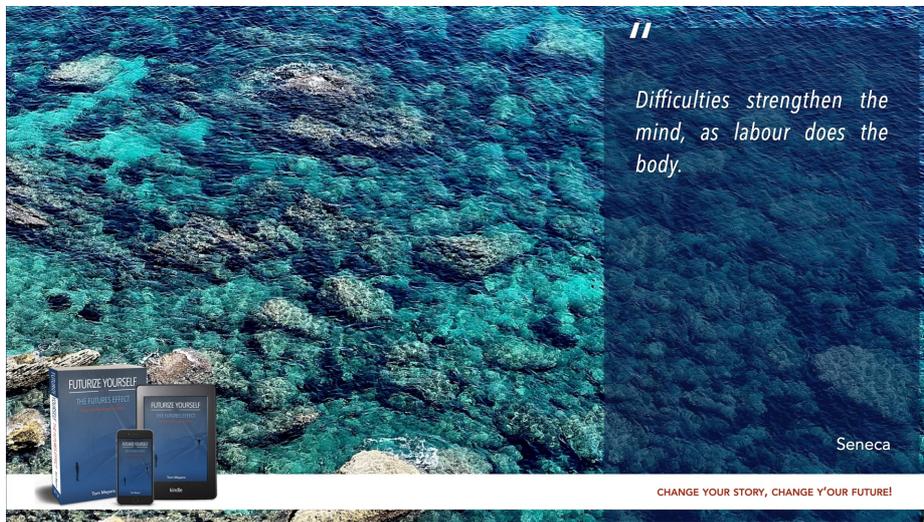
Tom

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**CH3.5 Not all challenges are signs to change**



Before I go on, you need to know that not all challenges are signs to change. Some challenges make you stronger and bring you closer to your goal. For example, learning new skills can be challenging. Staying home during a lockdown, not being able to visit friends or family can be challenging. Athletes training for years to be on top of their game for the next Olympics is challenging. Writing a book is challenging, but it doesn't get written by sitting on the sofa watching TV.

Exams are extremely challenging and can seem to stop your flow experience. I remember very well how I struggled for all my osteopathy exams. When I was studying, I was swimming against the current for months, and faster currents would push me under the water, but I kept swimming. But these challenges were there for a reason, were part of my evolution to becoming an osteopath. Oh yes, I cursed, cried, questioned if this hardship was all worth it and was truly leading me to what I had envisaged becoming. But each time, the answer was yes. I wanted and needed this. It mattered, and I needed to take the therapist in me into a specific direction. A direction that was more recognised than - but in line with - kinesiology, where I would feel more whole and could use all my newly discovered faculties. Osteopathy was that direction, and it fitted my personal profile to a T. So in moments of doubt, I reconnected with my future as an osteopath, which gave me the resilience, the motivation and the stamina to go on.

If resilience is your ability to bounce back from adversity, chronic stress occurs when these same demands outweigh your resources. Over time, chronic stress will be harmful for your health and wellbeing. It will change your time perspective, change your behaviour and shorten your lifespan.

This type of motivation or stamina is no different from the motivation and extra energy you get when thinking of your upcoming holiday when you are having an awful day at work. This pre-holiday happiness or energy booster can be experienced weeks or even months before the holiday actually begins - fantastic, right? I thought so when I started to use this analogy to explain the futures effect to my patients.

When I used the holiday example, everybody recognised what I meant immediately but had never thought about it before. For some patients, this fried their circuits a bit. They completely got it on a deeper level, but when trying to apply it, their brain couldn't process it. I noticed that most of the time, these were patients who - to manage their stress - had been practising mindfulness for years.

**“Mindfulness is the energy of being aware and awake to the present moment. It is the continuous practice of touching life deeply in every moment of daily life. To be mindful is to be truly alive, present, and at one with those around you and with what you are doing.”**

Thich Nhat Hanh

While mindfulness is all about bringing your attention to the present moment, it doesn't mean one should deny the future. I often see that practitioners lose sight of this, and forget to be mindful of their future.

To be mindful means that you are not in your default mode. The default mode is, for example, when you open your wallet at the checkout of your local supermarket to pay for the groceries you'd wanted to make that surprise dinner, are surprised to see that your wallet is empty and can't remember where you've spent the €50 that you are sure was in it that morning. If you had been more aware during the day, you wouldn't even be checking for the money – you'd go straight for the debit card.

To be mindful can also be in relation to future events. Futurizing yourself to evolve on purpose is not done on autopilot but consciously, and for that you have to be mindful.

**The fact is that practising mindfulness can actually help you in envisaging your future, as it helps to reduce stress. Remember that stress over time can lead to anxiety and depression, mood changes, memory problems and changes in time perception.**

**Therefore, it is imperative when you want to futurize yourself or to practise any other form of future-oriented awareness and planning, including for business purposes, that you do it in a state of ease. Practising mindfulness can help with this, but if you feel it doesn't bring you back to ease, get professional help that includes the resetting of the autonomic nervous system.**

The past has come and gone, and the present might be the only place that exists. However, if you aspire to have a GREAT future, you need to spend time being mindful of the future. **“The present is always leaving, and the future is always arriving. We have the power to greatly influence the future by consciously making present-moment choices that are consistent with the future we want”** (Jennice Vilhauer, *Think Forward to Thrive*).

Just living in the present moment is in many ways against our nature, as futures thinking is a ubiquitous feature of the human mind. Based on millions of years of evolution, our minds are not constructed to live in the present. To evolve, there needs to be anticipation of a general direction for the future (Thomas Lombardo, *Future Consciousness: The Path to Purposeful Evolution*).

This has been so since conception. A fertilised human egg cell develops into a human and never a chicken because it has direction. As it were, a design is realised.

To my patients, I often illustrate how much futures thinking or anticipation is ingrained in us by explaining: “My stomach is a futurist. As soon as it

sees chocolate, it starts a digestive process in preparation for that first bite. It anticipates what is coming, just like my mouth that starts salivating.”

Imagine our digestive system not doing that. Imagine if our body didn't anticipate danger. Life wouldn't be as we know it.

Looking to the future has always defined humanity; it is part of our DNA. Your brain is an anticipation machine, but so is your body. The fact that we are still here is thanks to our ability to anticipate.

The uniquely human ability to visualise and to time-travel in our minds allows us to anticipate consciously just like my stomach does autonomously, and to intentionally shape and control our future through our deliberate behaviour. That, in turn, makes us more resilient, because we become better prepared. (Suddendorf, T., Brinums, M. and Imuta, K. (2016). Shaping One's Future Self - The Development of Deliberate Practice. (PDF) [https://bit.ly/2lvhhBs.](https://bit.ly/2lvhhBs))

At any time, we can start to visualise. Nothing can stop us time-travelling - not even a crisis. For example, during a pandemic where the immediate future is difficult to predict, we can turn to this innate ability by taking ownership of our long-term future, envisioning what we truly want, and using that vision to steer our actions and gain control over the present.

Thus, the future becomes a fantastic stress management tool and a great asset to y'our health and wellbeing. The future does not exist except in our mind, but unlike the past, we can change it, give it a direction by aligning our decisions, choices and actions. I know this might be a concept that needs getting used to, but you'll find very quickly that it has merit. Although futurizing yourself means aligning and committing yourself to long-term objectives, you don't have to wait to feel or see the benefits. Some (not all - that would be too amazing) are immediate, because the decisions and choices you make and the actions you take to realise the future are in the present. Remember what I explained about the benefits of planning your holiday or just thinking about it? I would even go further and claim that sometimes the stage of planning and thinking about your holiday is more joyous than the holiday itself. The future is now; this is what is so fantastic about it.

**“As humans, we spend a lot of our mental lives living in the future and our future-mindedness can be a source of joy if we know good things are coming, and travel is an especially good thing to have to look forward to.”**

[Matthew Killingsworth](#)

## **To be continued next week with:**

CH3.6 The future as a milestone

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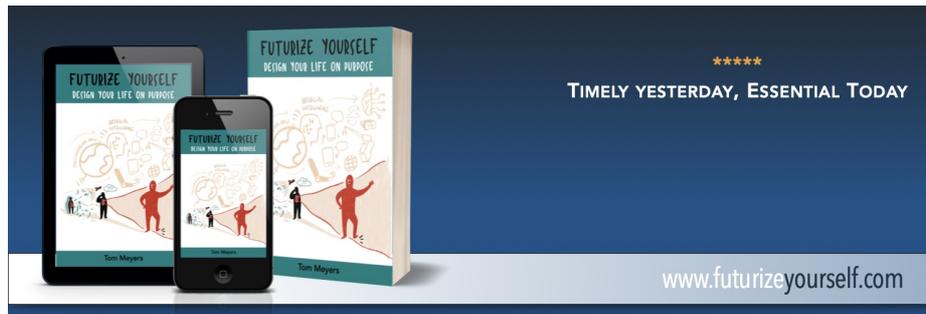
### **About the author**

Tom Meyers, also known as “TomTom the Health Navigator”, is an osteopath D.O., body-centred stress coach, the founder of the “Reset Approach”, a wellbeing



futurist, space enthusiast, TEDx organiser and author of "Futurize Yourself - Design your life on purpose."

His mission is to empower you to flourish and thrive in this fast-changing, uncertain and challenging world full of opportunities.



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