FutureWise Millennials

Rob Reiher Ph.D.

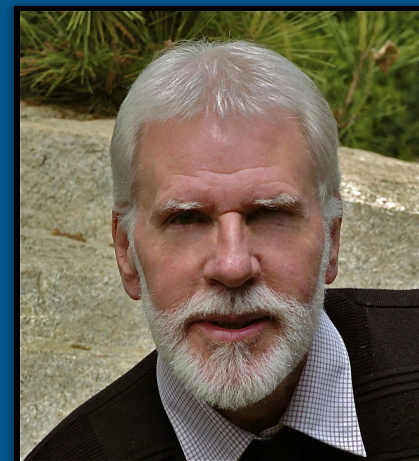## Challenges, Choices & Changes

PART 1: You Never Saw It Coming

Rob Reiher Ph.D.

Rob is a highly respected developmental and educational psychologist. He is a media expert who studies the escalating impact of tech, media and consumerism and it's accompanying NOISE (distraction, distortion, disruption and overload) on today's youth, families and society. Rob has decades of experience working at the top levels of the kids' media and entertainment industries. His many clients have included CBS, Warner, Lucasfilm, Spielberg, Marvel, Mattel, Fisher-Price, Discovery Kids, Nike and more.

In addition, Dr. Reiher has extensive experience as a researcher, counselor, speaker, consultant, and educator. As an adjunct professor of Psychology at Woodbury University in Burbank California, Rob created and taught the first INNERTAINMENT course in the country. He has also taught at Sober College in Woodland Hills, California and Art Center College of Design in Pasadena.

Rob has written two books and is the co-author (with Daniel Acuff Ph.D.) of KIDNAPPED: *How Irresponsible Marketers Are Stealing The Minds of Your Children*. In this illuminating book, Dr. Reiher and Dr. Acuff discuss the developmental parameters for creating enriching entertainment and media. They offer extensive insights and advice on how parents can determine and evaluate positive consumer products for their children.

With the accelerating rise and combined impact of technology, media and consumerism, Rob has recently focused his attention on how our choice making skills are becoming undermined by increasing the increasing levels of "noise" (distraction, distortion, disruption and overload) in today's society. His latest book, currently in the works, is FutureWise: *The Challenge of Choice in the Culture of Noise.*

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You Never Saw It Coming

I was at the mall the other day, and just for kicks I decided to sit on a bench and watch how many people had a cell phone in their hand or were actually using it while they were were walking and/or talking to each other.

Although I've been "stunned" by the amount of people taking up space on the workout benches at my gym, while completely "lost" in their personal digital world, it's even more illuminating to focus on this issue and actually record what I am witnessing in a public mall. At my particular mall it turned out that about 8 out of every 10 people were involved in one way or another with their smart phone.

What 's happening?

I know, I know, you've heard it all before, and it's just some old guy ragging on technology again. Probably an academic who just doesn't get it.

 Well, part of that's right. I'm definitely not part of the Millennial generation, and I **am** on the upside of the human life cycle. But I absolutely love technology, try my best to stay up to date with the latest innovations, and I'm a big fan of the Apple watch, Netflix, Amazon Prime, big screen TV's, stereo head phones, the I phone camera, etc. etc. etc. So what's the big deal?

 The big deal boils down to one basic idea...**RELEVANCE (personal visibility)**. The "bill of goods" we were "sold" by the media and masters of mind games, was that technology with it's vast array of benefits, would make our lives easier, more productive, and save us time and energy from the grind, so we could become more successful. What was left unsaid, was all about the "tradeoffs" that would slowly and imperceptibly take place underneath the surface of our awareness. So even if we did save the time and energy, the real question is... what would we do with the time and energy that we saved? Or even more importantly, *could we* and *would we* use the time and energy we saved, to create a fulfilled and rewarding future...our personal legacy.?

Millennial Research

We are currently facing a severe trend of higher rates of depression and suicide among young adults. The increases in depression, suicide attempts and suicide appeared among teens from every background across all regions of the country and regardless of economic status, race or ethnicity (Clinical Psychological Science). There was a significant increase in mental health issues in just a five-year span between 2010 and 2015. The result of national surveys shows that the number of U.S. teens who felt useless and joyless increased 33 percent, teen suicide attempts surged by 23 percent and the number of teens between the ages of 13 and 18 years old who committed suicide skyrocketed 31 percent (Twenge). According to Dr. Jean Twenge, author of iGen, "We are on the brink of the worst mental health crisis in decades". iGen refers to the generation born between 1995 and 2012.

 Twenge, Jean. "With Teen Mental Health Deteriorating over Five Years, There's a Likely Culprit. "The Conversation", 18 Sept. 2018, theconversation.com/with-teen-mental-health-deteriorating-over-five-years-theres-a-likely-culprit-86996.

What's Really Going On Now?

Sooooo, if this savings of time and energy that we're "hyped" about is so beneficial to our well being, why are we now experiencing the highest rates of suicide, depression and anxiety among Millennials, in history? What's really going on?

The 20+ Year Long View

From my "perch" in the world of tech, media, consumerism and education, I've had the priviledge to observe a twenty plus year progression of mega and mini trends as they've unfolded. These trends were predicted by some of the great minds of the past, who understood our "human condition" better than most of us, and from their base of research and knowledge, they could extrapolate how the future would begin to unfold, as technology, media and consumerism joined forces to become the new "Power Partners" creating and dominating our lives.
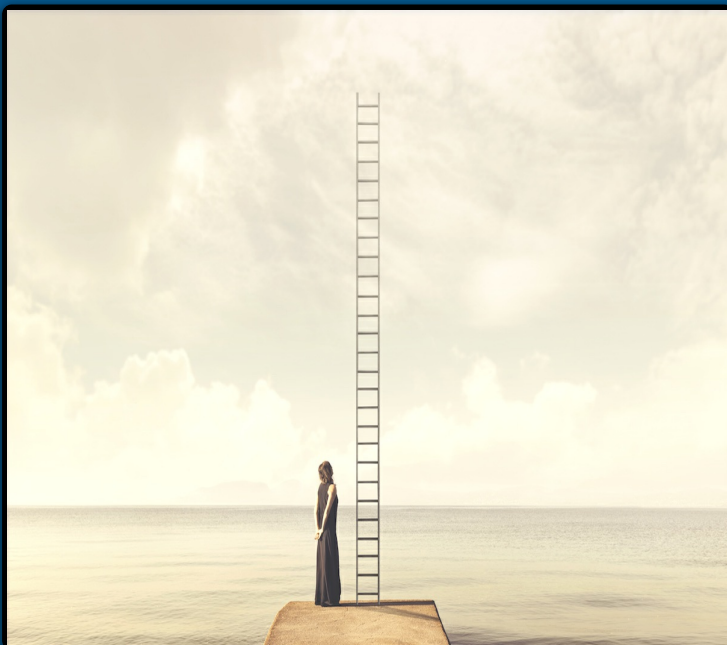
The Changing Circles of Influence

When the *Circles of Influence* surrounding us change, our ability to make choices for our personal well being and future, change along with them. The most important part of this phenomena however, is that if the changes within our *Circles of Influence* occur slowly, little by little, over a sustained period of time, they go unnoticed until we wake up one day and ask... what the hell happened? In the world of psychology this is called JND or *just noticeable difference*. While we can instantly recognize and emotionally respond to a major event like an earthquake because it has a high JND, a smaller JND like the changes occurring in computer memory or digital bandwidth have a far slower JND. And while constantly changing "under the radar", their impact just seems to show up one day like magic.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE UNDERLYING FACTORS IN OUR CHANGING CIRCLES OF INFLUENCE:

1985 Neal Postman

Amusing Ourselves To Death

In the latter part of the 20th century, professor (New York University) Neil Postman picked up where Marshall McLuhan left off, to offer his insights and critique of where America was headed in the new millennium. He covered a vast range of social issues and authored more than twenty books including the two that follow: *Amusing Ourselves To Death* and *Technopoly.*

One of the major "take aways" from Postman's book Amusing Ourselves To Death, was that even in the pre-Internet age. TV was turning all public life (education, religion, politics, journalism) into entertainment. But even more importantly, that because humans have an infinite appetite for distraction, entertainment through the predominant medium of the time...television, would come to undermine other forms of communication... **and we would no longer care about the "tradeoffs" we were making, as long as we were amused, and our pleasure chemistry (more later on this topic) was satisfied.**

RESEARCH

Kids in high school today spend as much as 90% of their daily screen time engaged in entertainment.

1992 Neal Postman

Technopoly

In line with many of his insights in Amusing Ourselves To Death, Postman, in his later book *Technopoly* (1992), exposes many of our "blind spots" regarding technology, and how our blinders can begin to slowly effect both the cultural values in our Circles of Influence and our personal well being. The first point Postman makes, is that while most people believe that technology is our friend, this is both a naive and an unexamined point of view, leaving a great deal more to be uncovered. First, every technology is both a burden and a blessing. There is no such thing as a one-sided positive approach to technology. Instead, tech must always be viewed with "tradeoffs" in mind. The following examples represent only a few of hundreds of changes that have occurred as a result of the digital age and it's increasing innovations in technology.

-The advances in the speed of the Internet have increased the speed of life in general.

-Speed of messaging creates a change in both attention span and in an individual's patience for the unfolding of information such as web sites that are slow and cumbersome.

-Emphasis on visual information and imagery reduces the tolerance for verbal information that is at a slower pace of information processing.

-Smart phone "external" stimulation begins to dominate face to face communication and levels of intimacy.

-In depth and more complex information processing skills become more difficult and time consuming with a reduction in involvement.

-Information collection lowers our levels in individual privacy.

-"Knowledge monopolies" are formed by individuals and companies that have the most powerful and innovative tech tools.

-Educational technologies shift teacher-student interactive skills toward computer based relationships.

Postman also reminds us that believing technological changes will be evenly distributed among the population and benefit everyone is a myth. Instead his position is that technological innovations are far more subtle, unpredictable, mysterious and often downright dangerous. Although technology is certainly a tremendous benefit to humanity, from Postman's perspective it must always be viewed with a "tradeoffs" perspective in order to embrace the positive along the negative implications.

2012 David Houle

Entering The Shift Age

David Houle is considered by many, one of America's most important futurists. In his book *Enterting The Shift Age*, he uses the metaphor of an "earthquake" to provide a "flavor" and an emotional sense about what we are currently experiencing in today's changing technological world. Although we have a tendency as humans, to reduce our fears by rationalizing the speed and impact of our changing world, the culture is continuing to expand and accelerate this speed of change, and with it, we are in a constant state of flux, whether we realize it or not.

Houle reminds us that whenever the world enters into significant phases of change, economics lead the way and become the gatekeeper, as currently represented by our global economy. In addition, as technology advances, the flow of "power" *can* move more in the direction of the individual, and away from slower and more cumbersome bureaucratic structures. This change in the "power" direction opens the door to what previously, were more limited possibilities. Instead it offers us higher potentials for creativity, entrepreneurship, and what Houle designates as the new opportunities for wealth in innovative intellectual property (IP's).

Although it "feels good" to identify with Houle's positive technological view of future, it also represents an example of Postman's concerns relative to representing "both" sides of the technology discussion. From a FutureWise perspective there are a number of psychological factors that must be included in this discussion, especially if we address our concerns toward the current situation that Millennials and Digital Natives find themselves immersed in today.

WHAT FOLLOWS ARE JUST A FEW OF THE MANY ISSUES THAT CURRENTLY PRESENT THEMSELVES FOR THE MILLENNIALS.

-Entrepreneurship among Millennials is currently below the level of previous generations. With all the tools and possibilities today, why is this?

-How do our 180 plus cognitive biases (blind spots) play into our current "addiction" with screens and our productive use of time?

-With the advances in the brain science of *neuroplasticity* (brain mapping), what do we now understand about the neuroscience of positive choices as a gateway to a positive future?

-As technology, media and consumerism continue to change at exponential rates, who's really in charge, and what is the underlying "agenda" and worldview of the people "pulling the strings"?

-If RELEVANCE and feeling personally significant in today 's world is one of the major issues for today's Millennials, what speciically are the psychological factors and critical skills needed, to PREPARE to uncover and integrate and individual's personal passions into a highly relevant and financially rewarding future?

We've have entered the SHIFT AGE, with all it's possibilities for changing the future of our society, and for moving past the learned limitations of the past into a post modern era of creativity, critical thinking, well being and personal and planetary progression. But the question still remains...HOW?
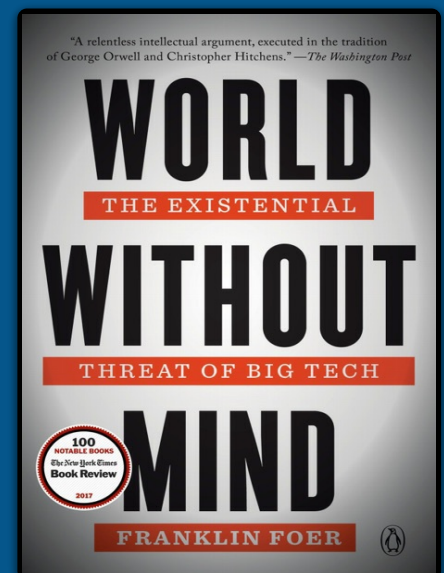
2017 Franklin Foer

World Without Mind

Franklin Foer, in his new book WORLD WITHOUT MIND (2017) presents a compelling and "darker" argument for where things are headed in the future, and from his "insider" perspective, how Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple and Microsoft have their corporate goals set on becoming our new "personal assistant", and with that agenda in mind, providing all of us with our new worldview, lifestyle and mindstyle. This corporate blueprint is already alive and well, and it's one that is purposely designed to allow the big corporations to "own" our contacts, photos, documents, calendar, and private personal items.

Foer's perspective is highly skeptical and rightfully so. Recently we were exposed to the "goings on" of big tech and what is going on behind the scenes with psychologists and other behavioral science experts who are hired to create digital products that persuade us to use them more and more, and at higher rates of frequency. The emerging departments of "persuasive design" in schools such as Stanford University, are now playing a role in the integration of mind changing psychological techniques into our everyday use of technology and media.

Foer's point of view is that the "monopolists and tech giants drape their pursuit of monopoly in grandiose rhetoric about human rights and connection... a lofty sense of self-mission that makes the growth of these networks an imperative; their size becomes an end unto itself." He goes on to talk about how the long lineage of technology companies reveal that the visions of democracy and collectivism have typically ended in cults of personality and authoritarianism.

"A relentless intellectual argument, executed in the tradition of George Orwell and Christopher Hitchens." —*The Washington Post*

WORLD

THE EXISTENTIAL

WITHOUT

THREAT OF BIG TECH

MIND

100 NOTABLE BOOKS
The New York Times
Book Review
2017

FRANKLIN FOER

"They intend for us to unthinkingly turn to them for information and entertainment, while they build unabridged catalogs of our intentions and aversions. Google Glass and Apple Watch prefigure the day when these companies implant their artificial intelligence within our bodies."

Franklin Foer

Challenge - Choice - Change

Every great movie has three distinct phases, that directly match our own individual life journey. The next time you're watching a movie, keep these three dimensions in mind.

#1. There is a lead character, the protagonist / hero, who is encountering a CHALLENGE in her/his life. The character may have some behavior "patterns" from the past that consciously or unconsciously are interfering with moving along their life path and there may be both internal and external conflicts which are either recognized or which remain beneath the lead character's level of awareness.

#2. The character will continue to make CHOICES, some of which alter the pathway they are on, or some that have virtually no impact in changing the current status quo.

#3. If the CHOICES that the character makes are effective, a noticeable CHANGE can occur, and the character can continue to move along their life path. If the CHOICES are ineffective, the patterns of the past maintain their "grip" and no changes occur.

This is the formula for a good movie as well as a formula for our own life. It's why we love to watch films and identify with the characters that discover their power pathways.

The INNERTAINMENT Media Method

Change doesn't always have to be that difficult.

Although we often fail to notice it, entertainment offers unique and powerful possibilities for individual growth and change.

Sometimes we forget that the entertainment we enjoy and become immersed in has another side to it. The "inside" of entertainment offers us a gateway to understanding ourselves and making critical changes in our life if we stop for a minute to take advantage of it.

For the FUTUREWISE MILLENNIALS series, you'll be introduced to a completely unique and different way to make changes in your life through the medium of entertainment. This is called the INNERTAINMENT Media Method.

As each PART of the series unfolds, it will be accompanied by a simple Action Item from the **Innertainment Playbook**, that will allow you to personalize your discovery process to your own needs and wants, while moving forward to uncover your power pathways. Each step along the path offers a simple and entertaining challenge, designed to build your awareness, ability, and control, the three keys to making successful choices.

There is no requirement or demands, other than to understand that entertainment pathway has been designed to unfold in a way that best fits the demands of our time starved lifestyle.

I hope you will take advantage of the **INNERTAINMENT® Media Method,** and our **Innertainment Playbook** Action Items, to **PREPARE** yourself, createYour individual story, and along with it, an inspired, fulfilled and **RELEVANT** future.

The INNERTAINMENT Playbook

Action Item #1

Entertainment covers a wide variety of categories, from films, videos, games, music, sports, theater, etc. While each of us have our own preferred forms of entertainment, the INNERTAINMENT PLAYBOOK is specifically designed to move through different types of entertainment in a predetermined order. This order is modified as the Innertainment tasks increase their range of discovery. To begin, we start with the category of film, and intentionally limit our activity to the main character or protagonist of a film.

To become more and more familiar with how the personal change process works, both in entertainment and in real life, use the following sequence to identify one of your favorite characters in a film that you enjoyed. To start, focus on ONLY one or two things, under each of the questions that follow:
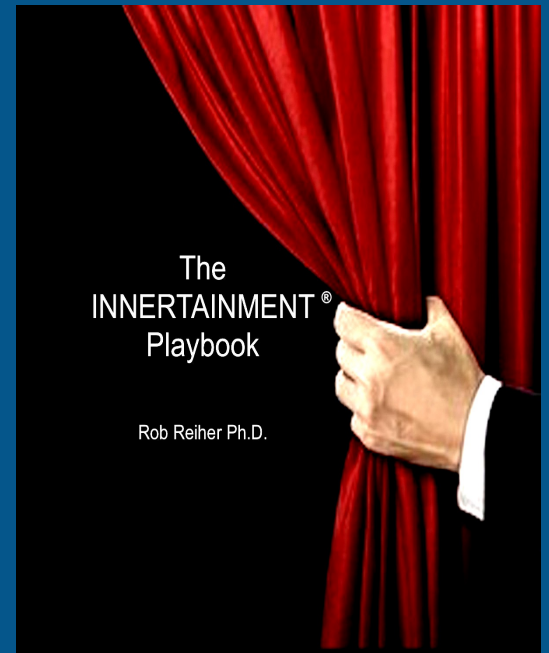
FIRST, PICK YOUR PREFERRED FILM AND THE LEAD CHARACTER IN THE FILM.

#1. WHAT WAS THE CHARACTER'S MAIN CHALLENGE?

#2. WHAT CHOICE WAS THE CHARACTER MAKING ABOUT THIS CHALLENGE?

Which **CHOICE** didn't "work" to overcome the **CHALLENGE**?

Which **CHOICE** did "work" to overcome the **CHALLENGE?**

Try to simply view this question from a "before" and "after" perspective

#3. WHAT CHANGE(S) OCCURRED AS RESULT OF THE CHOICE(S) MADE?

The
INNERTAINMENT ®
Playbook

Rob Reiher Ph.D.

Some Closing Thoughts For Today's Millennials

If there's one thing I know for sure, it's that there are no shortcuts for success, and if you do get an early taste of it, perhaps just by luck, it's not sustainable unless you are PREPARED for the speed of change, along with the skills to develop your RELEVANCE and maintain it, as the Circles of Influence that surround you are changing on a daily basis.

Technology, Media and Consumerism will continue to increase exponentially. But as this growth of the "Power Partners", with their accompanying financial and dominance agenda expands it's reach and frequency, the world will be inundated by higher and higher levels of "noise" (distraction, distortion, disruption, overload). Although we'd like to believe that our cognitive and emotional abilities are capable of adjusting to this incremental assault ...we're not. Instead, most of us will compensate for the overload to maintain some sort of balance and well being. **And it is right here, that the core problem of the future rests.** At this point in our journey, and in the evolving progression of the planet, we must now, unlike any other period in our history, develop the critical skills of *Awareness, Ability and Control,* in order to make the kind of choices that PREPARE us to become fulfilled and more RELEVANT in the new Culture of Noise.

YOU NEVER SAW THIS COMING! How could you? When technology, media and consumerism combine their power, and attempt to influence and persuade us to help them become even more relevant and financially powerful, the game changes. We're subject to new forces we never expected, that want to control our lives. Take away my smart phone or shut down the Internet now, and I'm at the mercy of the "big boys". This is the new reality that has developed slowly, "under the radar" in the last twenty years. iPREPARE yourself, there's lots more to come.

Who's story do you want your life to be about? There's only two choices. It's either YOUR story or THEIR story? Begin PREPARING yourself now. This is just the beginning and the PREPARATION is not going to get any easier.

THANK YOU

We Welcome Your Feedback

Feel Free to get in touch with us for any feedback or questions.

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