

How We Future

A Conversation with How We Future Host Lisa Kay Solomon

With more than 25 years of experience in strategic foresight and design thinking, **Lisa Kay Solomon helps leaders navigate complexity and shape a better future.** She teaches popular futures-oriented courses at Stanford's d.school and is the coauthor of *Moments of Impact*, a best-selling book about how to design effective strategic conversations. She is starting a new podcast, *How We Future*, to speak with visionaries about how we turn “future” into an active verb—one shaped by imagination, optimism, and everyday action. In this Q&A, we explore what and who inspires her work, as well as what she hopes listeners will take away from the show.

1. **You've built a remarkable career as an educator, author, and futurist. What first drew you to the work of futures thinking and long-term imagination?**

I've always been drawn to creative solutions that solve human problems. Early in my career, I worked on innovative projects that explored the gap between what people thought was possible and what they were actually capable of creating—from helping Dunkin' Donuts reimagine coffee for harried commuters to working with early Internet companies who needed a human lens to fulfill technology's potential. We simply cannot build futures we haven't first imagined, and we're all born with imagination as a superpower! But too often it gets deprioritized in our schooling and professional development, so people end up outsourcing their future to others. There's something deeply joyful about helping people rediscover that there's no “they” out there shaping the future for us—we are the “they”



2. **As Futurist-in-Residence at Stanford's d.school, you help students and leaders explore what's coming next. How has that experience shaped the way you think about the future?**

Working with students has taught me that the future isn't some distant destination—it's being created right now in dorm rooms, labs, and late-night conversations. When you think about it, students are our future, and one thing we know for sure is that we'll all get older with passing time. It's a privilege to expand their sense of possibility and help them build skills to shape their lives with intention and optimism. Their energy reminds me daily that futures thinking isn't

academic theory—it's a practice for anyone who believes tomorrow can be better than today.

3. What inspired you to create *How We Future*—and why did now feel like the right moment to launch this podcast?

Anyone who knows me knows I love acknowledging and celebrating 'bright spots'—people who are actively shaping better futures, often in ways they don't even realize. Whether it's Taylor Swift turning her re-recording project into a masterclass on agency and ownership, or one of my guests like Coach John Tanner using every water polo practice to help his players grow as leaders and citizens—there's power in recognizing how ordinary actions can create extraordinary futures. I kept meeting incredible people like this, but their stories weren't being celebrated through the lens of futures thinking. Right now, when so many feel overwhelmed by uncertainty, we need more examples of how people translate their vision into real, tangible impact.



4. The show explores how people “future.” What does that mean to you personally?

It means feeling empowered to take action, regardless of what situation you are in, what your role is in your work or life, or where you are coming from. It means having the capacity to observe and question what's happening around you, the ability to imagine a range of new possibilities, and the courage and ability to act to move an idea forward, even if you don't have all of the answers or assurances that you will be successful

5. Your first guests include conversation designer Jeff Rogers, actor Ahmed Best, Stanford women's water polo coach John Tanner, and executive coach Rae Ringel—each from very different fields. What connects them in terms of how they think about and shape the future?

What connects them is their understanding that futures aren't just built through big gestures, but through small, intentional actions that create ripple effects—what I think of as micro-moments of meaning. Each of them has found ways to turn uncertainty into opportunities for themselves and others, whether through conversations, performances, team building, or coaching relationships. They all embody that futuring doesn't require expensive investments or fancy technology—it happens through how you show up in your daily work and the choices you make to lift others up.

6. What's one surprising or memorable lesson you've already learned from these early conversations?

An early pattern I'm seeing is how my guests focus on the power of micro choices to have outsized positive impact. Whether it's actor and Jedi Master Ahmed Best talking about being inspired by watching the birth of hip hop music as electrical engineers wired up sound machines on the streets of his childhood Bronx, or Coach John Tanner asking his water polo players to create and deliver TED talks during precious practice time to help his athletes become better

learners and teammates—I keep discovering that the most profound futuring often happens through everyday intentional choices. The best futures are built through small gestures that add up to extraordinary change.

7. Many people feel overwhelmed or pessimistic about the future. How do you hope the podcast will help listeners reframe that mindset?

I want listeners to discover that an abundance mindset is a futurist's superpower. Every episode shows someone who chose to see possibility instead of just problems, often in surprisingly doable ways. Comfort in navigating uncertainty comes from experience and perspective—and hearing these stories helps people build both. This isn't about ignoring real challenges—it's about learning to translate your concerns into constructive action and realizing you have more agency in shaping what comes next than you might think.



8. How does your background as a designer show up in *How We Future*?

It's foundational. As I learned from my dear friend Nathan Shedroff, founder of the MBA in Design Strategy program at the California College of the Arts, “design is about making choices that trigger the right response.” This holds true whether you are designing a product, a designing a strategic conversation, a classroom learning experience, or even an organization's culture. It asks you to first answer: “Who am I designing for? And what value am I trying to create for them?” Every episode is really an exercise in designing a space where guests feel safe to share not just what they do, but how they think about turning vision into reality. I'm constantly listening for

those moments where a personal story might unlock something universal about how we all can choose abundance over scarcity and look for micro-moments to further our preferred futures.

9. You've said that the right conversation, at the right time, can be a transformative experience – how does this influence your decisions as a podcast host?

I approach each conversation believing it might shift how both my guest and listeners see their own capacity to shape what's coming. That means creating space to explore not just success stories, but the messy reality of how people navigate uncertainty with resilience and hope. The magic happens when someone realizes their own story of turning challenges into opportunities might inspire others to take their next bold action.

10. What sort of audience do you hope the podcast will reach?

I'm hoping to reach anyone who's ever wondered how to stay optimistic while still being real about hard challenges—people who want to translate their awe into agency and action. You don't need a fancy title or advanced degree to be interested in actively shaping tomorrow. I want the podcast to feel like a conversation with someone who believes you're already more powerful than you realize and that small, intentional choices can create extraordinary futures.

11. If there's one thing you want listeners to take away from *How We Future*, what would it be?

I want people to walk away knowing they can translate their awe into agency and action. The biggest takeaway is that you can choose abundance over scarcity, look for micro-moments to further your preferred futures, and turn uncertainty into opportunities for yourself and others. When you start seeing yourself as someone who actively creates rather than just reacts, everything shifts—and you don't need expensive investments or fancy technology to begin.

How We Future with Lisa Kay Solomon will be available October 14 on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and all major podcast platforms.

For more information, visit howwefuture.substack.com

Media Contact:

Jessica Pellien

jessica@pellienpublicrelations.com

267-980-6868