

To the Future with Love

- Heather Parry (*chair*)
- Rutger Bregman
- Ruby Wax

HEATHER	<p>Welcome and thank you for joining us for today's event which is entitled To the Future with Love. I'm Heather Parry and over the next hour I'll be speaking to two brilliant minds, Ruby Wax and Rutger Bregman. This event is part of the Book Week Scotland 2020 digital festival. Book Week Scotland is a national celebration of all things reading and writing, so we really hope you'll enjoy being with us today.</p> <p>I'm sure my two guests need little introduction, so I'll just give them the briefest roundup of their incredible careers. Ruby Wax is a comedian, TV writer and performer who will be well-known to all of us thanks to her 25-years in the business. Ruby, you don't look old enough. As well as knowing comedy inside and out she also has a Masters in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy from Oxford and was awarded an OBE in 2015 for her services to mental health. Her newest book, which I have right here, is <i>And Now for the Good News to the Future with Love</i>.</p> <p>Rutger Bregman is a historian, a writer and co-founder – I think I'm right – of <i>The Correspondent</i>. Is that right Rutger?</p>
RUTGER	<p>No, I can't pretend I co-founded...but I've been there from the start...</p>
HEATHER	<p>...OK. He's often as cited as one of Europe's most exciting young thinkers. His last book <i>Utopia for Realists</i> which made the case for universal basic income was a New York Times best seller and his new book which I also have here is <i>Humankind: A hopeful history</i>.</p> <p>Guys, I'm so glad you could join me today. How's it going?</p>
RUBY	<p>I'm, I'm pretty happy. Amidst a pandemic. Maybe that's not advertising?</p>
HEATHER	<p>Ruby, where are you today?</p>
RUBY	<p>I'm in Findhorn, Scotland. It, it's a, and, when I was writing the book I was looking for the good news so I visited the, you know, the kind of a, the potential green shoots in business tech, community, health, education and while I was doing community I went to several, you know, intentional ones where they do walk the talk – it's zero emissions but it's pretty swanky, you know. We're not living in tents. But they know what sustainability means. Strangely most people don't even though they wear the t-shirt.</p> <p>So, I'm here. And I work in the garden where the food goes to a food bank and, yeah, I'd say I got it right. There's no small talk here and people are really interesting. And we're not talking about politics.</p>

HEATHER	I want to ask you a little bit more about Findhorn later 'cos many of us in Scotland know the name, but we haven't had the experiences that you've had with it. So, we'll get to that a little bit later. Rutger, where are you speaking from today?
RUTGER	Well, I live in a place called Houten in the Netherlands. It's a little bit to the south of Utrecht if you know that, or to the south of Amsterdam. I mean the Netherlands is a very small country anyway. If I drive for two hours in any direction, I'm either in Germany, Belgium or in the North Sea. And actually, the Houten is a little bit of a utopian place as well. It's quite famous among urban designers because it's, I see it as the bicycle capital of the world. It's, it certainly revolves round bicycles. It's pretty much impossible to get around by car or at least highly, highly, inefficient so you have bicycles highways and its bike, bike, bike everywhere. So yeah, sometimes you see these urban designers walking around here from Japan studying how it's done.
HEATHER	They sound like two pretty perfect locations from which to have this conversation all about positivity and future change and things we could be doing better and things we're already doing better. So, with these two books you've both come down like angels from on high to convince us during this cursed year that actually life isn't all that bad and humankind is both better intrinsically and doing better than we ever have done before. Amazing timing on the part of both of you. I'm sure you couldn't have known how necessary these books were gonna be when you were writing them. But Ruby, can I ask you what brought you to this super-positive understanding of the world? Your last book was called How to be Human, did writing that change your view of humanity?
RUBY	Well I, I wrote it with a monk and a neuroscientist and then we toured that show with the monk the neuroscientist and some of it was, you know, still written with humour but the, the part of the brain is very very primitive, that's why we're in a little bit of trouble, 'cos it doesn't realise that the wallpaper's changed. So, it can't deal with the kind of complexities in 21st century. So, the basic idea was "you are not your fault", you know, if you understand things worked back then but are backfiring now. So that was, I really thought we were more reptilian than we were the higher brain and now I think we are the higher brain and that's how we started. And the savagery is coming out because of the culture now so I was sick of being bombarded by bad news, like everybody, if they were honest before the pandemic, you know, one disaster ends the next one steps in. So I wanted to go around the world, and see where, as I said, the green shoots are in business, in community, in health, in education to now these things are a few people, this is, to me, the new paradigm. But I wanted to see it with my own eyes and I, I believe where you put your attention defines who you are. So, for two years I gave myself probably the happiest time of my life and now I'm living in one of these communities.

	<p>I saw education like you've never, you wouldn't believe, so people that roll their eyes and go "well it's all going to hell" - well you can roll your eyes but if you see this stuff and maybe pick some ideas thing would go in another direction. I'm not saying the world's a happy place it's just that I wrote a Michelin Guide if you wanna know really, in business, what's coming you could pick up some of the ideas and use them for yourself. So that's why...I didn't wanna, I, I, I don't wanna get, I don't wanna be rained on by toxicity, so we can choose to shift. We're lucky enough to, you know, we're not in a war zone or in a refugee camp, so I'm talking about that, I'm talking about those lucky enough to have choice. So, I took a choice.</p>
<p>HEATHER</p>	<p>I love the idea too that the green shoots that you talk about, they are not things, they're not aberrations, they are our true nature coming through. They're like the tree. When you try and pave over where a tree roots is, they're the tree roots coming through. So that's who we really are. That's a thing I took away from your book. Rutger, how about you? Many of us know you from your excellent first book Utopia for Realists – did writing that book bring you to this one?</p>
<p>RUTGER</p>	<p>Yeah, in a way it did. So, Utopia for Realists was about the question how crazy ideas can become reality, you know. Milestones of civilisation like the end of slavery or democracy or equal rights for men and women, these are all utopian fantasies ones, so I wonder how that happens. Turns out it actually starts in the fringes, you know, with people who are first dismissed as unreasonable and unrealistic and irresponsible and then it moves towards the centre. Now, one of the ideas in there – and I wrote this book in 2014, so that's six years ago – was universal basic income. And back then it was a pretty much unknown idea to just completely eradicate poverty, give everyone a monthly grant that's enough to pay for your basic needs – food, shelter, clothing's education etcetera. And I wrote about that and, you know, tried to give a lot of scientific evidence that this may actually work and went on a book tour and a lot of people were interested in the idea but what I experienced time and time again is that after 30 or 40 minutes, people would say "yeah, interesting - but what about human nature? Aren't people selfish deep down, aren't we all lazy? Is civilisation a thin veneer, right, and, you know, that cracks at the merest provocation?" Then I realised that I needed to dig a lot deeper, so I started on this journey and a lot more research and started to notice that there was actually a shift happening in so many scientific disciplines. Scientists were moving from a quiet cynical view of human nature to a much more hopeful view of who we are as a species, you know. I saw in anthropology, sociology, psychology even economics and I spoke to all these experts but they're all so smart and so specialised that they don't know what's going on, or don't realise what's going on, in the field next to theirs. So, I thought well, maybe someone should write a book to connect the dots and to show that something bigger is going on.</p>

HEATHER	I'm just wondering why you think that is occurring right now? Why are we turning towards, like a more positive view of each other even? Because like you said there are certain things coming through in psychology and things like this, but also people who, you know, don't work in those fields, I don't work in those fields, we do seem to be looking for a better view of each other. Why do you think that is?
RUBY	Well...
RUTGER	Well, I think, I think...sorry Ruby...but it all connects to what you said earlier is that if we humans, we become the stories that we tell ourselves so stories can become self-fulfilling prophecies. If people believe that deep-down were all selfish and it's not gonna work out, then that's probably gonna happen. But if you turn that around, then can maybe move to a much better, more ecoliterian, more democratic world.
HEATHER	How about you Ruby?
RUBY	I think that people now know that the old model didn't work. It's occurring to people that it's not each man for himself and dog eat dog. And even – I'm sure Rutger you know this – when Darwin said 'survival of the fittest' he didn't mean the big alpha, the big, you know, the killer makes it, he meant and the only reason it was mis-interpreted was by Herbert Spencer and he, and then it caught on with industrialists so they could justify their greed and say "yeah, well the poor don't deserve anything" so they switched it around. What Darwin meant was those who co-operate best, those who are the glue of human, you know, bring us together are the ones, those genes are passed. Now, I think we know now that need to work more in community. I mean we knew that when we sat around the fire, you know, after a hard day's hunt. But we forgot it now and so I think we're getting the idea back and, and in every chapter, whether it was education, they are not pushing kids to, for example, when I went to Finland, you'll know this Rutger, and I, there were schools in England, I met the minister of education. He said "we don't need a Nobel Prize winner, or we don't need, you know, CEO head of whatever, we want people who feel safe" and so the way they educate kids, they are not burning them out but they're making them into thinkers. And same in business. There's something called conscious capitalism and I visited those companies - don't worry about it, they are making a profit, but they, it's teamwork and they're putting purpose in front of profit. And in a minute millennials will say I'm, they'll have an app that says "this isn't kosher". So, we're all, they're gonna get busted if they keep this up, companies that really are working for the wallet.
HEATHER	How much of that do you think is a response to us being kind of drowned in this endless news cycle and, you know, you write about technology in the book as well and how we can become addicted to it and addicted to, like, urge squirrelling. But then soon enough we realise that that isn't

	working, even for us as people. Hope much of that can, comes from, you know, the saturation we have in bad news at the moment.
RUBY	Well, like Rutger says, if we believe it and roll our eyes and go "technology, technol-" like it's technology's fault. We put it there. You know what I mean? We're responsible. It didn't land in the garden like a UFO. It's, it's up to each individual now, you know. We've evolved by evolution, you know, we needed a sun, then we needed to, you know, stand up. Well now we kind of need to evolve ourselves. You know, take over the wheel so that we can deal with the world we've created which is technologically genius, but emotionally in the dark ages. And I think people are waking up. How much money is lost? Billions, for people with stress-related, you know, illnesses that can't go to work. How many suicides, how many...you know, it's in the newspaper, you don't have to think somebody's making it up, so we need to change now. I was lucky enough to find out, you know, where tech is. They're with the good guys there. Course there'll always can be shysters, you know, who know how to steal your data, you know, and turn it into hard cash. But there've always been shysters. So, you know, let's celebrate the busy who are really trying.
HEATHER	Do you...
RUTGER	We...sorry...
HEATHER	Sorry, go on.
RUTGER	I think we really need to think as carefully about, you know, the information that we put in our heads as about the kind fruit we put in our bodies, right? People are obsessed with how much sugar and salt and fat is in their food, or at least some people are. But the same should be the case for, for the information, right. There's so much evidence now from psychology that the news, and which I define as this sensation, this reporting of stuff that happens today instead of the really important things that happen every day. It's just not good for you, right. It makes you more cynical, more depressed, more anxious...there's an even a term for this in psychology. They call it mean world syndrome and...
RUBY	Mean what?
RUTGER	...it – mean world – you'll think that the world is mean – probably my pronunciation is not, is not right, sorry about my dunlish, my Dutch-English – but, yeah, that's, that's, that's really something we gotta think carefully about. It's not a neutral product, it's not just objective information out there but it really influences our own behaviour. And limits our options as a society.

HEATHER	<p>Well on that kind of thread, Rutger, you take aim at some of the, kind of, most influential – and I do mean in the negative sense – like myths about ourselves that have been driven by studies in the last 70 years. I'm wondering if you can tell us a little bit about things like the Milgram experiment and what you found about that?</p>
RUTGER	<p>Sure. So, after the second world war obviously scientists and, in this case psychologists, were wondering how could people behave in such a horrible way, right? How do we explain the concentration camps, holocaust, yeah Auschwitz etc and so they came up with a new version of what some scientists call veneer theory. This idea that civilisation is only a thin veneer and that, you know, below that lies real human nature which is very nasty.</p> <p>And so, there was a generation of social psychologists who did these really exciting experiments. One of them was the Stanford Prison experiment that became very famous, you know does by Philip Zimbardo who put 24 students in a fake prison, made 12 of them into guards, 12 into prisoners and then supposedly the 12 guards turned into monsters very quickly. The other experiment was done by Stanley Milgram and this was indeed an experiment where people were asked to participate in a study where, that was supposed to be about memory, and they used punishments of giving someone electric shocks to see if that improved memory. In reality the study was about how far people would go. So it started with 15 volts, went up to 30, 45, 60 volts etc. All the way up to 450 volts – dangerous, lethal shocks that could actually kill someone. And so, the shocking finding was that 65% of people were willing to go all the way if they were told to do so by an authority figure.</p> <p>These two experiments Stanford Prison experiment and Milgram experiment became incredibly famous, you know. All the students in psychology classes heard about them. Millions and millions of people know this, they've been telling it about each other, you know, birthday parties "have you ever? Do you know about the Stanford Prison Experiment? Do you know about the Mil...? Oh..." Turns out that the archives have opened up in the past couple of years and we now know that this is, well, very shoddy science. In the case of the Stanford Prison experiment I think we can call it a hoax, because we now know that these students were specifically instructed to behave as monstrous as possible and they were told that, you know, this was only for the good of society because the researcher, Philip Zimbardo, wanted to use the results to go to the press and say "look, we gotta reform the prison system".</p> <p>And in the case of the Milgram experiment, well, the, the results are much more nuanced. We now know that a lot of the participants didn't really believe the situation was real and therefore kept pushing the button. And also, the interpretation is quite different. We, psychologists no longer believe that if people were doing it, that they did it because they were some kind of robots who just didn't care about other people in the room, but because they had legitimately been convinced by the researcher that it was for the good of society which is, by the way, a discomfoting</p>

	<p>conclusion as well you know. It's not, in my book I don't paint human nature only in bright terms, right, were clearly not angels and actually sometimes we do the most horrible things because we believe we're on the right side of history, right. There are very few genuine sadists out there. I mean the joker does exist, but it's a very, very rare creature. Most of us when we do bad things, we do it believing we're actually on the good side, you know. We do it the name of loyalty and friendship etc. Anyway, long story short, we should revisit these experiments and that's what scientists and psychologists have been done, have been doing, and they've reached very, very different conclusions.</p>
<p>HEATHER</p>	<p>It's really striking how much has to be put in place to make us believe these awful things about each other. It has to have the veneer of being science, it has to have, like, you know, people who know more than us telling us this. And what I like about both of your books is that they are very different, but they share this idea that we actually thrive on connection and collaboration. And that can pull us in the wrong direction as you mentioned as well, but it also can be a kind of lifesaver for us. Ruby, I was thinking about your Frazzled Cafés, which I hadn't heard of before. Can you tell us a little bit about what that is and what comes from that?</p>
<p>RUBY</p>	<p>I, I had an instinct that, you know, I always wanted to go to AA meetings, but I didn't qualify. But I was so envious that, you know, people could speak from the heart, other people were giving them their full attention. I didn't do the, you know, 12-step thing but I liked the honesty, so I started Frazzled Cafés four years ago in, in cafes up and down the country and 12 people would meet with a facilitator and it was structured, so it's not a free for all but people were allowed and, people were allowed to speak from the heart without being thought of as some weak, and you watched how these people would come in as timid strangers but by the end they were so connected. I mean that was a new family and they'd meet every two weeks and some of them stayed for three years. Then when lockdown happened, I now do it on Zoom, and I have about 100 people three times a week. If you go to frazzledcafe.org you can come on. It's free. And I have about 100, but I also have, there's hosts during the day if you wanna join a smaller meeting. So, 100 people come on, I'm telling you, maybe religion used to be like this. You know we don't talk politics, it's not therapy – don't say here's what I would do – but I open and close it with mindfulness, just to get everybody a little de-frazzled and we're in the same room.</p> <p>And then for one- or two-minutes people can start to talk, and I'm telling you, compassion is the new virus. Some of them are young, all different colours and you just watch their heads nodding. And some people say, you know, I always felt invisible and nobody cared but now I can feel it in the room. Their stories are unbelievable. Nobody's indulgent, nobody goes on too long and then there's breakout rooms and that's where they really, really bond and, you know, it's good for our health. Too bad we</p>

	<p>didn't do it in real life. They're all, you know, Quakers know how do it but a lot of people have said "I'm practicing here giving people my full attention and listening, so that when I get out of here I have a new way of listening" 'cos we...</p>
RUTGER	<p>I love this.</p>
RUBY	<p>...we're trained in listening. So...</p>
RUTGER	<p>You're reinventing religion, basically.</p>
RUBY	<p>Maybe. I mean it's not my idea, but I, I believe that when humans are given the freedom to not rant, but to be as authentic as they can, I don't think people look down at it. I think people, I now only trust somebody who's vulnerable. I don't want to hear about people who are arrogant and make me envious because that's what it stirs up. Envy, anger, rage, jealousy...just say "here's, here's who I am" for god's sake. If we don't do that now, we're never gonna do it.</p>
HEATHER	<p>And you do write, Ruby, about how, if you give people space to be vulnerable, they will be vulnerable and that's what fosters that connection. And Rutger, you really strongly believe that if you expect the best of people, they will give that to you. Can you speak a little about that for us?</p>
RUTGER	<p>Yeah, sure. So, in medicine we know about the placebo effect, right, where if you believe something's gonna cure you, then it just might, right. It, it's been really thoroughly researched if the doctor says "well, this pill" and actually nothing's in there, it's just a bit of sugar, that might actually help. We have a lot of evidence that this can actually help you and cure, you know, in a real physical way. Not that you just believe it, no, but it has a real physical effect which also says a lot about, I think, what it means to be a doctor, right. I think a doctor is also all, always a little bit of a pastor or a therapist or whatever. You can't really disconnect these things. But the opposite of the placebo effect is the no-cebo effect where the doctor says "well, be wary of the size effects" or the doctor gives you the feeling that "well you might actually be a little sicker". That can also be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Now, I think you can take this idea and, and see it in other dimensions of life as well. Indeed, our view of human nature can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. On the one hand I think there's a huge amount of scientific evidence that, you know, helps us move towards a more hopeful view of human nature, but I think it could even be more true if we actually start believing it and practicing it. So nowadays, often our institutions are basically designed around the idea that people are selfish. You know, our schools, the way we do democracy, our workplaces and if you, if you believe people are selfish then you need a couple of things. You need hierarchy, you need control, you need bureaucracy etc etc etc. You need, basically, a pyramid structure because you can't, people to trust, you know, you can't trust</p>

	<p>them to go for their own affairs. If you say "well, actually I believe that most people are pretty decent" that's a quite revolutionary statement. It's pretty subversive. It's not like "oh, this a, these are books about, just some happy, warm, fuzzy feelings" you know, that you get once you believe people are kind. No, no, no, no – this is revolutionary, this is subversive because everything changes. And that is also the reason why, throughout history, those at the top have always been wary of a more hopeful view of human nature. Because they understand what it means. It means they'll lose their power. If we actually start believing that. Yeah, that's also why I think it's important to make a distinction between optimism and hope. Optimism is about this confidence that things will turn out to be alright. It makes you a little bit lazy, I think. While hope empowers you to act. It, it just gives you this belief that things can be different, and I would call this, you know, the era of hope. I think that actually in a weird way Covid-19 has also given us hope that things can actually change.</p>
HEATHER	<p>I completely agree. I don't know, like, about where you guys were, but I live in Glasgow and one of the things that immediately happened when they announced the lockdown in the UK was that, as an offshoot of the kind of Facebook community group, there was a volunteer group for people who couldn't leave the house because they were shielding, because of , they actually had corona virus. And it was thousands of people in my small area going out to do food shops for people, you know, saying they would look after other people's kids for free if they still had to go to work if they were key workers, giving money to complete strangers they'd never seen and this kind of like mutual age is springing up everywhere it seems.</p> <p>So, I think the last eight months have kinda borne out what both of you have been saying so we, you've been proven correct, I think. But do you think that's something that we will keep on? Do you think the world were living in now is one we can take forward? I'm gonna aim that at Ruby first.</p>
RUBY	<p>I, I think as when the lockdown eased of a little and little town halls in small little communities they weren't talking about the next stage, you know, where they were waiting chickens yellow. They were talking about picking up the garbage on Thursdays and knocking on the door, so and the banging of the pots on Thursday night. I think people get the idea that, as I say again, that compassion is a virus too, you know. If you can steady yourself, you pass that, like, neural wifi – always liked that expression – you know I think that people have to understand the world isn't the way it is and we go, "but" – if you're listening to too much of that news, they know what they're doing. I'm sorry. That's intentional, because they, somebody's a genius knows that when the human being gets too cortisol gushing, right, they can't think straight, you know. They lose their, their ability to think straight so they watch more news, you know, I mean, the people on your computer who pop up things that they know will be your, your drug of choice. That's their, we're being torn but if the individual</p>

	<p>says "you know what, I'm gonna shut it off" not all the time, I mean, I need email but the 10,000th, I'm even answering spam, we, if we understand we're addictive, you know, we're, we're addicts and there's people taking advantage of that. But I don't have to pay attention to them. Home in on the ones that are doing the really interesting stuff. You know, again, in business I did see where they put purpose in front of profit – this companies did the best, you know. Everybody in some of the companies has a mission, you know, they have to have a charity that they really back, and that really gives them pride. Not maybe putting in the widget, but if people have meaning they'll work all hours. And they do now work in teams rather than... the top guy doesn't know what those teams, he hasn't got the knowledge they do so they let him go. Same in, you know, in everything I, I researched. It's teamwork, you know. That we were born to mingle.</p> <p>What, what human being can take the pressure of this world? Where do we get the idea that you could everything? That started in the 80s. The woman who could do everything.</p> <p>And we admired it. It was in magazines, she has three th-, you know, three kids, she jogs at four in the morning, she knows how to make a muffin and she's the president of a, you know, of a corporation. She should have been burnt at the stake, but everybody went "oh..oh...well..these are superwomen. They should have gold shoulder pads".</p>
HEATHER	<p>Yet another pressure. To put on women as well, we don't have the right shoulder pads, were not making muffins, were doing it all wrong. How about you Rutger, do you think this is, do you think this present moment is the beginning of something politically different? Do you think it's something that we can take forward into communities and bring power moving into our communities?</p>
RUTGER	<p>Well look, I think here are more than enough reasons - and there are probably enough talks online to find about why you should be depressed right now and, you know, the reasons for despair. So, I do want to recognise that this a, we live in an extraordinary historical moment where things can, you know, go in many directions at the same time. Why I am hopeful is because I, I sense this shift I the zeitgeist. There really seems to be a profound shift in 2020 that, that is not, that we didn't see in 2008, for example, with the financial crash. So, for example, if you look at younger people. If you look at millennials and especially if you look at generation z, you know – people who were born after, I think it's 1996 if I'm correct – then you see this extraordinary shift, you know. This is the most highly educated, progressive ethnically diverse generation in world history basically. Now if you think about the people who rule the world right now, you know, the politicians, the bankers, the lawyers, the accountants etc. they're you know, I dunno, 40/50/60 years old. They grew up, or at least they sort of intellectually they came of age in the 80s and probably the 90s, you know, in the era when we thought that history</p>

	<p>had ended. The, the Berlin had fallen, communism had lost, capitalism had won and there was this confident feeling that basically nothing was left, you know. We could just enjoy our, our awesome iPhones or fast food etc. and meanwhile we were wrecking the world, basically, environmentally.</p> <p>There's now a very different generation, and that generation is gonna take over. Some people say "well, as people become older, they become more conservative" – sure, there's some evidence for that. But there's way more evidence that, you know, your political views or the way, just, you look at the world, is, is mostly being defined in your teens and in your 20s. And there's a very, very different generation coming, so, demography is on the side of change. Now the question is obviously, is it going to be fast enough? And we have some pretty tight deadlines, especially when it comes to the environment but this shift that is happening gives me hope. And, and to say one final thing about that, I think you can also see that in the world of ideas. That ideas that have been dismissed for such a long time are moving into the mainstream. I already mentioned universal basic income, you know. Six years ago, when I wrote about it, it was completely forgotten, obscure idea – and it was very hard to get any attention for it. And now, just at the beginning of April there was an editorial in the Financial Times which is not exactly, you know, a leftist, progressive, communist newspaper or anything. But even the Financial Times was saying that we need to reverse the policy direction of the last 40 years and think about higher taxes on the rich, universal basic income, a more activist for the state to really tackle climate change, you know. I'm not saying it's going far enough already, but it's, it's just amazing to see what's happening. And if you would've told me that five years ago, I wouldn't have believed you.</p>
HEATHER	<p>I think you're right, and I think anyone with kids or nieces, or nephews is just amazed by how, you know, like, connected these kids are with, like, the difficulties and challenges ahead of them – but how smart they are as well. I mean it's, it's just wild what, like, 10/15-year-olds will be talking about now. It's certainly what I wasn't speaking about when I was 15. But I think it's also important to remember that they, there have people doing these radical things for a while. And Ruby, one of those is Findhorn which has been around, you know, for a long time now. Can you tell us a little bit about that in case people don't know what Findhorn is?</p>
RUBY	<p>Well, it, it's in my chapter about communities I did go into the cities of, you know, where they are doing, for example, bike lanes, you know, Copenhagen wins and where they're pushing people together so that the journey's as interesting as the destination. They're psychology now, used in how people relate to each other, rather than these monoliths where the only, you know, you could see somebody's TV across the, across the, you know, airspace, you don't really see them. But I think a lot of people are understanding everything is contributing to our well-being. So, I've gone to these eco-communities of which there are 10,000, so I didn't visit all of them. But they're built in different way. There's 600 people here, and</p>

	<p>some of them whatever you do, I went to one in America too where it's in Ithica, so there were a lot of professors from Cornell there, there's kids doing startups, there's old people, there's young people – they all are having an allotment of veg, you where they can do that. They have to work three hours a week for the community, they have meetings and the ethos of, it's called, GEN – with is Global Eco Network – they have to follow the law which is equality, authenticity and fairness or something. And that, that has to be embedded in the way, you know, this community works and in some them they don't own the house, they buy shares in the house. And if, you know, you suddenly don't know how to fix your computer there a website and all the neighbours come over. It's just, it's got heart. Now I'm not saying you can do that all over, but in London, in south London, there's a place called BedZED. This is free housing. The buildings are built so that they capture the sun, they do have the allotment and they do have the community centre so elderly people are learning Zumba, women with babies have other women take care of it and in the heart of a very deprived neighbourhood there's joy. And again, it's these little islands that will, you know, we can only do so much. Politicians aren't going to change the world. We are. And I agree with Rutger, what he was saying, you know.</p>
HEATHER	<p>It seems to me that sharing space is such an important thing. Is that something you find at Findhorn as well? Like, do you sharing space with people instead of closing yourself off gives over to a completely different mindset, is that right?</p>
RUBY	<p>Well there, there's a big garden, you know, that, where they feed the community. They also do what, you know, we read about which is they take, you know, your waste, it's turned into, you know, it's, it's to a, the sewage goes into a big garden. Those plants know to turn it into pure water, and it feeds the entire community providing watering for, it's on a sand dune and there's forest growing here. So, it's a really interesting experiment. You don't have to have to have money to do this stuff, that's a rumour and Findhorn was always ahead of the game as far as tech. I remember 20 years ago they were already going into the solar thing. It's just nice to be around the real thing, you know. I'm sick of people at dinner parties going on about the environment and about this and that. Barking, and getting themselves more ill 'cos that's how we are. We kinda love kicking up our adrenalin. It's just a human glitch. I mean no-one ever gets addicted to kale. But, but, you know, I wanted to be around the hope, you know. And that's here. That's – you can feel it. And they know how to turn, you know, they know what they're doing and so I thought, when I was at these dinner parties, either shut up or get off the pot. And so that's been my theory. I don't wanna talk about it anymore, go look at it, you know. At the end I went, at the end of the book I went, there was a chapter about world savers, so I picked some charities that I thought were the real deal. Where the money really went to the cause, so Choose Love is a charity and I went with these young</p>

	<p>people and they're on the ground. They don't have to have dinner parties, you know, where people pay 200 dollars a, you know, a plate. They go there and they know to build sewers, they know how to build showers, they know, you know, they know how to get it on the ground. And quickly. They don't have to go bureaucracy. And so I'm there with these refugees and I, I didn't know what I could I could give to them so, I'm sort of ashamed, I said "they live in plastic bags" I said, "I'm gonna get you all manicures" and so we went to a, a, you know, a beauty salon and you saw them light up. Humans are humans and I was so ashamed I was even doing it but, you know, just like showing up, people light up. You don't, you know, stop talking about it and do something – unless you're the emergency yourself. No, I...</p> <p>Again, millennials, there's some statistic, probably you know Rutger, about how much they want meaning now in their lives more than just money. 'Cos they realise my generation use the world as an ashtray.</p>
HEATHER	<p>Rutger, you, you also write about this idea of sharing space and you actually wrote about the tragedy of commons and the need to go back away from closing public spaces, especially after people, something that has become, you know, so clearly important in the last eight months, you know, so many people didn't have anywhere to go outside. Can you speak a little about that? What was the tragedy of the commons and how has it, kind of, affected us?</p>
RUTGER	<p>Yeah, so the tragedy of the commons is an old idea from a scientist called Garrett Hardin who believed that if people own something collectively or communally, they, they just destroy it. Because if people are fundamentally selfish then they just take what they want and, so the classic is, an example is where, you know, a community of framers, they have some collective land and everyone, you know, just lets their sheep and cows graze as much as the animals want and then, you know, everything is destroyed. For a long time, scientists used to believe this. That there really was a tragedy of the commons but then came, along came a very important economist and sociologist called Elinor Ostrom who later was the first woman to win the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2009.</p> <p>And she basically showed that, very often, you know, that this theoretical tragedy of the commons – it doesn't really exist, you know. You can have a form of ownership where it's not the government, or the market, you know, who are it's not about private property, but where just people collectively managed something. And we do that all the time because – and this is the wonderful thing about people – they can talk, you know. They can agree on things. And they can work out their differences. And that actually happens quite often. It doesn't make the news, you know, it's not exciting, it also looks pretty boring, so I've got one chapter in my book about participatory democracy which is another, you know, pretty revolutionary development of the last 20/30 years where, you know, citizens come together around a table, you know, whether they're left</p>

	<p>wing or right wing, rich, poor, young, old, highly educated, no education at all and they just talk about really, really complicated issues and they reach sensible compromises. Now it looks really boring because it's people just having a reasonable discussion, drinking bad coffee, you know. But it works so it's not gonna make CNN, but it actually works. I guess this is often the problem basically, by the way, with human goodness is that it's not exciting. It's not sensational, it's just people reasonably discussing their differences and their difficulties.</p> <p>But, in order to do that it's very important to actually come together and to see one another. We have to remember that we humans are very physical creatures, you know. We've not been uploaded into the cloud, I mean, corona has also reminded us just how physical and biological we, really are. So, we are designed, or we've been shaped, by evolution and for contact we want to see, feel, hear, touch each other - it's so important. I mean we; we could see it in our bodies what makes us unique as humans. For example, it's that we're the only species in whole animal kingdom with the ability to blush, right. We involuntarily give away our feelings when we feel a little bit ashamed and that establishes trust, once again, between people. So, I love what you said, Ruby, about survival of the fittest and, and how that's been mis-interpreted because actually evolutionary biologists now argue that, indeed, it's survival of the fittest but that means survival of the friendliest.</p>
RUBY	Yeah.
RUTGER	<p>Because it's actually the more friendly people who, for the biggest part of our history, prevailed. Because, you know, having friends helped you to survive. And if you, you have no friends well, imagine Donald Trump in the ice age. Wouldn't have lasted for long, people wouldn't have liked him he would've been cast out of the group.</p>
RUBY	The tribe would have thrown him out away from the watering hole, yeah.
RUTGER	Exactly.
RUBY	But it's, it's, yeah, we, it's the tribe again really and we really have to redefine what that means and be careful it's not us and them.
RUTGER	Uh-huh.
RUBY	I mean, you're talking about this democ-, new demo...I'm living in it. And I'm there.
RUTGER	I was just talking, you're doing it.
RUBY	I mean, they have problems but the, the joy here it's palatable. You know, and they kind of understand, the kindness which I always would blush when I heard that word, speaking of blushing or compassion. it was so

	wimpy, but, and you know biologically when we feel those feelings, we're gushing that, that hormone oxytocin which we organically have – mothers for their baby's brains by gushing that hormone. And it makes it, it's the feel good thing and it's better for your immune system, so even if you're selfish, if you do something nice, you know, force yourself, you will gush that stuff and that really, that really works, your immune system in a way you can't get with anything else. You can take as many pills as you want but that, that hormone is what it feels good and it'll make us live longer.
RUTGER	Yeah. I like you point, but he way, about you, when you think about sort of going back to tribe, you have to be wary of this inclination, also present within human nature, is that we very quickly tend to think in "us versus them" you know. And oxytocin is actually a good example because there's a huge amount of evidence that indeed oxytocin is involved with feelings of kindness and compassion, you name it but there's also quite some evidence that t also increases groupish behaviour so that we become more distrustful of those people far away, of strangers that we haven't met. So, I guess this is the big paradox and the big, the problem that we come back to again and again in human history. Can we also learn to trust a stranger? And can we feel the same kindness and compassion, or maybe, maybes not even necessary to feel it, but at least sort of rationally understand that those people far away are also people, you know. With the same desires and feelings as we have, and they also have kids that they love etc. etc.
RUBY	I came up with an app. I made it up. 'Course I don't know how to build it...
RUTGER	There's an app for that
RUBY	No, but I made it...okay, you're sitting at your computer you push, you know, a face comes up from somewhere in the world and then there's, you know, for the game, for one minute just look at each other. The next 30 seconds one talks and, you know, there's various questions and there's an interpreter if they're from another country that says, you know, what did you want when you were a child? Do you feel you've accomplished it? What are your hopes? You know, so they just speak. The other one can't, you know, they do these things in real life and then you do it back to them without their interruption and then you look at each other again. And then maybe give each other feedback and then that person disappears, and you never see them again. But if, if everybody played the game for. A few minutes, you know, if you really look in the eyes of somebody, you know, you can see in our, my Frazzled. They're looking in the eyes, they're not looking at the colour. It's our natural inclination. If people feel the same thing we do, that's the tribe.
RUTGER	Yeah, yeah. This is, by the way, also where humans are unique. All the other primates – and there are more than 200 primate species I total – they have got dark, you know, around their eyes. That dark's clearer. And

	<p>so, we have white, so people can see that I'm looking to the left and to the right, right now, and that's basically another gift from evolution. It helps us to, to once again establish trust. If we can actually see what the other people are looking at that, that really helps to trust other people. And, and other primates' chimpanzee for, chimpanzees for example, they're a little bit like mafiosi wearing shades, right, or poker players. So, I, I think that's such a fascinating thing to think about. I mean, what would life be like if we couldn't actually look each other in the eyes but, yeah, we've, we've really been shaped...</p>
RUBY	<p>You know, if I listen to you I'm starting to mimic, you know, your facial thing, so I'm reading you and that again creates an oxytocin and, and, and I, it's, you can't do a weekend workshop or a top tip, it happens organically that our bodies will start to match and we have to remember to, to savour those feelings.</p>
RUTGER	<p>Hmm</p>
HEATHER	<p>Well this really neatly brings me to my, I think, what's gonna be my last question. The Book Week Scotland them is future, so I'd love to round this up by asking, on you more optimistic days, what's your most optimistic vision of the next ten years? And how can we start to move towards it, do you think? Ruby, I'll start with you.</p>
RUBY	<p>You know, I can't speak for everyone. I think individually you have to decide where's you tipping point. What do you want to live around? And these are for those of us choice, again. You know, and most of the is struggling just to survive, but those of us who are, our, you know, self-supporting, we, we have enough. It's to choose, you know, how you, how you deal with getting, you know, the human race connected. We have to connect them and give, and really put meaning on the top of the chart. I think we lost that. It's just to get through and make as much as you can, you know. We are, what our, you know business cards are. I don't know, you have to look deeper. I think we have to say, and maybe you call it wisdom, but maybe encourage that and evolve ourselves because, you know, we evolved thumbs and, you know, then we stood up. Physically we're already, there's nothing else to do, you know, Uber can run faster than us, but now we have to take over the wheel and evolve ourselves. Now that's much more complicated a conversation, but we can do it. We have a higher brain, it's capable of rational thinking and compassion and awareness and attention, but you need exercise it. And there's infinite, there's many ways to do it. I mean, I do mindfulness but it's not for everybody. But it's not gonna happen with wishful thinking and some people might be naturals so they should be the leaders.</p>
HEATHER	<p>Rutger, what about you? What do you hope that the next ten years looks like and what do you think we can do to get there?</p>

RUTGER	<p>Well I've been thinking more and more about the importance of courage. So, on the one hand we have evolved to be friendly, right. There's so much evidence for that, that if we are a species that longs for connection and also for meaning. I agree with, with Ruby that. But it's also true that, you know, we're pretty groupish and we find it quite hard to go against those who are around us, right. There's this book called Harry Potter that you might've heard of, you know, the first book when, you know, Ron and Hermione and, and Harry have, you know, done some amazing things and beat Voldermort then there's this moment where they get their points for Gryffindor and, and Percomense also gives points to, I think, Neville is – I always read the Dutch edition – so Neville, I think Neville Longbottom and he gets ten points for gryffindor, not because it's – well, in a way because he has been heroic – but because it's, and this so Percomense says "it's difficult to stand up to your enemies, but it's even more difficult to stand up to your friends." And so he gets ten points and then they win, you know. I think that's really such a deep and important moral lesson to remind ourselves today because if we live in an era where life is relatively easy, you know. You live in a Scandinavian social democra-, social democratic country then you don't have to be extraordinary, you know. If you're just an average, decent person then society's gonna be fine. But if it's true that we're now moving into an era that is more difficult, you know, in terms of what's happening to the climate, to, you know, species going extinct to democracy itself, then maybe history asks a little bit more of us. A little bit more courage. And then the question is "are we willing to be unpopular to make things a little more uncomfortable? Are we willing to do more than just talk about our ideas, but also actually do something?" Like Ruby said.</p> <p>So, I think that's gonna be more important and I'm trying to push myself here because I guess that's where it starts.</p>
HEATHER	<p>I think they're two brilliant sentiments to take with us as we go away today and look into ourselves and move forward with courage and also the courage to be optimistic which both of you books give us as well, So thank you so much for writing them.</p> <p>This Book Week Scotland event has been brought you by the Scottish Book Trust. Scottish Book Trust wants everyone living in Scotland to have equal access to books because better access to books means better life chances. You can help gifting a book to a family who is struggling this Christmas. If you've enjoyed this event, please consider sharing your love of reading with others by making a donation to Scottish Book Trust Christmas Appeal at scottishbooktrust.com</p> <p>Ruby, Rutger thank you so much for joining us today and here's to the future.</p>
RUBY	Thank you.
RUTGER	Thank you.

RUBY	Nice to meet you both.
RUTGER	Really love that, thanks.