

Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast  
Episode 46: [Here's Our Plan And We Don't Know](#)

Tristan Harris: So I, at the age of 22 or 23 years old, had started this company called Apture, capture without the C. We raised venture capital, we did the startup thing, we had employees, we were building a product that made it easier for people to learn more about anything without leaving the website that they were on. And I had to come up with this whole narrative to recruit people. You have to say, "We're going to change the world." You have to have a purpose, so it's not just, going to make money, it's going to be a positive, impactful, mission aligned objective in the world.

Tristan Harris: And our friend, Joe Edelman, started this thing called Doubt Club, which gathered a group of startup founders together once a month to express our doubts. And one of the insights behind this thing called Doubt Club was that as a technology founder, when you're building technology, there's nowhere you can really go to express doubts about the entirety of what you're doing.

Tristan Harris: There's certain things that you can tell your co-founder about, but maybe you don't tell your investors about, and there's certain things maybe you can tell your investors about, about your co-founder, but you won't tell your co-founder about, and then there's certain things you can tell your employees, but there's no really safe place to turn if you just want to question the entire thing. And so much of the things that people work on in the tech industry are based on these narratives that we persuade ourselves of, that we are changing the world, we are making the world a better place. Facebook is making the world more open and connected. Twitter is enabling everyone without a voice to speak. And those narratives are convincing, they're partial truths. But Doubt Club was a place that both Aza and I went to, that was where we questioned whether or not this was even a good thing to do in the world.

Stephanie Lepp: Renowned quantum physicist, Richard Feynman once wrote, "It is our capacity to doubt that will determine the future of civilization."

Tristan Harris: That's Stephanie Lepp, the Executive Producer of Your Undivided Attention.

Stephanie Lepp: And this episode is going to be a little different.

Tristan Harris: It's going to be different because Aza and I are going to be in the hot seat and Stephanie is going to be hosting.

Stephanie Lepp: And it's going to be different because we are going to be talking openly about our doubts with you, our listeners. I'm Stephanie Lepp.

Aza Raskin: I'm Aza Raskin.

Tristan Harris: And I'm Tristan Harris. And this is Your Undivided Attention.

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- Stephanie Lepp: In 2018 Tristan, Aza and our third co-founder Randima Fernando launched the Center for Humane Technology or CHT.
- Tristan Harris: And in launching CHT, we went from privately questioning the startups that we were building to publicly challenging what the entire social media industry was creating. And we continued to evolve our understanding of what is generating our social media problems in the first place. We continued to doubt whether what we were building was up to the task, which is what we'd love to share more of on this show with you, starting today.
- Stephanie Lepp: Hi Tristan. Hi Aza.
- Aza Raskin: Hey Stephanie.
- Tristan Harris: Hey Steph.
- Stephanie Lepp: Hey Tristan, I'm going to start with you. So I know there have been many influences on your thinking and on inspiring you to ask big questions, but I'm going to ask you about one in particular. So in 2017, you were in the midst of launching the Center for Humane Technology, this new organization to address the implications of social media. And you heard an episode on the Future Thinkers podcast featuring Daniel Schmachtenberger. And I actually remember that episode coming up on my Facebook feed from you. And so to kick us off, can you talk about your experience hearing that episode?
- Tristan Harris: Sure. So here we were working on the Center for Humane Technology we're a new nonprofit, we think, "We're going to somehow change these companies, these specific actors, and we're going to change their business models, and we're going to change how the designers think, and we're going to get new designers to think in a different way." And somehow we didn't know how, we were hoping we could kind of change tech looking at that, as a narrow system, as a narrow set of actors. And I was driving in my car one day, I was driving, I think down to [inaudible 00:04:20] Foundation for an event on disinformation. And I remember crossing 280 and I was listening to this podcast someone had sent me with Daniel Schmachtenberger, and I think it was called The Existential Game. And it was really about the broader predicament that we're in, in the way that our economic system organizes incentives.
- Tristan Harris: He brought up the point, can you have world peace with a for-profit military industrial complex, where you have to have growth in arm sales every year? Maybe, but notice that you have to have growth in a for-profit arm sector every year. Can you have health in a world where you have a for-profit pharma industry that wants to sell people more drugs every single year and create in the US one of the most medicated countries on earth? Can you have humane

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technology that's oriented around people's offline lives and experiences when that's not nearly as profitable as social media, that organizes people's behavior for as many online experiences as possible, virtualized identity, virtualized human interaction? I saw that the problems that we're seeing around the world, whether it's deforestation or plastics or climate change, or social media driving these negative trends. We're all part of a kind of a win-lose game, where if I don't do it, the other guy will with a perverse incentive.

Tristan Harris: So we don't have 1000 different environmental problems or pharma problems or food problems or tech problems. We just have what he calls these generator functions of existential risk. And once you see that, you start seeing how... There's a part of it that's disenchanting, right? Because one part of it is, "Oh my God, how do we stop that?" And then there's the other part of it though, that's clarifying and empowering, which is you start seeing that there's a core set of reasons why we keep producing plastic, even though we know it's ruining the planet or why we keep deforesting, even though we know we should stop, and why we shouldn't create social media engagement that goes that low in the brain stem that manipulates people and personalizes so much that it causes polarization, but we have to have a growth paradigm on top of social media engagement.

Tristan Harris: So there's a kind of a clarifying aspect to that realization. And specifically what I remember is I knew about externalities, but Daniel talked a lot about how as different agents are racing to do their extraction, whether it's extraction of generating plastics or racing to pull attention out of human beings with more and more efficiency. Across the board, it's you get more efficient profits by socializing the cost. So you privately profit. And then the costs show up on society's balance sheets. You extract the attention with personalized AI, but then the cost to society of a broken, shared reality that doesn't show up on Facebook's balance sheet as a trillion dollar cost, a breaking democracy, that shows up on society's balance sheet as democracies that don't work any more.

Tristan Harris: And when I saw that, and just even the notion of externalities, that's actually where a Center for Humane Technology, we came up with a project called The Ledger of Harms, which was meant to accumulate the ledger of unaccounted for costs onto society's balance sheet from technology. And that included mental health, alienation, loneliness, conspiracy thinking, polarization. And that was just a big insight of basically this is the system. This is the collective system that produces kind of our existential game for whether we as a species make it.

Tristan Harris: And frankly, we had had those conversations back in 2017. I remember Aza, rushing back into the Common Sense Media office and telling you and Randy like, "I had just listened to this mind blowing podcast." And I was like, "We have to start the ledger of harms and you all have to listen to this. And we have to figure out a way that we're going to deal with the existential game. And how do

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we actually narrowly focus on social media when this is a set of problems that's consistent across the entirety of how our society is structured."

Stephanie Lepp: Aza, do you remember Tristan sharing that episode with you?

Aza Raskin: I do remember because I was driving up to Grass Valley for my birthday. And there was one line in particular that really struck me. And that was, there was a line about, "What is the value of a tree?" And Daniel in this episode is walking through a tree's value. Well, it's really hard to measure, but tree is providing shade for you and other animals. It's providing an ecosystem, there's a whole root system and there are bugs and insects in there. It's providing nutrients to the other trees that are connected to it. There is an incredible wealth of things a tree provides, but how do we value a tree? We value it just as lumber with one number and that one number hides all of the complexity of that tree.

Aza Raskin: And later I ran into Donella Meadows' work, who talks about thinking and systems, how to change systems. And she had this wonderful quote, which is, "The world is a complex interconnected, finite, ecological, social, physiological economic system. We treat it as if it were not, as if it were divisible, separable, simple and infinite, our persistent intractable global problems arise directly from this mismatch." And it was a kind of waking up realizing that you couldn't possibly have a flourishing world if you value things based on a single number, right? We do the exact same thing of over-optimization in our startup world. When we have a metrics like engagement and we just game everything to make that metric go up. And of course, everything else gets swept into externalities.

Tristan Harris: Yeah. If I recall correctly, Daniel, who was actually borrowing from Forrest Landry's work, at one of his brilliant collaborators down in San Diego, California, who I think the framework is called abstraction extraction and then commodification. So abstraction is, that's not a tree let's abstract it into, it's a bunch of two-by-fours, right? So we go from a living tree is a complex system versus, no, there's just this many two-by-fours I can get out of that tree. So you're abstracting the value of the tree into something more predictable. Then you extract it into that form. And then you get depletion of how many trees there are, because you're cutting down trees into two-by-fours. And then you get pollution, which is that you get ways in which that tree was creating kind of ecologically balanced environments for its surrounding ecosystem. And that balance goes away and turns into either pollution or depletion.

Tristan Harris: And that notion of abstraction, extraction, depletion and pollution is what's happening everywhere. So now if you look at attention, here's a person and there's... Imagine seeing a baby, you see the potential of this child and all the things that they can become. And the living being that is each of us, that when you open your eyes in the morning, and just for a moment before you look at your phone, the kind of infinite possibility of what could emerge from that

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consciousness in that day, that's like the tree, you're like this living complex theoretically free. If we talk about free will, which is its own conversation, a person, but of course that free person isn't worth nearly as much that way as they are as finite units of attention.

Tristan Harris: The two-by-fours of a tree is the same as the predictable time slices of you scrolling with your finger over and over again, as one second of attention, two seconds of attention, because Facebook and social media companies also need to abstract you into predictable forms of attention, extract, those forms of attention, those units, those comodifiable units of a person's eyeball staring at a thing that can be sold to an ad and monetize at a predictable rate of exactly 0.67 cents. But then at scale times 3 billion people is billions of dollars and then depletion and pollution.

Tristan Harris: So the depletion in this case of people's wellbeing, because you're sucking people's life force out of them and making them spend more time with their esophagus compressed at 45 degrees, staring at a screen in the morning for an hour, then the kind of freedom of that person, if they were to wake up and do yoga or express themselves or go dancing or you do something totally free and open. And then you get depletion, then you get pollution, which is what is the pollution that comes in society from people's freedom being commodified into these predictable slabs of not just scrolling, but again, outrage generating. So the more people are posting highly engaging material on Facebook, as opposed to lowly engaging material. Well, highly engaging is going to be more profitable and highly engaging produces these negative societal effects, because you end up with the most crazy town of the attention economy becoming mainstream town of our world.

Tristan Harris: So I think there's both a kind of terror that comes with seeing that big interconnected system operating that way. But there's also a kind of clarity that comes from that, but then what do you do about it? And I remember actually having these moments where this is classic and developmental theory and learning where you kind of learn a new thing, but then you don't know how to stabilize that new thing. That's also what society was wanting at that time from us. They wanted to know how is this affecting our children? How addictive is it? And we would list all these stats and here's how it's affecting attention span. And so it actually kind of felt like not being honest with the world in a way about our true understanding of the broader situation. And that's kind of why I think Stephanie, we wanted to have this podcast actually was so we could talk about that transition so people could understand, I think the scale and scope of what we really need to address. It's not just social media, it's how all these systems interconnect and what's at the real root of it all.

Aza Raskin: I think one of the things that made it really difficult was this awakening realization that if I cared about tech or was I making tech and was not aware of

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these underlying runaway systems, then I was part of the problem. And yet still not knowing what to do. So in that period, when, what would become CHT was gaining steam, remember Tristan, you and I sitting in a cafe in West Oakland having a conversation and you were critiquing some of the interfaces I was making and I was critiquing some of your approach because it was like, "Hey, I see what you're saying about the attention economy, but I don't see how you're going to do anything about it. I don't see what the form you could be choosing will do. You could talk about it, but is that going to really change any of the economic incentives? Startups are still the most capital efficient way of changing the world." Those are the words I remember saying word for word. So I'm going to continue working on this product and I'll have bigger effect than you sort of complaining from the sidelines. I remember that sort of it's ramping up a little bit, but this sort of I remember what my mind was like back then.

Tristan Harris: Well this is actually really, really important. It really gets to, when we talk about in systems change, changing the paradigm from which people are thinking, because what you're speaking to is the paradigm that you and I were born and raised into basically, I went to Stanford, which is conveniently situated right between Sand Hill Road, where all the venture capitalists are and Page Mill Road where all the lawyers are and it makes it the most efficient sort of venture capital startup creating ecosystem. And I remember I was a Mayfield Fellows Program at Stanford. Many different tech companies actually kind of were part of this program and they train you basically, if you want to be a socially acceptable human being as a graduate from Stanford, you need to start a tech company and you that's the only form of success.

Tristan Harris: And when you tell your friends that you're thinking about building a nonprofit or thinking about learning, how to cook, you don't get any reaction. But if you tell people you're starting a tech company, then that's how you get your social validation. So when you go back to that conversation, you and I were having at that cafe, I remember that too. And I remember thinking very cynically about my own thing that I was doing. What are you going to do when you see this problem? You're going to think about it? You're going to talk about it? It's this massive amorphous thing, which is just the system inside of which we are living. How can knowing about it or talking about it, change anything?

Stephanie Lepp: Great question. And I know that that has been a big source of tension for both of you. And so I would love to lean into that for a second. So you created the Center for Humane Technology in order to address the doubts that you were discussing in Doubt Club, but then you're confronted with these deeper and more amorphous doubts about what's generating the issues with technology and climate change and inequality, and, and, and... And so indeed, as you asked Tristan, "What do you do with that?" What do you do with that? Meanwhile, in the early days of CHT, you were going to DC and talking with legislators and just kind of getting drawn into this burgeoning, but somewhat narrower

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conversation about tech reform. And so I would love to hear a little more about the tension there between the doubts or the awakening that you were having on one hand and the actual work that you were doing and that the world was asking you to do on the other.

Tristan Harris: Well, yeah. I think that's such a great prompt. I distinctly remember actually flying down to Mexico for this conference called [inaudible 00:17:36], it's the City of Ideas Festival in Mexico City and giving a talk on tech reform. And I remember going back to my hotel room after giving the talk about all the issues of technology, but I was really first waking up to this bigger meta crisis. And I felt physical pain in my stomach, and Randy will remember this actually, because I just didn't know how to square this specific issue of technology, which we are obviously experts in, and had some capacity to advance with this bigger issue. That even if you got the tech issue addressed, even if you perfectly address that, you still have abstraction, extraction, depletion and pollution running on a finite planet and a finite ecosystem across every other domain.

Tristan Harris: And so the sense of, it doesn't add up, like you could "solve" some narrow aspect of some of these problems, but you wouldn't be addressing the bigger risks that determine whether we make it or not. And that physically and emotionally and spiritually, I think inside of me was really, really, really hard. And in fact, especially the kind of gap between the two, because the world wasn't asking us, "Well, what do you do about abstraction, extraction, pollution and depletion and existential risk. And how do we make it through the bottleneck of the systems that we've built into some different paradigm." They were asking us, "Here's what Facebook did yesterday. Would you please comment on it? And maybe that'll help advance the conversation?" The gap between what we were holding and what we were known for was painful.

Tristan Harris: Now, the good news though, I would also say Aza, you should jump in, but is that the world really wanted to know about what was wrong with technology? It was a new issue. We had climate change, we had environmental issues. We had inequality on the agenda. We didn't have technology on the agenda. And so there was this opportunity to speak to how these systems were breaking in a way that reflected some of the bigger trends that we were looking at. Aza, do you want to say anything about that?

Aza Raskin: I just wanted to add in to hold these sort of frames was very isolating. One of the things that really helped me is there are two types of ways of talking about the world's problems, the first kind of way is that you just sort of like, "Okay, here's the world. And then there are a whole bunch of problems just sort of emerging happening to it." But if instead you talk about what are the mechanisms like, describe the machine that when you pedal it as an outcome, a predictable outcome, you get climate change, pollution, in equality, exploitation, then your mind, it can only reach for solutions that change the fundamental

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working of that machine. And well, that doesn't mean like, "Wow, that's so easy." It really changes, at least my felt sense of agency for what we can do, because now what we can do can fit the scale of the problem. Like we're describing the problem. Well, which means the problem now becomes at least partially tractable.

Stephanie Lepp: So within the last year, I think there has been a bit of a breakthrough for you, in terms of speaking publicly and explicitly from this generator frame. Last June on Your Undivided Attention we had for the first time Daniel Schmachtenberger in dialogue with you, Tristan. And so I just want to ask you, how has that felt for you to explicitly inhabit this generator frame in public?

Tristan Harris: Yeah. When you understand those generator functions, that there's a growth imperative tied to abstraction, extraction, depletion and pollution, it really does create this split. And the reason I want to double down on this feeling of alienation or isolation is because it may be something that you listeners out there might be feeling listening to this podcast cast. I definitely have heard from people who say, "Wow, this podcast is so informative, it's so nice, so great." But then I feel alone because then I'm understanding these things about the world that other people around me don't understand.

Tristan Harris: And one of the reasons we wanted to bring these worlds together is first, I think we do need more community, right? People need to understand that other people feel this too, and understand this too. And that walking worried sense that something's not right, does have grounding, your mammalian system is not lying to you, but it's not that it's a pedophile QAnon elite that's kind of running the world and that's the big crisis that we're facing. Or it's not that it's just one political party is taking power. It's not that, Hey, there's just these one or evil oil company executives who aren't doing the right thing, because if one oil company didn't do it, the other one would, again, it's that we're caught in these races that produce these negative outcomes, the runaway systems beneath.

Tristan Harris: And so Stephanie, to your question about how does it feel getting to kind of go out publicly and talk about these things. It feels really, really good and important to me because these have been two parts of my own identity and my own psychology that I've been holding and they felt separate for too long. And it hurts to hold them separately. And that won't go away because the world does still perceive technology as just an issue.

Tristan Harris: How do we deal with what Facebook did yesterday? They changed their policy on X or Adam Mosseri from Instagram testified to Congress about why, what do you think, microphone in your face? You're commenting on these narrow moments or choices or design events instead of how these systems are operating. And I do feel a lot better communicating more from these generator functions. And we're hoping with this podcast also to take you listeners out

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there, along with us for this ride, because that's what it's going to take to address these problems. They're not separate issues. They're connected by these fundamental runaway systems that we mentioned earlier.

Aza Raskin: Like in Donella Meadows' framework, there are 12 leverage points in a system going from constraints and stocks and flows at number 12, all the way up to transcending paradigms at number one. And it's not like you just then focus on paradigmatic change. You have to do all of them from times and delays to changing the incentives of the system, to the stocks and the flows. And so I think there's a way in which if we all, as individuals and communities and societies share a similar diagnosis, if we can articulate the problem, then we naturally in a decentralized way, all start pushing in the same direction. And when we all push in the same direction, no system can stand up to that. And it's just the acknowledgement that there is room in here for hope.

Stephanie Lepp: So to bring it back to systems theorist, Donella Meadows. One thing I love about Donella's leverage point framework. And just her general MO is that she totally and unabashedly acknowledges, we don't know. She had humility. And so in that spirit, I wanted to read to you the last paragraph of her seminal piece, Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System, she writes, "Magical leverage points are not easily accessible. Even if we know where they are and which direction to push on them. There are no cheap tickets to mastery. You have to work hard at it. Whether that means rigorously analyzing a system or rigorously casting off your own paradigms and throwing yourself into the humility of not knowing. In the end, it seems that mastery has less to do with pushing leverage points than it does with strategically, profoundly, madly letting go."

Aza Raskin: We're trying to change a system. And there are a couple theories for how you change systems. Donella Meadows has this 12 leverage points on how to do it. But even people who are immersed in it, there is no magic bullet. And these are complex systems, which means you do not know how they're going to react because there's so many sub-components until you start to act on them and sense how it changes. And so it's this sort of continual dance to try to change a system. And you don't know whether it's going to work before you try.

Tristan Harris: Which is to say also, it's not like the Center for Humane Technology, this podcast, we have some kind of master plan that we have some master purpose narrative story that we know exactly what's going to fix all this, and we're going to tell you what it is. We're all figuring it out together. But I think we want our audience to come with us in thinking about this ecosystem of change as a system.

Stephanie Lepp: And so with that, I would love to bring us back to Doubt Club and ask you how can this show be a kind of public doubt club? Well, so startup founders don't necessarily share their doubts with their co-founders or teams or investors, but how can your undivided attention be a venue for us to share our doubts, our

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biggest questions and unknowns and uncertainties with our listeners in a way that serves us all?

Tristan Harris: Yeah. I think we would like on this show to be coming with questions and expressing our doubts about what is the right thing to do, given the situation? I just did a big interview this morning and people are always asking, "What should we do about this?" "What can I do?" And the truth is that I don't know the answer to how this whole thing is going to change. Right? We have been working on this for now, I think me personally, I'm clocking up to eight or nine years and that's a long time and I still don't know how this is going to change, but I will say that I didn't know back then either. And so many unexpected things [inaudible 00:27:24] have continued to happen. And I don't know where all the change is going to come from, who would've predicted a Francis Hagan five years ago, who would've predicted attorney general lawsuits years ago, who would've predicted that the co-founder of WhatsApp would come out and say, "Hashtag delete Facebook." There's a million things that are happening now that we would've never anticipated.

Aza Raskin: Yeah. One of the things I'd love for us to get better at is figuring out how to ask our guests on Your Undivided Attention to voice their own doubts. And it's hard, right? Even when I think about answering that question, Steph, I find it difficult because there are days when I think The Social Dilemma, the movie that I know has been seen by a 100 million, 150 million people. And like, "Did that really matter? Did it do anything?" What did it push on?. And I'm out in the world and people reference it and that'll make me feel good in the moment, but Facebook's market cap continues to go up. And none of the underlying generator functions have really shifted. So did it matter? And I go back and forth.

Stephanie Lepp: Yeah. And it's hard because sometimes people look to you for certainty. So if you're going to be forthcoming about your doubt, how do you kind of do that in a responsible way? It's kind of a delicate dance.

Tristan Harris: Yeah. Imagine if you're running for president and someone says like, "So what's your plan?" And you're like, "Well, I'm not really sure. Here's some things that I'm thinking about might help, but like obviously none of us really know." Who can say that?

Stephanie Lepp: "Here's my plan and I don't know." That's also what's amazing about Donella though. Here's my framework and-

Aza Raskin: I don't know.

Stephanie Lepp: ... I don't know.

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- Stephanie Lepp: Aza, can you talk a little bit about the work that you're doing outside of the Center for Humane Technology and how it enables you to lean into or engage with your doubt?
- Aza Raskin: Yeah. So the other work that I do is a co-founder for a project called Earth Species Project or ESP. And then its goal is use the latest in machine learning to decode the languages of non-human species. And the goal is actually very much inspired by Donella Meadows, which is a paradigm change. Can we shift the way that we think about ourselves and our relationship to the rest of the planet? And I don't know if it'll work.
- Aza Raskin: Roger Payne a whale biologist who in the 1960s released this record, the Songs of the Humpback Whale with his wife at the time, Katie Payne, and it created Star Trek IV, go back in time and save the whales. It goes on Voyage 1 as the first track on the golden record representing not just humanity, but all of earth. It's distributed a 100,000 times back then, which is huge. And it's played in front of the UN General Assembly. And it's sort of like the galvanizing artifact for banning deep sea wailing, which is why we still have humpbacks today.
- Aza Raskin: There's humanity going to the moon. And those images of seeing ourselves from the outside earth eyes and blue marble are still the most viewed photos in world history. And when there were human beings standing on the moon, that's when the EPA came into existence, NOAA was born, the Modern Environmental Movement was born. Earth Day was started. The Clean Air Acts was passed in the Nixon era. And so I don't know whether Earth Species will create the moment, which then galvanizes a shift towards radical sustainability and empathy in shifting our own self image. But I have hope that it could.
- Stephanie Lepp: Quantum physicist, Richard Feynman, who won the Nobel Prize for physics in 1965 and is considered the founding father of nanotechnology. He said the secret to his scientific success was his ability to embrace doubt and uncertainty. And so to close, the question I want to ask you is what one action can our listeners take to strengthen their capacity to doubt?
- Aza Raskin: It is really hard to doubt on your own because you don't know when those doubts are true doubts that you should be listening to. And when those doubts are the doubts that you should continue past. And so one thing that you can do is at whatever level you are, whatever your peer group is, pull together, two, three of them and make yourself a doubt club. I think it's a really powerful way to find the places that you have been deceiving yourself and get to see yourself from the outside.

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- Tristan Harris: Yeah, I totally agree. I do think starting a doubt club with your friends, don't listen to this stuff alone. Don't think about this stuff alone, be in community. I do think that's one of the right answers, but I'm not sure about that.
- Aza Raskin: The other thing, which despite all the things we just said about doubt, in fact, maybe not despite. We don't have all the answers, but by the way, here's some answers that you can check out. We have answers on our website. We have [crosstalk 00:32:40].
- Tristan Harris: With 100% certainty.
- Stephanie Lepp: If on the spirit of our new mantra, "Here's my plan and I don't know.
- Aza Raskin: But one of my life models, just so you know, is things went exactly as unplanned.
- Stephanie Lepp: Great.
- Aza Raskin: But something we can recommend with that 100% certainty, except for the doubt that we come along with it is we're just releasing a course shortly, that talk about a lot of fundamental principles of humane technology, and that can help arm you to make your own good decisions locally. Because it's very hard to answer the question, what can you do? But we can give you a good set of questions that help you answer the question, what can you do?
- Stephanie Lepp: All right. Well, Tristan, Aza, thank you for being willing to put out a course, put out a plan, put things out and say, "I don't know."
- Aza Raskin: Thank you Step.
- Tristan Harris: Thank you so much Steph.
- Stephanie Lepp: Tristan Harris started his career as a magician. He studied persuasive technology at Stanford and used what he learned to build a company called Apture that was acquired by Google. It was at Google where Tristan first sounded the alarm on the harms posed by technology that manipulates attention for profit. Today, Tristan is the president and co-founder of the Center for Humane Technology.
- Stephanie Lepp: Aza Raskin was trained as a mathematician and dark matter physicist. He took three companies from founding to acquisition before co-founding the Center for Humane Technology with Tristan and Randima Fernando. AZA is also a co-founder of the Earth's Species Project, an open source, collaborative nonprofit dedicated to decoding animal communication.

**Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast**  
**Episode 46: [Here's Our Plan And We Don't Know](#)**

Tristan Harris: And if you work in technology, one way that you can start thinking and problem solving from an understanding of the generator functions of existential risk is through a new free course that we're launching. The course is called foundations of humane technology, and it'll prepare you and your product team to build technology that protects wellbeing and help strengthen our collective capacity to address the most, your urgent challenges facing humanity. You can sign up for updates at [humanetech.com](http://humanetech.com).

Tristan Harris: Your Undivided Attention is produced by the Center for Humane Technology, a nonprofit organization, working to catalyze a humane future. Our executive producer is Stephanie Lepp. Our senior producer is Julia Scott. Engineering on this episode by Jeff Sudakin. Dan Kedni is our editor at large. Original music and sound design by Ryan and Hayes Holiday and a special thanks to the whole Center for Humane Technology team for making this podcast possible. You can find show notes, transcripts, and much more at [humanetech.com](http://humanetech.com). A very special thanks goes to our generous lead supporters, including the Omidyar Network, Craig Newmark Philanthropies, and the Evolve Foundation, among many others. And if you made it all the way here, let me just give one more thank you to you for giving us your undivided attention.

Aza Raskin: Well, is this the end step? I don't know.

Tristan Harris: We're going to do, I don't know. It's my plan.