

# 10 STEPS YOU CAN ADOPT TO LIVE A MORE SUSTAINABLE LIFE

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The past 100 years of industrialization, urbanization and rapid population have given humanity a drastic new way of life that *may* be more convenient and make our lives easier, but creates long-lasting, damaging effects on our environment. When you take a good look around, it is easy to see the negative effects of living unsustainably including **contaminated water, dirty air, poisoned land, loss of wildlife, stronger storms, floods, droughts, rising sea temperatures**, etc. The change is happening faster than most people know. One journalist, Steve Connor, calls climate change "Disaster in Slow Motion" (except that it's not in slo-mo anymore).

(See Mr. Connor's article here: <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/steve-connor-climate-change-is-like-a-disaster-in-slow-motion-1822400.html>)

It is imperative that each of us begins to change our habits. In this ebook I am advocating 10 simple actions that each of us can simply and affordably adopt to help make a difference. Every person who makes the choice to be more ecologically responsible is IMPORTANT in the grand scheme of things; every simple change will be noticed by the environment!

Every day in the news are more and more tales of how climate change is manifesting in our world. The reality is that we MUST change. The simple steps I outline here can help you to reduce your environmental footprint.

## ***What is the primary problem facing humanity today?***

As of November 2009, the human population has reached almost 6.8 billion, with the greatest concentrations in Asia and Europe. By contrast, in the year 1910, earth's population was 1.75 billion. In only 100 years, the population has quadrupled! By 2025 – 15 years from now - our population is projected to be 8 billion. *That's over a billion more people needing food, shelter, power and clean water.*

We need to be thinking about how to live sustainably as our population grows. Every generation has had its issues to bear - wars, plagues, depressions, holocausts - but humanity has perhaps the most difficult task it has ever been faced with, NOW. If we do not change the way we live, humanity will not be able to survive on earth.

Our oceans are dying, and corporate interests are destroying our wildlife for profit. We're at a juncture when we need to embrace change, live simpler lives, and take responsibility for our actions. If humanity adopts the concept of living sustainably, we will be able to sustain human growth indefinitely.

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What are the results if we do **not** make an effort to live more sustainably?

- Massive reduction in arable land for agriculture;
- Widespread drought;
- Rising sea levels;
- Huge displacement of human populations (not to mention non-human populations)

**Essentially, less land, water and food for more humans to live on.**

If you don't think that YOU are important in the grand scheme of things, then you are wrong. You and me, and our family and our neighbors and our friends are collectively the only people who can help to reverse the damage that's been done already, and prevent more catastrophic damage from being done.

## Stage 1: Reduce your Petroleum Usage

### 1. Travel Less

Combine errands; walk or take a bike; use mass transit; carpool. Traveling less drastically reduces your carbon footprint. Think before you use your car. Can you save your errand for the next day when you might be able to do two errands instead of one? Is your destination close enough that you can walk? Is it possible to join with your neighbors to go grocery shopping? Can you take a vacation closer to home to avoid flying? If you ask yourself questions like these before making decisions, it will help to minimize carbon emissions.

### 2. Buy Non-Toxic Cleansers

Trade your petroleum-based home-cleaning chemicals for non-toxic cleaners. When you use a petroleum-based cleaner, the toxic elements end up in the wastewater, which ends up in the ocean. Our oceans are in peril from the pollution and rising temperatures; if we don't change our ways they could completely die. There are many natural products on the market that work as efficiently or better than petroleum products. See <http://www.xtrasweetlife.com> for more information.

Also, there are several things you can make at home that work just as well. My favorite is a half & half combination of Hydrogen Peroxide and water, with 1/8 cup of strained lemon juice. This completely non-toxic, biodegradable solution is excellent for washing windows, disinfecting countertops, cleaning bathrooms and scaring away all kinds of insects. (Hydrogen Peroxide is a natural anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-mold agent, and can be used undiluted (3% dilution) to keep your

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toothbrushes clean, whiten your teeth and kill the germs that cause most colds, flus and other viruses.)

*Petroleum-based products include: plastics, toiletries, paints, lacquers, ink, packaging, candles, matches, shoe polish, asphalt, roofing shingles, linoleum, aluminum, rubber, spandex, cleaning supplies, detergents, medicines and food.*

## Stage 2: Reduce Your Waste

### 3. Recycle! Recycle! Recycle!

At this point in time, most communities have recycling facilities. The time you take to separate your paper, glass and metals is well worth it. You can recycle plastic bags, clothes, furniture, appliances, electronics, eyeglasses, cell phones, bottles, cans, and building materials. Overloaded landfills - which are toxic - are but one effect of humanity's garbage. At this point in time there is a mass of garbage the size of Texas free-floating in the Pacific Ocean... can you just begin to imagine how this is harming ocean wildlife? Reduce your waste in every way possible.

### 4. Buy Less

Perhaps it is human nature to buy, buy, buy.... presents for holidays and birthdays; things to make us feel good; toys that last a year, or a month or a week or a day, or an hour... more clothes, and food, and electronics; it goes on and on and on. Instead of using THINGS to fill a void, make the choice to give instead. Give your time to a local cause, and you will feel MUCH better than buying a new THING. *It's been proven that the act of giving releases very helpful chemicals in your body that are healing and boost the immune system.* Instead of going to the mall, go to the park. Resist the urge to buy more things. Instead of buying holiday presents, give a donation to a charity. The less you consume, the less waste you produce.

[http://dollarphilanthropy.typepad.com/weblog/2007/06/its\\_official\\_th.html](http://dollarphilanthropy.typepad.com/weblog/2007/06/its_official_th.html)

## Stage 3: Make the Earth More Healthy

### 5. Keep a Garden

There are many benefits of growing a garden, but the primary benefit is the healthy vegetables you get to eat! In an urban apartment, if you have any kind of southern exposure, you can grow lettuce, tomatoes, herbs. If you have even a tiny bit of land with direct sun, you can grow a garden. Aside from the nutrition you gain by eating freshly picked vegetables, you also get a full taste and aroma. And if you are growing in the ground (instead of pots), you are nourishing the earth. Carbon points: it means less trips to the grocery store, and you are oxygenating the air.

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Economic points: growing your own vegetables is significantly cheaper than buying them. One more reason: you have complete control over how your food is grown; no worries of pesticides or genetic modification. (But make sure to buy organic, heirloom seeds!)

## **6. Take Care of Your Health**

The kinds of foods many people eat and the sedentary lifestyles of many jobs have led to a drastic change in human health. Heart disease, cancers, diabetes, auto-immune diseases - these are all relatively new, as we have changed our way of life drastically in the past 100 years. Getting back to a natural state of living involves getting a decent amount of exercise, fresh air, sunshine and plant-based foods every day. It involves practicing preventative medicine instead of waiting for your body to break down. If you get to the point where you are dependent on medication to stay "healthy", you have not only done yourself a great disservice, but the environment as well, as medications break down in your body and are excreted into the wastewater systems. They end up poisoning water supplies and ecosystems. There are so many legitimate online resources for living a healthy life, it's up to you to make the decision - if at all possible - to live a life without medications.

## **7. Plant a Tree**

Are you aware that trees clean and produce our air? They convert carbon dioxide particles to pure water and sugar. The massive destruction of the Amazon Rainforest is one of the primary causes of global warming; there are now significantly less trees - especially ancient trees - to filter our air. If each person planted a tree, we would have 7 billion new trees to help us breathe. It's a simple action that anyone can take to effect great change. Perhaps you live in an apartment and don't have land to plant trees? Then donate one to your local park.

## **8. Buy Local**

As Americans, we are addicted to products made in Asia. Wal-Mart may be filled with inexpensive things, but the environmental cost of transporting those things from Asia to your local Wal-Mart is astronomical. Likewise, apples from Chile, textiles from Turkey, olives from Italy - they have their cost above what you pay at the cash register. If you can make it a habit to search out local food and goods, you are not only doing your community a great service, but you are easing the atmosphere and the oceans, which are choked to the tipping point with pollutants from the boats and planes that transport these goods. Search out organic foods, hand-crafted clothes and goods instead of spending your money on Asian or South American goods which often are toxic and cheaply made.

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## Stage 4: Reduce Your Energy Usage

### 9. Invest in Renewable Energy Products

Renewable energy is the best choice for now and the future. In most cases there are no harmful wastes to pollute our air or water. There are so many products on the market that use renewable energy - including flashlights, radios, holiday lights, battery chargers, fans, outdoor lights, even backpacks that can recharge your cellphone or ipod! The list is growing every day. These products use a range of alternative energy, including solar, wind, hand-crank, etc..

In addition, you can drastically cut your energy usage by replacing all traditional light bulbs in your home with either CFLs or LED lights. These lights cost more at the outset, but their life is infinitely longer and they use so much less energy that they pay for themselves within the first year of usage. As an example, I have one circuit in my home that powers 3 lights. If I had 60 watt bulbs in each of those fixtures, that would be 180 watts of usage every time I turned the lights on. But because I am using 15 watt CFLs, which gives the same amount of light as a 60 watt bulb, my usage is only 45 watts for the entire circuit.

*Another good idea is to put your TV, VCR, gaming consoles etc on power strips, and turn those strips off at night and when you go away. The phantom load is eradicated, saving energy and money. One of the very best ways to save money and energy is to replace your old hot water heater with an on-demand water heater; you will have endless hot water, but it does not heat the water for the entire day, only for the period that you need it. Having used one I can attest to the quality of the hot water and the savings on the energy bill.*

### 10. Weatherproof Your Home

Many people live in older homes or apartments that leak air like a sieve. During the winter, the cold air comes in and cancels out your heating system, forcing you to turn your heating system UP, therefore spending more money, and using more energy. If you can seal the cracks, and insulate, you will be amazed at the difference! It's not difficult to find out where the cracks are - usually they're around windows and doors. Just take a candle and see where the candle sputters. There are all kinds of caulks and weatherproofing tapes you can buy to help seal those cracks up. Or, replace the doors and windows that are really old with an energy star door. At Home Depot many standard energy star doors are well under \$200 and not too difficult to install. Windows are a little bit more expensive, and also not too difficult to install yourself with the right tools. The tax incentives currently given by the government make this a very affordable endeavor... it's well worth it!

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### **Bonus: Invest in Renewable Energy for your Home Energy Needs**

Zero-energy homes are here! Technology has made it possible for us to affordably outfit our homes with PV (solar) arrays, thermal hot water, turbines, and geo-thermal heating/cooling systems. In New York there are major subsidies on the state and federal levels that make the installation of a renewable energy system affordable! The advantage of this scenario is that you create a surplus of energy in the summer, spending \$0 for your energy and then selling some back to the utility company (if you have a big enough array). Your meter literally winds backwards. Then, during the winter, you are still creating energy, but perhaps not enough to supply all of your needs. So the surplus of energy from the summer then lowers your bills.

Not very long ago, it took 30 years to gain back the cost of installing a solar PV array system, however that has changed. With the current incentives, it is very affordable and takes only about 7 years to pay back. And that's just solar - with wind, in the right circumstances, the payback is even sooner and the efficiency is higher.

One of the more popular choices especially for new construction is geothermal heating and cooling. A well is dug to a point in the earth where the water maintains a constant temperature between 52 - 55 degrees F. A radiant system is installed in the floors of the house, and the water is run continuously throughout the piping. During the winter, 55 degrees creates warmth; in the summer, 55 degrees cools the air. It's completely renewable, clean, even and very comfortable.

***Please feel free to forward this PDF to anyone who you think might benefit from the information. It's free!***