

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALING

(IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)

Keep in mind that change takes time to incorporate into your daily life. Biting off too much at one time will often lead to feelings of overwhelm or failure. Even small changes need time to find their place your daily routine. You are more likely to succeed when you choose a project that feels timely and authentic. Choose something that you relate to, and give it time to become a habit before picking the next thing.

*The **Environmental Working Group** is a great resource that can make some of these suggestions easier to adapt.*

Don't Worry About "Keeping up with the Jones": Studies have shown that we get more long-term satisfaction out of having a fun experience compared to buying an item. Likewise having more free time brings us more joy compared to earning extra to own a larger house etc. So focusing on enjoying the moment and keeping things simple. Lightens your environmental footprint and decreases your stress level while increasing your enjoyment of life by spending less on physical belongings.

Reduce the Use of Plastic: Plastic is one of the biggest issues that our planet faces. Much of the plastic created does not get recycled and ends up in our oceans. No plastic is 100% recyclable. Even the stuff that gets collected by the garbage companies is only partially reused. Avoiding the use of plastic can be simple things like using bar soap rather than hand soaps that come in plastic bottles. It can be choosing the brand of vegetable oil, salad dressing, condiments, carbonated drinks etc. that come in glass containers rather than plastic ones. It can be avoiding buying foods that are sold on plastic trays, using glass containers to store leftovers instead of

Tupperware, finding reusable covers for the microwave instead of using plastic wrap, etc.

Unsubscribe: Most companies have their bills, catalogs or newsletters online these days. Taking the time to unsubscribe from the paper version will save trees and fossil fuels. Unsubscribing from catalogs and coupon flyer will also remove the idea of shopping from your everyday mindset.

Avoid Harmful Household Cleaners: Many of the chemicals in traditional house cleaners cause damage to our ground water and creeks, even with city filtration systems. Common household cleaning products are a source of indoor pollutants that can negatively affect human health. This includes scented dryer sheets. There are many good environmentally friendly cleaners available these days. Try to avoid cleaners that contain sulfides. You can also make your own household cleaners with simple ingredients like baking soda, borax or vinegar.

Use Things Up: Use things until the very end. There might be the occasional funky moment when you don't have the newest trendiest stuff, but over a lifetime it reduces the amount of stuff you send to the landfill.

Avoid Anti-bacterial Soaps and Wipes: There are two reasons to stop using anti-bacterial products. First, the chemicals in these soaps are very hard to filter out and they do not degrade easily. They end up in our rivers and streams and cause damage to the ecosystem. Second, they don't even work. Most of the colds we get are caused by viruses not bacteria. Meanwhile we are creating super bacteria as they become resistant to these chemicals. There is also evidence that our children's immune systems fail to develop properly when the environment is too sterile.

Reduce the use of Paper Products: Consider all the ways that you use paper. Some are pretty useful, like toilet paper. Others like paper plates are not. Being a conscientious consumer saves tree. Consider keeping your shopping list on your phone or iPad, reading on a kindle, using washable napkins. If you do use paper plates etc. look for the compostable ones. Also important to, when possible, to use sustainable wood sources.

Put up a Clothesline: If you have a little space in the backyard, put up an old fashion clothes line. Air drying laundry when weather permits will save energy. While it is true that not everyone enjoys sun-dried jeans or towels, sheets that smell like sunshine are amazing.

Switch to cloth and compostable bags: Many places now have bans on single use plastic bags. Instead they offer thicker “reusable bags”. They are still plastic and will still end up in the landfill sooner rather than later. Many of these bags find their way into our rivers and oceans, where they harm the wildlife. There are many cloth bags available for household use these days. Keep them by the front door and in the cars.

Oil a Washable Pan instead of Using Aluminum: While aluminum is one of the most abundant resources on the planet, mining it is environmentally disastrous. The strip mining, high energy use processing and chemical residue leaves a heavy footprint on the planet. Use metal, glass or porcelain baking pans instead of 1 use aluminum. Use oil to grease these pans instead of lining with tinfoil. Buy soda in glass bottles. If you do use aluminum products, recycle. Aluminum and glass are the only two products that can be completely recycled and reused.

Invest in Rechargeable Batteries: Heavy metals from batteries, like cobalt and lead, leach into the ground water as they degrade in the landfills. There are now many places, like Best Buy, that have recycle bins for your old batteries. However the best option is to invest in rechargeable batteries and a charger. Today's chargers are fast and the batteries hold their charge quite well.

Recycle: Old news and perhaps over touted. But, yes recycle, beyond the stuff that goes in your recycle bin we now have ways to recycle paints, chemicals, electronics, medications, and food scraps. Check out your garbage company's website from time to time to find out what resources are available in your area and get updated on what the garbage company collects. But it is also important to keep in mind that not all things get recycled just because the garbage company collects them. Recyclable plastics are often problematic and end up stored in warehouses when the garbage companies can't find buyers.

Turn Things off: So many of our modern electronics have sleep mode now that it is easy to forget to turn them off when we are done. It is too easy to leave printers, computers, cable boxes, game systems, tablets, and phones on overnight. Even some toasters and coffee makers stay on 24 hours a day. While many of these have an automatic sleep mode, they are still using electricity. They can also affect your ability to get a good night sleep, especially when they are in your bedroom.

To-Go Cups: Investing in a nice to-go coffee cup and keeping it with you will help you avoid all those non-recyclable paper cups from coffee shops. Most coffee shops are happy to rinse your cup out as long as you take the lid off for them.

Water Bottles: Investing in a good glass water bottle is good for the environment and for your health. Not to mention that much of

the bottled water is just tap water anyway. The production and recycling of plastic uses too many natural resources, especially water. Also, studies have shown that chemicals from the plastic can leach into the bottled water and cause hormone disruption and increase the risk of cancer.

So avoiding bottled water helps the environment, your health and your pocketbook.

Eat more plants: Eating more fruits and vegetables will help in two important ways. First, it decreases the amount of meat you consume, which will have a positive impact on the environment. Even all natural meats use a lot of land and water. Second, you will improve your health, which means you will be sick less, and you will use fewer supplements and medications.

Buy in Bulk: Buying foods like rice, pasta and nuts in the bulk section is a great way to cut down on packaging. Even though some packaging can be recycled, it is better to avoid it all together when possible. There are reusable mesh bags that can be used instead of plastic. Buying in bulk will also in many cases save you money. Part of what we pay for, when we buy boxed food is the logo and the design of the box itself. It is also a good bet that there are fewer chemicals and preservatives in the bulk section; so it good for you as well.

Avoid Food Waste: Western countries throw away too much food. Food that used the Earth's resources to grow. Beyond that, it is depressing. It can be very discouraging to cook at home when you end up throwing away ingredients for meals that never happened. Make a plan before shopping. Be realistic rather than idealistic. There is nothing wrong with eating frozen or take out on nights when there is no time to cook. Shopping hungry or on the spur of the moment can lead to over shopping. Get creative with leftover ingredients, there are many ways create a new meal with what's in the fridge. Almost anything can be thrown into soups, hashes or

pasta dishes. Freeze portion size leftover meals for days when life gets too busy to cook.

Understand Expiration Dates: Most expiration dates refer to quality, not safety. For example, bread begins to get dry after the expiration date. You can extend that date by keeping the bread in the fridge. You also use the drying bread to make garlic bread or French toast. That being said, don't punish yourself by eating things that taste off.

Food Scraps: Many garbage companies have begun collecting food scrap as part of yard waste. The food scraps gets composted and reused as garden soil. This helps prevent soil companies from scraping top soil into bags to sell at nurseries. You also save water and energy as you use the sink disposal less. You could save money by switching to a smaller garbage bin. The list of acceptable items varies from town to town, but generally include vegetable and fruit scraps, raw or cooked, old bread and vegetarian leftovers, eggshells, coffee filters, paper towels, pizza boxes, and in some areas meat scraps. If you have a garden, you can use things like banana peels, eggshells, and coffee grind to feed the soil.

Shower Less: Americans shower more than any other culture. We shower even when don't need to. Skipping one or two showers a week or taking shorter showers will save quite a lot of water over the course of a year. Your hair and skin will be healthier if they do not get scrubbed on a daily bases. Plus you will save money on the water bill.

Sign up for Community Clean-Up Days: many communities have organizations that schedule clean up days for parks, beaches, and/or creeks. It usually involves an afternoon picking up trash with other environmentally minded folks. Can be a fun way to meet people as well.

Leave the Car at Home: When possible walk, take the bicycle, Carpool, or use public transportation. Fewer cars on the road is good for the land and the air.

Shop Local: shopping local, especially locally produced foods, reduces your carbon foot print. It uses less fuel and packaging while supporting a healthy local economy, which can then invest in more sustainable practices. Yes, Amazon is often the most convenient option, and sometime the only one, but consider the carbon foot print of the delivery trucks and the trees needed to produce all that packaging before choosing online shopping.

Support Environmentally Responsible Companies: All production creates some carbon foot print, but there are companies that are environmentally conscientious and worth supporting.

Support Environmental Organizations: There are many organizations out there that are working hard to support the earth healing process. Volunteering your time or donating money are both good ways to support their efforts.