



10 WAYS TO HELP OUR PLANET

Overview

March 2014

There are so many environmental problems: deforestation, water and air pollution, resource depletion, species extinction, climate change, the list is depressingly long. Worse, none of them seem to be resolving due to failure by our governments to enact policies and pass laws that would curtail much of the environmental destruction being wreaked by our greedy consumer capitalist lifestyle.

In fact, as we head into 2014, the situation is now so dire, particularly in relation to climate change with the majority of climate scientists predicting a catastrophic four degree temperature rise by 2100 unless we significantly reduce our carbon emissions (which seems highly unlikely), increasing numbers of highly credentialed experts are sounding the death knell for our modern, western way of life.

Assuming what they say is true - and certainly the evidence is compelling - that we face impending ecological collapse including runaway warming unless we radically transform our consumption habits, surely it makes very good sense to start transitioning now to living more sustainably so that when crunch time comes and changes are foisted on us, it won't be such a shock or as difficult to adapt.

Don't panic. Downsizing isn't as bad as those with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo would have us believe. On the contrary, getting off the consumer treadmill is a great opportunity to improve your quality of life. You'll spend less money, learn new and practical skills, and have more time for important relationships and other meaningful pursuits.

Of course, no matter how committed you are to the planet's welfare, reducing your ecological footprint can seem daunting, especially if you don't know where to start. Which is why we've decided to put together an eBook that offers some guidance in this regard.

Here we suggest loads of things you can do to help reduce your environmental impact - and live a happier and healthier life to boot!





Cut carbon emissions

Solving climate change requires us, as a society, using less energy and moving from fossil fuels like coal and gas to renewable energy like wind and solar. No-one can do everything, but everyone can do something, so here are some suggestions:

- Set your thermostat a few degrees lower in the winter and a few degrees higher in the summer to save on heating and cooling costs.
- Install compact fluorescent light bulbs when your older incandescent bulbs burn out. NOTE Australia started to phase out the latter in 2009.
- Many gadgets, electronic devices and appliances, even chargers for phones, cameras and the like, suck power when they're switched off or not in use, just by being plugged in. Best to unplug them all when they're not in use. Ditto idle electronics. Your computer might be asleep, but if there's a light on, it's still using energy. Or invest in a smart power strip which cuts off 'phantom' or 'vampire' energy use by products that go into standby mode.
- Wash clothes in cold water whenever possible. As much as 85 percent of the energy used in a washing machine is spent heating the water.
- Harness the sun's infinite energy by ditching the dryer and using a clothesline instead.
- If you're in the market for new appliances, look for those with a label that shows their energy (star) rating. The greater the number of stars the higher the efficiency. Click [here](#) for more information.
- Ask your electricity provider about [GreenPower](#), a government accreditation program that enables utility companies to purchase renewable energy on your behalf. And no, it doesn't cost the earth. The price of offsetting your home's entire emissions equates to less than three cups of coffee per week.
- Consider getting a home [energy audit](#) to see where you can cut back.



Cut carbon emissions *continued*

Read our blogs about climate change:

- The psychology of climate change denial [LINK](#)
- The future is in our hands [LINK](#)
- The earth is full [LINK](#)

Hear environmental crusader, Earth Hour National Manager and founder of the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, **Anna Rose** present on the topic at *Happiness & Its Causes 2014*. Her session is called *Personal story: I can change your mind about climate change*.

Anna made headlines around the country when she featured on the 2012 ABC documentary [I Can Change Your Mind on Climate](#) and is the author of the book *Madlands: A Journey to Change the Mind of a Climate Sceptic* (MUP, 2012).

On Earth Hour's agenda for 2014 is the urgent need to protect the Great Barrier Reef from the impacts of climate change. A new report, *Lights Out for the Reef*, released for Earth Hour's 2014 re-launch highlights the latest scientific findings on climate change impacts on the Reef.

On Saturday 29 March, Earth Hour invites Australians to host friends and family at their homes or join a community gathering to watch a remarkable, world-premiere Earth Hour documentary about the Reef and climate change, before turning off their lights at 8:30pm to make a stand for the reef.

50 organisers of the most unique and inspiring events will be selected to take part in Camp Earth Hour in May this year – an opportunity to meet with leading scientists, learn about the effects of climate change on the Reef and be trained in what they can do to make a difference.

If you haven't already, note the date and time in your calendar: 8.30pm 29 March and register your Earth Hour gathering at www.earthhour.org.au.





Use water wisely

Look at a world map and you can be forgiven for thinking there's a lot of water. In fact, very little of it is available for us to use. Most of the fresh water is locked away in ice caps, less than one percent is in the ground and a miniscule 0.3 percent occurs in rivers and lakes, the sources humans depend on the most.

Unfortunately, this hasn't stopped us wasting and polluting our most precious resource. As a result, water scarcity looms as one of this century's greatest threats. The [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development](#) predicts that by 2050 when it's estimated the world population will be nine billion people, about half that number will live in areas of severe water stress.

The good news is our own water conservation efforts right now can make a difference.

- If there's room, install a rainwater tank. The average 2,000 litre capacity rainwater tank can save up to 26,000 litres of water each year, even more (up to 59,000 litres) if it's plumbed in for internal uses such as clothes washing or toilet flushing.
- Only machine wash with a full load. Even one less load a week will save around 120 litres of water. Generally front loaders are more water efficient than top loaders. Over one year, front loaders use around 3,000 litres less than top loaders.
- Replace your standard single flush toilet with a dual flush system and you could save up to 90 litres a day.
- Save up to 30 litres a day by repairing leaks in and around your home. For difficult to find leaks, contact a plumber with leak detection services.
- Showers and baths account for 25 percent of all water used in an average home. Limiting your showers to two minutes or less will save around 24 litres of water each day.



Use water wisely *continued*

- Don't waste water while you wait for the hot tap to warm up. Keep a bucket handy to catch the water and use it on indoor plants or in the garden.
- If you're using an older style showerhead, you could be using more water than you need to. Installing an efficient showerhead can save you up to 18 litres of water a minute.
- If building your dream home, locate the hot water system and bathrooms, ensuites, laundry and kitchen as close to each other as possible. This reduces initial plumbing costs and saves water and energy by reducing the flushing of cold water from hot water taps.





3

Drink coffee and eat chocolate with a conscience

Our love affair with **coffee** is a relationship that started with the first serious influx of Italian and other European immigrants to our shores beginning in the 1950s. These days we guzzle a lot of the stuff, almost three kilograms per person per year.

Unfortunately our daily hit comes at a cost to the planet. Thanks to market demands, coffee is no longer grown by traditional means under a shaded canopy of trees but rather in plantations with no forested canopy. This has led to the use of chemical fertilisers and loss of biodiversity.

Choose coffee from shade-grown beans that haven't necessitated the destruction of habitat for native animals and insects. That way, you can drink your cup with a clear conscience. Reusable cups are another way to stem the environmental damage associated with caffeine consumption.

Eating **chocolate** has long been associated with feelings of guilt although most of us are worried more about its impact on our waistline than on the environment. Yet rainforest destruction and species loss are just some of the problems associated with producing this delicious pleasure.

Although it's possible to grow cacao well and sustainably in rainforests, doing so isn't as productive or profitable and can't meet consumer demand for cheap chocolate in developed countries. Consequently unsustainable cacao farming methods are used instead which rapidly degrade land and force farmers to clear more rainforest.



Drink coffee and eat chocolate with a conscience *continued*

Another problem is that chocolate often contains palm oil. The most threatened ecosystems by expansion of oil palm plantations are rainforests and peatlands which are cleared and drained to grow trees. This causes more greenhouse gases to be released into the atmosphere, as well as takes a gigantic toll on all the plants and animals that once lived in these ecosystems including rainforest dwelling orangutans, rhinos, tigers and elephants.

If you want to be part of the solution instead of the problem, buy chocolate that has [organic](#), [Rainforest Alliance](#) and/or [Fair Trade](#) certification. All are guarantees that your treat has been grown and produced sustainably.

Read our blog [Making a difference](#) about **Jane Goodall** and her efforts to make a difference which include almost constant travel around the world to raise awareness about the desperate plight of chimpanzees and other hominids (gorillas and orang-utans) whose rainforest habitat is being destroyed for all kinds of reasons including those described above.

Even better, hear this legendary primatologist, environmentalist and UN Messenger of Peace in person at *Happiness & Its Causes* 2014 where she will be presenting a session called *Sowing the seeds of hope*.





Take a walk

It's only in the last 50 years or so that we've stopped walking as much as we used to and started relying on the car. And what a difference that's made to our body shape. It's easy to see from archival photos and film footage that people overall used to be a lot skinner than they are now ... and healthier too.

Not any more. Today Australia is ranked as one of the fattest nations in the developed world with nearly 11 million Australians deemed to be obese or overweight and experiencing poor health and early mortality as a result.

But walking doesn't just help you lose weight. It's also great for the environment, especially when you consider the average Australian car travels 15,000km per year, emitting around four tonnes of CO2 into the atmosphere.

Commit to using your legs instead of your car for at least one of the short, regular journeys you make each week, such as to the train station or your corner shop. In fact, these small car trips tend to use a disproportionate amount of petrol and cause undue wear and tear so ditching them represents a financial saving as well.

But if you must drive and have lots of errands to run, aim to do everything you need to in one trip. This will save you petrol and time. Owners of older cars can also save on fuel by keeping tires properly inflated and changing oil and air filters regularly. Alternatively if you're looking to buy something new, compare the fuel efficiency of different makes and models and choose accordingly.



Take a walk *continued*

Follow traffic laws — your car burns less fuel when you drive slowly, obey the speed limit on highways and avoid idling. Most cars don't need to be 'warmed up' by idling before setting off. This simply wastes fuel. Start your car when you're ready to go. Once on the road, switch the engine off whenever your car is stopped or held up for an extended period of time. This will save you more fuel than is lost from the burst of fuel involved in restarting the engine.

Speaking of ditching the car, check out our blog [Tim Cope's excellent adventure](#) about Cope's epic journey from Mongolia to Hungary on horseback. We're thrilled Tim Cope will be regaling us with tales of his trip when he presents at *Happiness & Its Causes* 2014.





Buy less and reuse

We are gluttons when it comes to stuff. How many of us have possessions we never even use? Yet that doesn't stop us from buying even more things thanks the powerful influence of marketing and advertising.

Of course, the problem now is that we're consuming about 50 percent more resources than the earth is producing. By 2030, even two planets won't be enough. And yes, this is making a very big mess. Every year in NSW alone, more than two million tonnes of rubbish (stuff that's no longer wanted) ends up as landfill.

Drive around your neighbourhood just before a kerbside collection and it's incredible some of the household items people actually discard, many still in good nick. But even if they're not, whatever happened to fixing things? When we know how to care for and repair such items ourselves, we can dramatically reduce our consumption.

This doesn't mean you should despair if you're not handy. You can always search online for secondhand products. It doesn't matter what you're looking for, you can probably find it cheaply or for free from services like [craigslist](#) and [Gumtree](#). Don't forget garage sales, thrift stores and consignment shops either, all veritable treasure troves.

If what you're looking for isn't available secondhand and you must buy brand new, at least stop and think before you do. That way, you'll be less likely to proceed unless you genuinely need to. Also be prepared to spend more money for quality and longevity. There's nothing more wasteful than buying something fresh off the factory floor that within a short time breaks because it's a piece of junk.

Buy less and reuse *continued*

Some other easy ways to divest yourself of stuff:

- Borrow instead of buy. Libraries are an obvious place to start. They save money, not to mention the ink and paper that goes into printing new books.
- Share power tools and other appliances with neighbours. This saves money, frees up space in otherwise cluttered closets and garages and gives you a great excuse to connect with the people on your street.
- Look for new ways to reuse things. There are literally hundreds of web sites and magazines filled with incredible ideas for decor, crafts and so on. And if you don't need the finished product, present it as a gift or sell it.

Check out [The Story of Stuff](#), a short movie about the way we make, use and throw away all our stuff.

Read our blogs about the curse of too much stuff:

- May you blossom this Xmas [LINK](#)
- Less is more [LINK](#).

Also check out our '8 Steps to De-clutter Your Life' eBook [LINK](#).





Start composting

More than one third of all food produced worldwide is wasted. That's a shocking 1.3 billion tonnes per year, more than enough needed to feed the one billion malnourished people in the world. Not only that, unused food in landfill is one of the top sources of methane, a greenhouse gas that is 21 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

If we can't give it away to the starving, at the very least composting some of our unwanted food helps the environment by reducing solid waste and greenhouse gas emissions, and improving the structure and texture of the soil.

Compost is made with material such as leaves, shredded twigs, and kitchen scraps from plants (and also nitrogen-rich coffee grounds!) and is a great, low-cost source of organic fertilizer for your garden.

To learn more about the benefits of composting, don't miss vibrant change maker, landscape architect and *Gardening Australia* host **Costa Georgiadis** present his session *Growing happiness starts in the compost* at *Happiness & Its Causes 2014*.

Georgiadis is also the subject of our recent blog, [Putting the culture back into agri-culture](#), based on a talk he gave about the importance of school, community and backyard gardens.





Eat mindfully

Our sedentary lifestyle isn't the only reason we're fat. Our diets are also to blame. We're busy, time poor and distracted meaning often it's easier to shove a takeaway hamburger or processed cookie into our mouth rather than take the time to mindfully prepare and eat a meal made from good quality fresh ingredients.

Easier but what a toll eating this way is taking on our health, and the environment. The antidote is to eat mindfully, to acknowledge where food comes from and how it's made, and then when it reaches your plate, to focus on the dining experience itself. Not gulping down what's in front of you but instead savoring each mouthful, experiencing fully all the different textures, smells and tastes.

One obvious advantage of eating mindfully is that we derive much greater satisfaction with less food, so it helps prevent the risk of overeating. Another is that it transforms our attitude to grocery shopping. We start to care about the impact our purchasing decisions have on the environment, our health and animal welfare.

Put your money where your mouth is:

Buy organic. That way, you're supporting a method of farming that uses 45 percent less energy per unit of production than conventional farming. Organic farms also store more carbon in the soil than their counterparts, thereby keeping it out of the atmosphere.

Purchase from local farmers. This keeps money in the local economy as well as dramatically reduces the carbon footprint associated with food production. That garlic grown in China or can of lentils produced in Chile didn't just appear in the supermarket — it travelled many thousands of miles to get there and emitted tonnes of greenhouse gases along the way.

Join a food co-operative and help source food of your choice such as local, organic, sustainably and ethically produced items, as well as reduce packaging and waste — a lot of stock is available in bulk so you're encouraged to bring your own bags and bottles for packing.



Eat mindfully *continued*

Become vegetarian or at the very least eat less meat, to help with the problem of over-farming. It takes a little over seven kilograms of grain to produce less than one kilogram of meat. Each of those kilograms of grain takes considerable energy to produce, process and transport. Coupled with the fact an estimated 18 per cent of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions can be attributed to livestock production, it's obvious why meat production has a huge climate impact.

Choose your seafood wisely by only buying from global fish stocks that aren't over-exploited or fished right up to their limit. For guidance refer to [Australia's Sustainable Seafood Guide](#).

Read our blogs about mindful and ethical eating:

- Food in the hood [LINK](#)
- Food (not so) fabulous food [LINK](#)
- Stay local [LINK](#)

Check out these presentations by past speakers on a range of topics pertaining to food:

- Tim Sharp – The happiness diet [LINK](#)
- Chris Thornton – The brain, the mind and eating disorders [LINK](#)
- Simon Tedeschi & Matt Moran – The path to mastery [LINK](#)
- Paul Amminger – Food for your brain [LINK](#)
- David Gillespie – Eating your way to health and happiness [LINK](#)
- Dr Rosemary Stanton, Maggie Beer, David Gillespie, Dr Felice Jacka and Madonna King - Panel: We are what we eat [LINK](#)





Welcome wildlife

Australia is clearing away much more native vegetation than is being replanted or than is regenerating naturally. This takes a terrible toll on our wildlife. For every 100 hectares of bush destroyed, between 1,000 and 2,000 birds, among them parrots, honeyeaters and robins, die from exposure, starvation and stress. Mammals including wombats, wallabies and bandicoots also fare badly from land clearing, as do many other species.

The good news is you can do your bit to help displaced critters by making your backyard more wildlife friendly.



Create a frog pond: The best way to attract frogs is to find out what kind of habitat your native frogs like and try to recreate that in your yard. You can get information on native frog species from the [Australian Museum](#) or the [Department of the Environment](#). A word of warning: it's illegal to catch frogs from elsewhere and put them in your pond.

Keep stingless native bees: They're very low-maintenance, fascinating to watch little creatures that produce delicious honey, albeit in teeny amounts. Although it's illegal to take native bee nests from national parks and reserves, it may be possible to remove them from private land with the owner's permission. Otherwise you can buy hives from suppliers who sometimes rescue them from land about to be cleared for development.

Plant native species to attract native birds: If a bird knows it'll get fed and be safe from predators, it's more likely to visit. There are some tricks to encouraging native birds into the garden. They adore red and yellow flowers so keep that in mind when you're selecting plants. Reliable water encourages visits for a drink or a dip. Just remember birds like to be elevated so they feel safe. Also consider installing a nesting box as a bird feeder. But don't go overboard – only provide enough seed to attract birds, not make them reliant on you.



Detox your life

Over the past century, tens of thousands of chemical substances have been introduced into the environment, many as ingredients in products we use everyday such as those for cleaning the house. They enter air as emissions and water as effluent and wreak havoc on eco systems, fish, animals, and, of course, humans.

In fact, chemicals are so ubiquitous we're exposed to them even before we're born. Researchers have found up to 300 contaminants in the umbilical cord blood of newborn babies.

What's crazy is that even though experts suspect this cocktail of chemicals in our water, food, air and homes may be partially why some cancers, food allergies, asthma, arthritis and other health problems are on the rise, new chemicals are still being commercialised every day.

The size of this problem makes it seem positively daunting but there are things you can do to cut back on your chemical exposure.

Switch from the standard household cleaning products to cleaner and greener ones. These work just as well as the mass marketed ones which are full of toxic chemicals, some of which aren't even listed on the labels. You can also use basic ingredients you have around the house, such as vinegar instead of bleach, baking soda to scrub your stovetop and tiles, and washing soda to remove stains. Lemon is effective against most household bacteria.

Use plastics wisely as some contain Bisphenol A, which is linked to cancer and Phtalates, which are linked to endocrine and developmental problems. Avoid plastic food packaging (when you can). Don't microwave food in plastic containers. Choose baby bottles made from glass or BPA-free plastic. Avoid vinyl teethers for your baby. Stay away from children's toys marked with a "3" or "PVC." Avoid plastic shower curtains.



Detox your life *continued*

Avoid non-stick pans, pots, bakeware and utensils as Teflon contains perfluorinated chemicals which have been linked to cancer and developmental problems.

Replace toxic lawn and garden pesticides and herbicides with less harmful natural ones. The chemicals we use on our gardens may eliminate pesky snails and other pests and kill off weeds, but they also kill off those insects which are beneficial. Birds and other wildlife may be affected too.

Avoid toxic pest control and harmful pet-care products. Most tick and flea products contain active ingredients and solvents that might cause cancer in animals. We're also at risk of absorbing these chemical nasties every time we play with and pat our pets.

Seal (with a non toxic sealer) or replace particleboard walls, floors or cabinets which often contain formaldehyde, which can emit irritating and unhealthy fumes for decades. Avoid plywood, fiberglass, fiberboard and paneling.

Replace your skin care and personal products with less toxic and chemical free alternatives. Deodorant, toothpaste, cosmetics, hair products, nail polish and perfumes are often full of toxins.

Read our blog [Eco-parenting: growing greener children](#) about the harmful effects of chemicals on our children.





Join the movement

Together we can combat climate change and other environmental problems. Speak out and join forces with other concerned citizens working together to create a better future for our planet.

Here's how you can help:

Get educated. We live in an age of information where if you own a computer and have an Internet connection, you can access facts and figures about pretty much any subject. On that of climate change, check out up-to-the minute information provided by the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) and [The Climate Institute](#). You might find our resources page helpful too.

Make your voice heard. Demand the government do more to tackle and solve environmental problems. One way is to join organisations like [GetUp!](#) whose raison d'être is to hold politicians accountable on important issues. Whether it's sending an email to a member of parliament, engaging with the media, attending an event or helping to get a television ad on the air, members take targeted, coordinated and strategic action to effect real change.

Support and donate. Many organisations don't accept funding from governments or corporations; instead they rely on our goodwill and generosity to continue their work. This ensures they're in the best position to take action and confront those who are wrecking the planet. But if you don't have money to spare, you can always donate your time. Volunteering is rewarding on so many levels: you learn new skills, get great work experience, connect with like minded people, and best of all, feel like you're contributing to making the world a better place.

Donate to the Jane Goodall Institute Australia [here](#) and Anna Rose's Earth Hour [here](#).

Join the movement continued

Read our inspiring blogs about social change and environmental activism:

- ***How to convert potential to performance*** - about Dr Jane Goodall's global humane education program, Roots & Shoots which aims to graduate a generation of young people committed to solving social, environmental and animal welfare problems. [LINK](#).
- ***In their words: Anna Rose and Five principles of transformational activism*** - five ways the concept of transformational activism can be translated into the work that activists do. [LINK](#).
- ***Every little bit counts*** - Wangari Maathai explains why she dedicated her life to social change, a story she hopes will spur those of us listening to also take action. [LINK](#).

The Buddha said: *A jug fills drop by drop.* In the same vein, if each and every one of us commit to doing our little bit, the effect of our combined efforts can be seismic.



HAPPINESS & its causes

29 & 30 May 2014, Seymour Centre Sydney



Hear from some of the experts outlined in this eBook:

- Legendary environmentalist and primatologist, **Dr Jane Goodall**, is presenting *Sowing the seeds of hope* on Day 2 of the conference.
- Environmental crusader, **Anna Rose**, joins us on Day 2 with her personal story *I can change your mind about climate change*.
- **Michael Parker**, philosophy teacher and author will present *What's the right thing to do?* on Day 1 and will lead an interactive conversation with young people about a topical ethical dilemma.
- Adventurer, author and filmmaker **Tim Cope** will share his inspirational story on Day 2.
- **Costa Georgiadis**, vibrant change maker, landscape architect and TV host shares his passion for nurturing soil and the soul on Day 2 of the conference.

www.happinessanditscauses.com.au

Resources

VIDEO PRESENTATIONS FROM OUR CONFERENCES

- Prof Marc Cohen: Wellness, mindfulness and sustainability [LINK](#)
- Jane Hanckel: Eco-parenting and growing greener children [LINK](#)
- Natalie Houghton: How to convert potential to performance [LINK](#)

OTHER VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

- Dr Jane Goodall: What separates us from chimpanzees [LINK](#)
- Tim Cope : On the trail of Genghis Khan [LINK](#)
- Costa Georgiadis: Costa's philosophy [LINK](#)

BLOGS

- Happiness that doesn't cost the earth [LINK](#)
- It's time to change [LINK](#)

ORGANISATIONS/WEBSITES

- The Jane Goodall Institute Australia [LINK](#)
- Earth Hour [LINK](#)
- WWF Australia [LINK](#)
- Costa's World [LINK](#)
- Tim Cope Journeys [LINK](#)
- Happy Planet Index [LINK](#)
- Department of the Environment [LINK](#)
- SMH Environment News [LINK](#)
- ABC Environment [LINK](#)
- CSIRO [LINK](#)
- Climate Action Network Australia [LINK](#)
- Climate Council [LINK](#)
- Life Edited [LINK](#)
- National Geographic [LINK](#)
- Ecological Footprint Calculator [LINK](#)
- Earth Day Network [LINK](#)
- Australian Conservation Foundation [LINK](#)
- Greenpeace Australia Pacific [LINK](#)
- Australian Centre on Quality of Life including the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index [LINK](#)



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