

Ten Things (... you can do today to protect our environment, stop global warming, improve your health, and make the world a safer place)



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At a recent conference I was on a panel with the imposing title, “Plan B: 4.0 Mobilizing To Save Civilization, The Climate Change, Resource Depletion and Environmental Solution”. At the end, the moderator asked the following fabulous question: ***What 10 things could we do that would make a massive difference in personal and environmental health?***

We scientists tend to be far better at painting dystopian pictures of the future than offering solutions to guide individual action. But we must. This is my response. Please feel free to suggest additions and deletions.

1. **Drive less:** No invention has done more to destroy the planet than the car. From air pollution to global warming to ruptured communities to wars for oil, many of the world’s most pressing problems can be traced directly to its excessive use. Like any brilliant invention, the gas powered vehicle has an important role to play in our world, but the current patterns of use are enormously destructive and must change.
2. **Walk more:** This is more than just the flipside of driving less. Walking does more than just use less gas. It is exercise, meditation, time outside, and an activity that fosters community. We need to reinvent our oppressively auto-centric, walker hostile sprawl and demand planning and zoning that encourages this.
3. **Eat less or no meat:** Our modern agricultural system requires the equivalent of 10 calories of energy to produce one calorie of food energy. Growing genetically engineered, herbicide resistant corn to feed abused animals, so that we can eat Big Macs and increase our risk of heart disease and colon cancer is just a bad system all around. Eat beans. They’re good for your heart. And your planet.

4. **Eat organic:** We don't understand the combined effect of the soup of pesticides found in conventional foods. We do know that they are probably not good for the environment. In fact, they may be responsible for a massive die off of the bees that keep the whole system working. Organic agriculture is healthier for the planet and probably healthier for you.
5. **Slow down:** We live at light speed. Find ways to slow down from time to time. In particular, spend time in nature. We are small. Slowing down allows you to live and takes less energy.
6. **Question technology:** We love our iToys and with good reason. They are miraculous expressions of human ingenuity. But they come at us and, especially, at our children too fast. We need to understand the many ways they can effect our physical, mental, and social health. Ask the questions that no one else wants to ask.
7. **Reimagine the future:** Sustainability is inevitable. It is a simple law of physics. We do have some control over what it will look like and how we get there. If we stay on our current course, sustainability will be ugly and getting there will be cataclysmic. It will take all of our collective wisdom to make anything approaching a soft transition. The first step is reimagining the future. Do it yourself and demand your political leaders do it too.
8. **Study science:** Powerful financial interests have no qualms about manipulating science to further profits. Our best weapon is wisdom and understanding. Demand basic scientific understanding of your political leaders, your schools, and, most of all, yourself.
9. **Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Recycle:** This old adage was never more true. Waste is the enemy.
10. **Raise wise children and grandchildren:** The wise and wonderful Wendell Berry once wrote "[an exceptional man] knows that the world is not given by his fathers, but borrowed from his children." The world we trash is our children's. Remember them in every action. To love your children is to teach them well and prepare them for ownership.

Source: <https://ehtrust.org/ten-things-you-can-do-today-to-protect-our-environment-stop-global-warming-improve-your-health-and-make-the-world-a-safer-place/>