

Ask EcoGirl

By Patricia Dines

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Creating Your Personal Earth Action Plan

Dear EcoGirl: Suddenly green information is everywhere, and I try to do what I can, but I'm so busy. How can I prioritize my actions for the earth? Signed, *Focusing in Paso Robles*

Dear Focusing: I'm delighted that so many mainstream periodicals are finally catching "green fever." Hopefully the planet will benefit!

Still, it can be a little overwhelming to hear about environmental issues in so many fragmented pieces. With scattered tips, celebrity stories, and ad claims galore, it can sometimes seem like green is just one more obligation to fit into our already-stuffed schedules.

So, rather than give you yet another list of possible actions, **I want to try something different today and encourage you to step back and uncover your own personal approach to this topic.** I think this will help you both prioritize and feel more excited about the impact you can have.

Your Four Key Questions

I invite you to find a quiet moment, alone or with a friend, and write your answers to these questions. They'll form the basis of your ongoing Personal Earth Action Plan.

(1) GRATITUDE: "How does the earth bless my everyday life?" Feel the joy of remembering the many beautiful ways that the earth is the foundation of our daily lives. Through nature's magical processes, we get air to breathe, food to eat, children to love, warming sunshine, nurturing rains, countless delightful experiences, and indeed the mystery of life's journey at all. Sometimes crises can help us recognize what's most valuable. I invite you to simply feel the earth's blessings.

(2) VISION: "What change in the earth's condition do I most want to see?" Allow yourself to connect to your heart's dreams. Which earth cri-

ses do you most hope will shift positively in the coming years?

Perhaps you want to see global warming reversed, avoiding the effects of rising sea levels and disrupted weather patterns. Or maybe you want the richness of the world's diverse creatures and cultures to be preserved. Perhaps you have fond memories of family fishing trips and want that for your child too. Or maybe you feel the nurturing wisdom and solace of intact wilderness and want to retain this essential balm for our aching souls.

Write down or draw your positive vision, and hold it as your inspiration and starting point. Feel the pleasure of remembering how much you care!

(3) FRAMEWORK: "In what ways would I love to weave earth action into my daily life?" Even if you're already including the earth in your actions, step back and imagine what form you'd most love this to take. You don't have to be passive to others' suggestions. Identify what sounds fun and rewarding to you!

For instance, do you want to create new activities or adjust your current ones? Increase your socializing or your time alone? Be indoors or out? What gifts or resources would you like to offer, whether practical, creative, or mystical? What needs do you have, such as saving money?

You can reclaim your power around this topic, even with just a few hours a month. Remember that our actions together truly will affect what is to come. The more of us who do our part, the more that real change happens. Everyone's unique contributions are needed!

(4) IMPLEMENTATION: "What are some tangible ways that I can act for my vision?" With this new perspective, seek and gather action ideas that

serve both the earth and your life. There are many options available. Prioritize those most meaningful to you.

You can get input through newspapers, magazines, friends, talks, the Internet, and brainstorming. Look for ways to add green to what you already do at home, work, school, and play. Consider how to refurbish what you have or buy used before buying new. Save money and resources by weatherizing your home and carpooling. Use cloth napkins and towels instead of paper ones.

Remember that you're not alone in your love for the earth. Connect with others who also care about the planet, for mutual encouragement. Share green activities like gardening or beach cleanup with children and friends. Find groups working on your key issues, then support them with your time and money, to help amplify their results.

As you go along, pause periodically and feel the satisfaction that comes from honoring the earth by ensuring that its systems continue. And keep your Personal Earth Action Plan handy, to help remember and refine your vision and priorities. Also please share with me how this approach works for you. I hope that it helps people joyfully co-create our culture's timely transformation.

Ask EcoGirl is written by Patricia Dines, Author of The Organic Guides, and Editor and Lead Writer for The Next STEP newsletter. Email your questions to <EcoGirl@AskEcoGirl.info> for possible inclusion in future columns. View past columns at <www.AskEcoGirl.info>. Also contact EcoGirl for information about carrying this syndicated column in your periodical. "EcoGirl believes that everyone can be a superhero for the planet. Then she shows you how!"

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