

Ask EcoGirl

By Patricia Dines

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Constructively Channeling Your Inner Eco-Rebel

Dear EcoGirl: I know that I should be doing more for the earth, but I just don't seem to get around to it as much as I'd like. What's wrong with me? *Signed, Feeling Guilty*

Dear Feeling Guilty: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to explore a topic of great interest to me: why folks act and don't on today's essential eco-issues.

I absolutely understand some of the most common reasons for inaction, such as feeling too busy, needing to prioritize, and not knowing where to start.

However, another fascinating reason that I see is people's "inner rebel," the two-year old inside who responds to obligations with crossed arms and a loud "I don't wanna and you can't make me!"

But that rebellious side can also help us take action, when we realize that our health and future are being stolen each time our shared ecosystems are disabled.

So I encourage you to sidestep any dynamics of "should" and resistance. Instead find your personal eco-passions and priorities, so that you can act for the environment in ways that excite you, matter to you, and enhance your life.

Your Steps to Freedom

1) Understand your key motivators

To help you identify what nudges you to act or not, mark the sentences below that resonate with how you feel when considering eco-action.

- I'm glad to know about things that I can do for the earth.
- I hate to read about a problem without a solution.
- I don't want to have to figure it all out myself.
- I feel too busy to take on one more thing.
- I don't know where to start or what

will make a difference.

- I don't like being told what to do.
- It's too painful to face what we're doing to the earth.
- Eco-problems are so negative; I need only positives in my life.
- Most action ideas are stupid and won't work.
- I don't think anything we do can make a difference.
- It'll probably work out OK whether we act or not.
- Nature can take care of herself.
- Human survival is more important; we don't need nature.
- There's no eco-emergency; it's all lies.
- Other: _____

2) Identify practical solutions

Now you can use your motivators list to identify approaches that match your needs. For example:

- **If you're not sure what to do**, look for actions that fit your life. Believe me, there's no shortage of choices.
- **If you feel overwhelmed by how many options there are**, set your personal priorities. Perhaps start with what's easiest for you (such as donating money, shopping differently, or inspiring friends to act). Or prioritize actions you think will be most effective. Or act in arenas that matter most to you, such as protecting your children's future or preserving the world's creatures.
- **If you feel too busy**, look for eco-actions that also serve your other needs and priorities, such as helping you save time and money, be healthier, reduce health care costs, have fun with your kids, create a new career path, or make new friends.

3) Explore emotional shifts

If practical approaches don't work, it can be useful to explore the emotional realm. For instance:

- **If you're skeptical that we can really make a difference**, are you really sure that that's true? And are you really just going to roll over that easily to those negative outcomes?

For me, even when I question if we can have an impact, my bottom line is that we don't know the future, and I don't want to be on my deathbed in a Mad Max world thinking I might've done more to soften the blow.

- **If your inner rebel says something like, "You people are all stupid and doing it wrong,"** then I'd answer, "Great, then lead in doing it better!"

We need many people trying different approaches for us to be successful in taking on these life-threatening challenges. So create what makes sense to you. Perhaps others will like it too.

4) Balance passion with grounding

Even as you get fired up, also stay balanced by taking care of your well-being, listening to various viewpoints, and supporting others in also giving their unique gifts to the project.

I hope that these ideas help you find eco-actions that passionately inspire you. Please feel free to share with me what you discover — and create.

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 about going green to <EcoGirl@AskEcoGirl.info> for possible inclusion in future columns. Also see "Ask EcoGirl" on Facebook! And contact EcoGirl for information about carrying this syndicated column in your periodical. "EcoGirl: Encouraging the eco-hero in everyone."

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