

Ask EcoGirl

By Patricia Dines

EcoGirl@AskEcoGirl.info



Organizing for Eco-Success

Dear EcoGirl: I have ideas for being more green, but I'm not acting on them as often as I'd like. Do you have any suggestions? *Signed, Good Intentions*

Dear Good Intentions: Thanks for your great question. I certainly understand! A technique that works for me when I'm not moving forward on my goals is to ask myself these three questions:

- 1) **INTENTION:** What is my goal and what's the benefit of achieving it?
- 2) **PLANNING:** What information or analysis do I need to move forward?
- 3) **ACTION:** What are some possible next steps I can take to make this intention real?

Writing down my answers helps me clarify my real priorities, stay inspired by my aspirations, and integrate key actions into my do-list and daily routine.

Here are two examples of how this process can help you achieve your priority eco-goals.

Example Intention: Properly dispose of household discards, to minimize waste and protect ecosystems.

Planning: Find out your local waste service's sorting rules. Sonoma County residents with pickup service will sort items into three main categories: recycling (which goes in the blue can), yard and vegetative food waste (green can), and garbage (black can).

Action: Setup a system to make proper disposal easy for you, your family, and guests. If you increase your recycling rate, you'll reduce your garbage, trim your impact on the earth, and maybe even be able to shift to a cheaper trash service. As an example, this is my setup:

- I have two cans under my sink, labeled "Recycling" and "Garbage/Landfill." This might sound obvious, but I know folks without this system,

which makes recycling harder in their house.

You can download a sign showing what goes in the recycling at www.unicycler.com/go_green/recycle.

- I have a third bin under my sink for special disposal items such as depleted batteries. Then they're all in one place when I'm ready to drop them off.

- Food waste is a large component of our shared waste stream, so I gather my vegetable scraps in a 32-ounce yogurt container next to my sink, then put them into my worm composting bin. (You can also toss them in the green can.)

- I also have an area in my garage where I collect giveaway items. I periodically pull things from there to give to friends, drop at a thrift store, sell on Craig's List, or even offer at a yard sale.

Example Intention: Make full use of blank paper brought into the house.

Planning: Observe what blank paper comes into your home, then setup systems to use it at various stages.

Action: For instance, here's my paper flow:

- I bring in as needed reams of printer paper (recycled, of course).

- I print multi-page documents double-sided. Some printers and copiers offer automatic duplexing; look for this when you buy equipment. My printer doesn't do this, so my process is to print page one (or the odd numbered pages), place these in the paper tray, then print page two (or the even numbered pages).

- I have a stackable tray on top of my printer where I place waste paper that has printing on only one side. Then I use these to print one-sided draft pages.

- If a one-sided page is too damaged to go through the printer, I cut it into quarters and put it in my note paper

bin, ready to jot down phone call notes.

- When my note paper bin gets too full, I staple clumps into pads, keep them in the front hall, and offer them to guests. Thankfully, they appreciate the gift!

- Only after all these uses do my paper discards go into my office recycling bin.

- Scrounger alert: I know more than one person who gets excited seeing other people's one-sided paper discards, which they snag for their in-house systems. Paper for free, yay!

...

OK, so now it's your turn. What eco-intentions currently excite you, and how can you use the above model to make them a reality? I bet that this approach will help you move forward too!

I hope that this also demonstrates just how straightforward this process can be, and that you don't have to do exotic or expensive things to nurture the planet.

I invite you to share with me the systems you figure out for implementing green. I love swapping ideas with compatriots. Questions are welcome too!

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."

© Copyright Patricia Dines, 2010. All rights reserved.

Published in the *Sonoma County Gazette*, May 2010.

For more Ask EcoGirl columns, see www.askecogirl.info