

Ask EcoGirl

By Patricia Dines

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Connecting With Your Eco-Passion

Dear EcoGirl: I'm wondering how I can include nurturing the earth in my New Year's resolutions — and actually follow through with my good intentions! *Signed, Procrastinator*

Dear Procrastinator: Thank you for your great question. Yes, the new year often brings both the urge to make life changes *and* the discouraging inertia of old habits reasserting themselves.

So how do we actually convert our impulses into lasting new realities? For over 15 years, I've been exploring that question regarding eco-issues, because I feel that making new habits is a vital part of steering us away from eco-disaster.

Writers often motivate folks on these issues using fear and shame, but I feel that this soon becomes draining. Instead, I've been exploring ways to invite people to discover the fun, inspiration, and satisfaction that eco-action can bring.

So here are some specific approaches that I find more effective at eco-motivating both myself and others.

1) Articulate your deeper reasons for acting for the earth. Let go of the guilt-based feeling that you "should" be doing more for the planet and replace it with an understanding of why you actually *do* care. Perhaps it's because you savor the nourishment of being in nature, love the earth's creatures, want a saner world for your children, or know that our survival depends on the planet. Centering in your personal motivations increases your odds of follow-through!

2) Connect your eco-mission to your current personal or business goals. This is a quick and easy way to integrate eco-action into your life. Remember that whatever you care about really does depend on the earth's well-being! Here are some example priorities and ways you might add eco-dimensions to them.

• **Money and work.** Look for ways that eco-ideas can help you save or

earn money. For example, you can bring eco-principles into your business to cut costs, create new markets, and better serve customers. Or you might trim household expenses by increasing your home's energy efficiency. (Sonoma County's SCEIP program can help with financing; see www.sonoma-countyenergy.org.)

• **Health.** Eco-information can offer you great techniques for improving your health. For instance, you might reduce toxics in your home, eat local and lower on the food chain, and take nature walks with family and friends.

• **Children.** Parents and other caregivers can cultivate a lifelong love of nature in children, thus nurturing both the children's individual lives and the earth they'll inhabit. So look for ways to include kids in everyday eco-activities, from setting up a home recycling system to helping with a beach cleanup event.

• **Friends and social life.** A fun way to bring more relationship vitality into your life is to connect with others who also love the earth. So consider checking out eco-events or volunteering your time and skills to support local nonprofits.

3) Explore how eco-action can help you achieve your bigger-picture life objectives. For instance, it can help you:

• **Feel empowered instead of hopeless.** Action truly is the best antidote for despair. Some people only complain about the world and consider change impossible, but others roll up their sleeves and start making things better. I notice that hanging out with the latter folks really cheers me up!

• **Increase your passion, creativity, and aliveness.** Beyond our culture's cynical boredom and busyness, there's a world of people creating delightful new ideas, technologies, and projects for a better future. By learning about and supporting their work, you can

find your own passion and creativity stirred.

• **Embody being a responsible and caring person.** There's something magical that happens when we actually walk our talk by treating the earth and other cultures with respect. It makes us feel better about ourselves and our lives! One wonderful resource to assist on this path is www.ARCworld.org, a network of world religions taking environmental action to preserve sacred creation.

So I hope that this gets you excited about the many ways you can joyfully integrate the earth into your everyday life. **To get started, consider where you are now.** What do you already do and care about, and how can you bring (more) eco-action into that? What do you want more of in your life and how can eco-ideas help with that? There are lots of ways to make a difference — and have fun doing it!

For more specific action ideas, see my column archive on my website. Also, I'm excited to announce that my helpful eco-booklets are now at Santa Rosa's Community Market. For other locations, booklet titles, and ordering information, see www.askecogirl.info/booklets.html.

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.

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