

Ask EcoGirl

By Patricia Dines

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Is There Hope For The Planet?

Dear EcoGirl: Seeing all the eco-crises in the world makes me feel discouraged. Is there really hope, or is an early death for the earth just inevitable? *Signed, Disheartened*

Dear Disheartened: Thanks for your great question, which I'm sure others share. **My simple answer is that, yes, the situation is dire, but I also see reasons for hope and believe that better outcomes are always possible.**

But these better possibilities aren't static external abstract things that someone else will do for us or occur on their own. They'll happen to the extent that we take action.

A Range of Future Scenarios

I also want to advise against collapsing the future into a passive either-or assessment. I say this because:

1) Forcing ourselves to choose between hope-or-death scenarios discourages us from acting and takes away our power to make a difference. If I tell you, "There's hope," you can easily think, "Oh good, it's not that serious, others are taking care of it, and I can get back to my ordinary life." On the other hand, if I say, "There's no hope," you'll likely wonder, "Well, then why should I waste my energy trying to save the planet? Why not just party and enjoy what's left while I can?" Thus, either answer can become just another justification for not addressing our cumulative harm.

2) The future hasn't happened yet! We can make predictions based on current trends, and, yes, we live within physical reality's rules. But there are still a wide range of possible outcomes. The ones that happen are the ones we empower.

3) The earth isn't one system but a wide range of complex systems, each in various states of well-being or dysfunction. So, instead of the

world's fate being binary survival-or-collapse, it's more likely that different parts of the earth will get better or worse, depending on what we do.

Thus we'll collectively determine if our weather keeps getting wonkier, destroying more lives and towns, or if it starts restabilizing; if species continue disappearing and fisheries dying, or if they start repopulating; if agriculture keeps poisoning people, risking global monocrop failures, and increasing conflict among starving people, or if we broadly adopt earth-friendly practices; and so on with each eco-issue. Our cumulative actions are what creates the future!

The Benefits of Constructive Action

OK, you might ask, but what if we still fail? Wouldn't we have wasted our efforts? My answers to this are:

1) I personally don't want to be in the midst of future suffering and wonder if I could've done more to change the outcome. I want to know that I truly did all that I could. So, consider yourself in a damaged future world. What will you wish you'd done now? Some things just can't be fixed later.

2) Acting for the earth can benefit us personally. For instance, we can create a healthier world for our children, save money, build business opportunities, and nurture the kind of personal growth that only comes when we face our fears and embrace the challenges of our times.

I also find that caring for and connecting with the earth brings a profoundly healing calm, awakening our body's deep native wisdom as we stand up for what really matters. Doesn't that feel so much better than just letting Mother Earth die without even trying to stop it?

3) I think an eco-wise world would be much more fun! In contrast to the

Mad Max dark future that'll emerge if we keep doing what we're doing, the eco-wise path looks lush with increased health and joy for all. Today we just accept that so many people fall ill from toxics and pollution, starve from lack of resources, fight over oil, and have no access to nature's nourishing delights. But wouldn't it be great if we turned that around and saw fewer people suffer and more be healthy and safe? These are just some of the potential silver linings hiding in today's storm clouds.

4) Our culture is going to change, one way or another. The question isn't if we'll align with nature's ways, only if we'll be forced to do so through painful and lethal crises, or if we'll proactively and gracefully transition by making smart choices now, when they're easier, cheaper, and possible. Luckily, we have many allies around the world also working for a saner future. We're not alone in this quest.

So — the fate of the earth is at stake. Isn't that what mobilizes superheroes to act?

For lots of specific action ideas, see www.askecogirl.info and www.facebook.com/AskEcoGirl.

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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