

## Talking Sustainability

As parents we learn from each other. We learn more about parenting by sharing ideas with each other. We get ideas for colleges or how to handle a child who does not complete homework assignments from talking to each other. We listen and learn from these suggestions with the hopes that we will be able to help our children into the future. It is time to bring environmental sustainability into our conversation about parenting. These issues can no longer be regulated to the sidelines. There should be no embarrassment in speaking out and making changes in how one raises their children. We all gain and our children gain when we learn to take new actions. When we share ideas and model environmentally sustainable behavior we make it easier for others to join in. It is okay to talk about carpooling, or share ideas about where to buy locally grown produce; it is okay to work with other parents to limit the amount of party favors and extra stuff at the next celebration. It is okay to take action.



<http://www.greenchildmagazine.com/raising-tomorrows-sustainable-leaders/>



## **Reduce, Recycle and Reuse Paper**

Here are some more ideas for creating a more sustainable household. Of course recycling paper is an important step in living a more sustainable lifestyle, but it is not the only one. To complete the cycle we need to also use and purchase recycled paper. Buying recycled paper helps to create a market for the used paper. Recycled paper is just as good as paper made from virgin materials. It works just as well in printers and copiers. It is easily available. While the cost may be slightly higher, it is a small price to pay for doing the right thing. You will have the most impact if you buy the paper with the highest percentage of post-consumer recycled content. When we conserve paper we are doing more than reducing the number of trees that are cut down we are also conserving water, soil, using less chemicals, fuel, and preserving habitats

Besides using recycled paper there are other actions we can take to use less paper. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

Do I really need to use this paper?

Can I double side my copies?

Is there a way to use email?

Can I use scrap paper instead of a new sheet of paper?

Can I use half a sheet instead of a whole sheet?

What can I do at my place of business to reduce our paper consumption?

[http://wwf.panda.org/how\\_you\\_can\\_help/live\\_green/fsc/save\\_paper/office\\_paper/](http://wwf.panda.org/how_you_can_help/live_green/fsc/save_paper/office_paper/)

## Our Footprints on the Earth



A carbon footprint is a way to evaluate one's impact on the environment by measuring the total amount of greenhouse gases that are produced to maintain one's lifestyle. It is these gases that are changing the earth's climate.

1. The **primary footprint** is a measure of our direct emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> from the burning of fossil fuels in our everyday life, such as when we drive a car or turn on a light. We have direct control of these.
2. The **secondary footprint** is a measure of the indirect CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the life cycle of products we use. To put it very simply – the more we buy the more emissions will be caused on our behalf.

We can make many positive changes in our lifestyle that lower our carbon footprint. One way to is to buy carbon offsets. By supporting projects that lower carbon emissions you compensate for the carbon your lifestyle produces. For example the average family of 4 produces 25 tons of carbon a year. By donating to a project such as a small scale windmills for a family farm that takes out 3 tons carbon you are offsetting some of your carbon footprint. There are two important things to keep in mind for carbon offsetting to have a real positive impact. Each of us must continue to make changes in our own lifestyles. A carbon offset is not an excuse to increase our carbon output. Also be sure the project you are funding would not have happened without your support. Two good organizations for purchasing a carbon offset are

Native Energy <http://www.nativeenergy.com/>

The Nature Conservancy

<http://www.nature.org/initiatives/climatechange/activities/art23932.html>

## Having Less Stuff

Solving environmental problems does not only depend on high tech solutions. Significant improvement can be made by simply conserving resources. Any step in the right direction is better than no steps. On a daily basis there are opportunities for all of us to be conservers not consumers. When we act in this manner we are living with the natural world instead of against the natural world.

Every day we use stuff, lots of stuff. Creating that stuff takes water, fossil fuels, chemicals, and other resources. Be mindful of the subtle pressure from advertising and your peers that try to convince you need more stuff. Look for ways to use less stuff. Ask yourself some of these questions:

Do I really need to buy that?

Is there a way I can make do without that?

Can I give my children time instead of material goods?

Is new really better?

Can it be fixed instead of replaced?

Am I taking care of my stuff so I don't have to buy new stuff?



Follow the 50% rule. If we use things twice as long usual before buying a new one we would save a tremendous amount of resources. For example: Instead of buying a new television the current one can last 50% longer. Remember any actions you take are an act of blessing towards the planet.

<http://www.becomingminimalist.com/minimalism-benefits/>



## Greening your Holidays

During the holiday season faith and family are easily overwhelmed by commercialism and consumption. It is easy to fall prey to the message of more is better.

This time year can be an opportunity to create some new traditions that simplify the holiday season into a more meaningful and environmentally responsible experience. Think about and decide what you and your family truly want to get out of the holidays. What memories do you want to give your children? What traditions do you want to begin? What tasks create stress? How can you make it all simpler? Talk to your family and explain what you are trying to do. Share your ideas with friends and family. Ask yourself do I really need to buy this, do I really need to do this?

### Here is of some greener gifts:

- Give someone the gift of time by taking on a chore around the house
- Give the gift of your talents by teaching a new skill
- Give an activity by taking them somewhere fun
- Give a homemade gift
- Give a donation
- Give less stuff
- Give products made in an environmentally responsible way

### Here are some family activities to try:

- Visit a nature center, museum or park
- Take a walk in the woods or on the beach
- Become involved on a community service project
- Give a gift to the environment by changing something in your house to make it greener
- Make a project of sorting through and giving away toys, clothes and other products around the house that are no longer being used.

Even if you do not make wholesale changes, even if all you do use less wrapping paper you are taking step in the right direction.

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/sustainvu/resources/greening-guides/sustainable-holiday-greening-guide/>

<http://www.becomingminimalist.com/why-fewer-toys-will-actually-benefit-your-kids/>

## Greener Cars

What does benzene, cadmium, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, particulates and sulfur dioxide have in common? They are all coming out of our cars every time we drive. These chemicals have a direct effect on our personal health and health of the planet. Driving a car has the largest negative impact on the environment of anything else we do. The EPA estimates that air toxins from vehicles account for half of all cancers attributed to outdoor sources of air pollution.

Since it is unlikely any of us are going to give up our cars completely there are still some things we can do.

### Drive less.

- Combine errands into fewer trips
- Have your child take the bus to school. The bus is coming to Friends Academy anyway and the more children on the bus the less pollution and congestion
- Arrange a carpool for drop off and pick up
- Public transportation really does make a difference



### Drive Better

-Do not idle: Ten seconds of idling uses more fuel than restarting your car.



- Drive smooth: Sudden starts and stops decrease your gas mileage.
- Don't speed, it is safer and uses less gas. Does it really matter if you get where you are going a few minutes faster?
- Regular tune-ups, clean air filters and spark plugs will help make your car engine run smoothly.
- Take the junk out of your trunk: Less stuff in your car makes your car lighter therefore using less gas.
- Inflate your tires: Keeping your tires inflated saves a huge amount of gas. If every -American drove their cars with properly inflated tires it would save 2 billion gallons of gas a year.

<http://www.nrdc.org/greengate/guides/driving.asp>

## Green Cleaning in Your Home



There is growing concern about of harmful chemicals in our lives. Ironically we bring a variety of chemicals into our homes with the cleaning supplies we use. However there are actions you can take to make your home safer. To get a sense of what is in the products just read the labels of household cleaners. Here are some simple ways to help lessen the amount of these chemicals in your home.

- A safe all-purpose cleaner can be made with one part vinegar mixed with one part water and a spoon full of biodegradable liquid soap.
- Hydrogen peroxide diluted with water in a spray bottle makes a great disinfectant cleaning solution, adding some lemon juice helps make it even more effective.
- Baking soda and water can be used as a mildly abrasive cleaner.
- By mixing 1 tablespoon of ammonia, 1 tablespoon of clear dishwashing liquid and 2 cups of water you have an all-purpose cleaner.
- Dish soap can be made from mixing  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup of liquid castile soap, 3 teaspoons of vegetable glycerin, 5 drops of tea-tree essential oil, 20 drops of lemon essential oil and 1  $\frac{1}{3}$  cups of water.

<http://home.howstuffworks.com/home-improvement/household-hints-tips/cleaning-organizing/buy-cleaning-supplies.htm>

## Five Great Books on Sustainability

The more we know the more we can help build a sustainable future. These books will help you better understand the state of the environment and provide ideas for viable solutions.

*Ecology* by Ernest Callenbach. University of California Press, 1998. Available on Kindle

A concise handbook that explains 60 ecological concepts that will help the reader understand the interrelationships that allow life on earth to exist. It takes an understanding of ecology to truly comprehend how environmental problems impact the earth.

*The State of the Earth, Environmental Challenges on the Road to 2100* by Paul K. Conkin. University of Kentucky Press, 2009. Available on Kindle

A well balanced and easy to understand explanation of the environmental problems facing our society. Besides covering topics such as pollution, water resources, climate change, population and over consumption Conkin provides background on ecological systems and environmental philosophies. Reading this book will give one a very good understanding of what is happening in the environment.

*Hope Beneath our Feet, Restoring Our Place in the Natural World* edited by Martin Keogh. North Atlantic Books, 2010 Available in Ibooks and Kindle

The desire to live an environmentally responsible lifestyle in our society is a challenge. This collection of essays from a variety of environmental activists and writers tries answering the question: "In a time of environmental crisis, how can we live right now?" Their answers vary and each one reminds us of the beauty that remains and the positive actions we can take to stay hopeful.

*Last Child in the Woods, Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* by Richard Louv Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005 Available in Ibooks and Kindle

The book is a powerful statement of the need for children to simply have more time outdoors. Time in nature provides children with experiences that help them become more well-rounded human beings and gives them the connections and understanding to become true stewards of the earth. When children have time to be in the outdoors it is a win-win situation for the child and for the natural world. Louv's new book, *The Nature Principle* focuses on the positive impact outdoor experiences have for adults.

*Common Wealth, Economics for a Crowded Planet.* by Jeffery Sachs, Penguin Publishing 2008 Available in Ibooks and Kindle

A serious look at what is happening to the planet focusing on climate change, over-population, poverty and the political stalemate that prevents solutions. What makes this book powerful is the detailed and pragmatic explanation for solving these problems. The plan would cost less than 3% of the world's annual income which begs the question why haven't we gotten started?



## Combating Ecophobia

With all the news of climate change, toxic chemicals, air pollution and other environmental problems children and adults can suffer from ecophobia, a term coined by writer, David Sobel. Ecophobia is the fear created by a focus on only environmental problems. Fear shuts children down and separates them from the wonder of the natural world. Instead of love for the earth there is the overwhelming feeling that nothing can be done. Especially for young children the focus should be creating a relationship with the natural world. Before we ask children to solve environmental problems we must give them the opportunity and support to find their connection to the earth. The problem is children spend less time than ever playing and exploring in the outdoors. A lack of time and places to go children limits their interactions with the natural world.

We need to give children the time, place and freedom to play in nature. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Turn off the screens and make you children go outside.
- Give them the chance to be bored as the first step in being creative
- Take walk with your children in a nature preserve
- Set up a bird feeder, a place to dig holes, look under rocks, and get dirty



- Let them make a secret place in the yard to hide out and get away
- Leave even a little of the yard wild and undisturbed

The most important action you can take to help the planet is to raise children that will live a life of stewardship. To live a life that speaks this testimony one must love the earth. Children learn to love not by fear but by connections.

<http://www.nwf.org/be-out-there/why-be-out-there/health-benefits.aspx>



### **Cutting Waste with Compost**

Compost may be filled with creepy crawling creatures, but it is a great way to reduce solid waste plus improve your lawn and garden. The average household produces 500 pounds of food waste a year, much of which can be easily composted. Any leftover fruits, vegetables, foods made from flour, even coffee grounds and eggshells can be composted.

Composting is a simple process. In the yard you will need a large bin to collect the food waste. There are a wide variety of bins that be purchased or built by hand. Once the bin is set up, simply dump the food waste in. To speed up the process throw in some dead leaves and turn on occasion. Besides that just let the decomposers do their work. In the kitchen you can have a small container to collect the compost until you bring it outside.

If only all our solid waste problems can be easily solved. Composting is also a great way for your family to see one of nature's most important cycles in action.

Food waste into soil it is magic



### **Cutting Packing Waste**

One look at our garbage tells the sad story of over-packaging. Take a look for yourself as you tie up the garbage bag. Imagine how many trees and gallons of oil you are throwing away. By reducing the amount of packaging you use by only 10% a year your carbon emissions lower by 1,200 pounds. The first step is shopping with reusable bags. Just keep them in your car to make it easier to remember. After using a reusable bag only 11 times you have saved energy compared to single use plastic bags. Another step is to buy more products in bulk. When making purchases consider the amount of packaging in your decisions. Look at the packaging you use and try reuse it for something else. Dissect your garbage and ask the question: What can I do differently? Be creative. Speak up to stores, restaurants and mail order companies and encourage them to have more sustainable packaging and tell them that the amount of packaging is part of your consumer decision making process.

<http://www.greenchoices.org/green-living/food-drink/packaging>



## **A Truly Green Lawn**

With spring comes lawn care and the opportunity to live a more environmentally sustainable lifestyle. Right now over 10 million pounds of pesticides are applied on Long Island every year. These vast amounts of fertilizers and water have a large environmental impact. Much of the fertilizer washes into waterways and ends up in the Long Island Sound. It then causes algae blooms due to the increase in nutrients. This leads to an increase in bacteria that decompose the algae when it eventually dies. The bacteria use large amounts of oxygen which harms fish and other marine life by creating dead zones where there is little oxygen.

There is an alternative: Organic lawn care is safer for the environment, easier, less time consuming and less expensive. Here are some simple techniques to use:

Let your grass grow to a height of 3-3.5 in. Longer grass encourages deeper root growth and shades out weeds. Cut your lawn with sharp mower blades. Dull blades leave jagged edges on the grass. This greater surface area makes the grass more vulnerable to disease. In addition you should leave the grass clipping on the lawn for mulch.

It is better to water less frequently but for longer periods of time. Every seven to ten days is best even longer if there has been a heavy rain. More damage can be done by over watering then by drought. Deep watering encourages deep root growth. With shallow watering roots are more susceptible to hot, dry weather.

Overseed your lawn with a fescue blend instead of a single grass species. This grass diversity helps the lawn survive in different conditions. The best time to seed is August-September and late April into May.



Keep your lawn aerated with earthworms and other soil life. A core aerator pokes holes in the lawn and allows water and air to get down further into the soil. Spreading a ¼ inch of compost or compost tea also helps provide nutrients, soil life and water.

If you use a landscaping service ask them to follow organic landscaping procedures even if it means a slight change in your image of the perfect lawn. It is the right thing to do.

[http://eartheasy.com/grow\\_lawn\\_care.htm](http://eartheasy.com/grow_lawn_care.htm)



## Eating Green

The livestock we eat release incredibly large amounts of methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more of a problem than carbon dioxide. To feed this livestock it takes 149 million acres of cropland, 167 million pounds of pesticides, and 17 billion pounds of nitrogen fertilizers. They produce 500 million pounds of manure, more than three times the waste produced by all the people in the world.

Environmental problems can feel overwhelming and taking action seems pointless, but the Jewish text, Pirke Avot reminds us that:

“It is not your responsibility to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it”

Some action is better than no action. Food shopping can be a stressful activity for someone trying to make ecologically responsible choices. Before we drive ourselves crazy keep in mind that any change starts with small steps. Doing this improves our health and the health of the environment, even if we only take these steps on occasion we are making a difference. It is that simple. We do not need to overhaul our entire diet, just take one meal at a time, slowly doing more and more. Eating less meat is one of the most effective and impactful actions any of us can take.

Here are some facts to consider from the non-profit Environmental Working Group

-Eating one less hamburger a week is the same as saving 320 miles of driving

-If your family has one less meat and cheese meal a week it is like taking your car off the road for 5 weeks

Here is some ways how:

1. Take one meal at a time
2. Buy right-size portions
3. Eat more plants
4. Eat lower fat meals
5. Eat organic meats

**EAT-LESS-MEAT**  
*for a sustainable future for all*

