



HER LEAD

BEING GREEN IN 2019

Everywhere you go people seem to be talking about the state of the environment. The news media seems bent on proclaiming the climate apocalypse, governments are scrambling to draft climate agreements and environmental reforms, and everyday citizens are discussing the value of a metal straw over a disposable one made of plastic. This can be daunting, and make it seem like an eco-friendly lifestyle can only be achieved if you live alone in the middle of the woods. However, being green is actually sweet and simple — it requires two ingredients: mindfulness and compassion for the planet. Being green is about going back to our roots, cultivating gratitude for the world we live in and finding simplicity in our hectic lifestyles.

I believe that with a healthy, thriving planet beneath our feet, change will come more easily than ever. In order to rally for equality and peace — and any other issues in between — we need the strong Earth beneath us so that we can stand tall and remain grounded in our beliefs. Learning to care for the environment is easier that it seems; it does not require living in a tiny house, subsisting on your own food supply, or throwing out every plastic item that you own. Being green in 2019 is about creating a paradigm shift; it requires crushing social norms in order to live your message. Being green may not come easily now, but it certainly will if you follow these five steps!

1

**DITCH THE PLASTIC!
IT'S TRASH.**

Plastic is all around us, from coffee cups to the outer shell of new cars, from our skincare products to plastic microbes hiding in water sources. Plastic is a formidable opponent and one that can be extremely difficult to escape. But, as the HERlead forum has taught us, change starts with one individual and grows into an entire movement. Ditching plastic simply takes practice. Instead of relying on Starbucks to supply you with a new plastic cup each time, bring your own reusable coffee cup, metal straw and water bottle. Carry your lunch in a glass or metal container with a bamboo utensil set to accompany it.

I love to carry around a metal tiffin as it is the perfect size and easy to transport. Using reusable items is a super simple solution to defeating plastic and they offer a great opportunity to share with others why you are making the decision to live a more eco-conscious lifestyle.

2

EAT ALL YOUR FRUITS AND VEGGIES!

The Earth and the farmers who cultivate crops supply the world with an abundance of perfect fruits and vegetables each year. However, food waste is one of the world's most significant problems. According to the UN FAO, about one third of produced food is either lost or wasted each year; fruits and vegetables are wasted the most! We can tackle this issue through conscious consumption on an individual scale by purchasing fresh food more frequently rather than stocking up and by consuming all that we purchase.

Additionally, food waste has a major carbon footprint. If "Food Waste" were a country, it would be the third largest carbon emitter, not to mention its partner in crime: meat. A 2016 Oxford study stated that cutting meat from our diets could effectively reduce emissions by 70%. I highly recommend adopting a vegetarian diet – if you are up for it, a vegan diet. Not quite ready to give up meat? The next best thing you can do for the environment, food-wise, is to eat a Mediterranean diet, which would simply mean eating meat only a few times a month. The less food wasted, and the less meat consumed, the better.

Next time you are making a plate for your next meal, make sure to take only what you know you will eat and substantiate your meal with mainly natural, organic ingredients.

3

PRACTICE MINIMALISM.

Minimalism is an intentional lifestyle to simply live with less, to live simply with only what you need. This movement has gained much traction amongst millennials and continuously provides the perfect room inspiration on Pinterest. As a practicing minimalist, I have found that living with less feels much better and helps me to be more mindful in my purchases. This lifestyle of a bare room with the mere essentials is not for everyone but there are some key values to be taken from this movement, namely quality over quantity.

Many objects are hastily purchased each year, items that we may never use or will simply toss out after a handful of uses. I could hit you with another statistic but with a simple statement I can confirm that excess purchasing is not good for the environment. Rather, it is much more valuable, and much more "green," to simply purchase what you need at a given moment. When buying a new item, I urge you to carefully consider a product's value and what it may or may not add to your life. In a minimalist fashion, opt for quality over quantity.

4

GET OUTSIDE!

I spend a lot of time with a group of my peers at the local Center for Climate Protection, discussing various environmental issues, news and potential solutions; however, we rarely spend time together in nature. My main inspiration for pursuing environmentalism is the Earth itself, so why don't we spend more time outside?

Modern life is characterized by quick or nonexistent breakfasts, speedy drives between activities and appointments, and little time to spend outdoors. Spending more time in nature will remind you why you are choosing to be eco-conscious.

It will be your main source of inspiration as you defeat unsustainable societal norms. By taking a nice walk instead of driving to the store, you will have a moment of silence in your otherwise chaotic life. By taking a bike ride with friends, you can collectively enjoy the beauty of the outside world, furthering your dedication to the health of the environment. A key foundation to living your values, and to pursuing your passions, is to stay true and connected to the root of the issue. Someone taking a stand for the environment will be unsuccessful if they spend all of their time indoors and do not connect with the issue placed in front of them. Stay grounded to your values and get outside whenever possible.

5

BE MINDFUL.

Each time I am outside I am reminded to stop and breathe. Nature has a way of making you pause and reflect, to simply inhale and exhale, to find gratitude in your life. I am truly grateful for these moments of silence in nature and actively try to remain mindful throughout all of my day. Mindfulness is the basis of "being green." It is the root of the tree, the foundation of a living being.

As an individual passionate about protecting the environment, you must be aware of the surrounding problems, and you must be mindful of your own interactions and impact on the issue. This takes dedication and time; it requires staying up-to-date on recent news and staying present in your own life. Being mindful means stopping to sort your garbage into trash, recycling and compost containers. It means staying true to your values as you discuss the topic with a person whose beliefs may be counterproductive to your cause. It means taking time to express gratitude for the environment around you and allowing that gratitude to fill you up with passion throughout the entire day. It means taking time to reflect on why you feel compelled to support this issue and actively practicing it throughout your day.

Passion is a practice. It requires adept attention to oneself and the issue at hand. The more you are mindful about being green, the more power you will find when standing up for your beliefs. The Earth makes it simple to find an abundance of gratitude; if you are mindful, you can tap into that source whenever needed.