

There are many ways we can use our human energy to lighten the load on natural resources and tread lightly on our home planet. Check how many of these you do already:

### 1. Recycle and re-use

Wherever possible, separate waste into compost material, bottles, tins, paper, clothing etc and make sure that these get recycled. See if your local council has a policy for recycling, food reclamation to fuel or even methane extraction from waste. If they don't - start one. Ask your neighbours to contribute to a local composting station.

"The UK has one of the worst recycling records in Europe (12.4%) compared with 64% in Austria, 52% in Belgium, 50% in Germany and 47% in the Netherlands. In the UK we bury 80% of our rubbish in landfills, compared to the Swiss who only landfill 7% of their rubbish." (The Observer 2004)

### 2. Shop locally or order a veg box

Give your local farmers a boost by buying direct - either by visiting farms, farmer's markets or through vegetable box schemes - which are usually organic. This saves transport costs in 'food miles' and guarantees, fresh, local, un-polluted and healthy, in-season food. Try and avoid supermarkets and shop locally when possible to enhance your own local micro-economy.

"The average household [in UK] spends £470 a year (or one sixth of its total food budget) on packaging. In a typical Asda or Tesco shopping basket only 26% of the cost is accounted for by food; the rest is packaging, processing, transport, store overheads, advertising and the mark-up of supermarkets which is sometimes as high as 45%." (National Farmers' Union)

### 3. Make more of your own food from fresh

Stop buying ready-meals and throw away your microwave. Take the time to make healthy, balanced and delicious meals and condiments from wholesome raw ingredients. Be like the French and live to eat - rather than eat to live ! Eating food is the only activity apart from sex that involves all of our senses.

### 4. Promote community exchange

If you can exchange skills, items or energy direct with other people without the use of money - this makes your activities more efficient. If you can share resources with people around you - then you don't have to earn so much to buy things and you don't have to work as much.

### 5. Improve local diversity of nature

See what you can do to provide the right ecosystems to promote local biodiversity. Bring butterflies, moths, birds, wild flowers and so on into your local environment by providing the resources they need.

### 6. Review domestic energy use

Check whether you can save energy by cutting down consumption or being more efficient. There are government schemes in the UK to help with heating efficiency and insulation. Even switching off at the plug at night saves power -those little red 'power on' lights add up to over £4 million of electricity used in the UK each year ! Look at how your home uses energy and where it can be saved, even if it means putting a jumper on occasionally.

### 7. Start a local investment scheme

If you want to save for a future - doesn't it make sense to invest in something you can see and

touch - like a local investment system that brings a return on your money and improves your own locality? Invest money where you can see what it is doing - and where you can lend a hand if needs be. Community companies, local co-operatives and credit unions are a growing resource for sustainable local investment. What better way is there than to invest your energy directly into your local micro-economy where you can cherish it?

#### 8. Use an ethical banking system

Just what does your money do when you invest it a bank? Do you invest in the land mines that blow off children's legs? Do you support armaments manufacturing, the over-exploitation of rainforests, globalised cartels intent on raping the planet? Does your default investment in a bank endorse child slavery and prostitution, international drug running and money laundering? Check the investment policies of your bank to see just where they are putting your energy as an investment. If you don't like what you see, at least consider using an ethical bank that might invest in things you want in the world. Even better - reach for a lifestyle that doesn't include a bank account at all.

Did you invest in this?

"Japanese physicist Professor Yagasaki calculated that the 500+ metric tonnes of depleted uranium (DU) that the US unleashed on Afghanistan was the radioactive equivalent of 51,875 atomic bombs of the size dropped on the Japanese city of Nagasaki. During the 2003 Gulf War the amount of DU used was the equivalent of 103,750 atomic bombs the size of that dropped on Nagasaki. DU fallout will travel from the Middle East to the UK, US and parts of Asia." (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War)

#### 9. Review car use and petrol consumption

The real price of petrol, if you apply economic principles to its production - that includes the time the earth has taken to make it - comes in at over £1 million per gallon. Its use produces awful chemical pollution and extreme noise. Most internal combustion engines run at an incredibly low efficiency (usually about 20%). The logic of having something that weighs over a ton to transport a single person defeats me. Yes, I know they're incredibly convenient compared to the alternatives and that many motors have cult status but - come on - there has to be a better way than this! Boy am I looking forward to hydrogen / oxygen fuel cells. Cycling is great!

#### 10. Start a local energy collective

Your roofs are a resource! Take a look at some of the rooftop energy panels available today. Chat with your neighbours about a collective approach to local energy needs. Sell your excess energy back to the grid! Intermediate technology combined with modern technology in wind, solar or water power has come of age so start your own power supply.

#### 11. Learn more about the nature in your local environment

Which wild animals and plants live in your environment? Share some time with them and see what they can teach you. Become a direct 'friend of nature' and explore how other species see the world we share. You could even adopt some wild nature near you and 'look out' for it.

#### 12. Make things from found or recycled materials

Do you remember the fun you had whittling wood when you were younger? Keep an eye out for interesting wood you can prepare to make useful things. So much stuff is just thrown away or destroyed that could be useful again given a little T.L.C. Wild wood can make attractive coat hangers, boxes, shelves, even furniture.

Waste skips often have objects that can easily be given a 'new life'. Working with your hands to make things 'new' can be a deeply satisfying experience.

#### 13. Make your own Christmas and birthday presents

Take time out to make things that you enjoy and give them away to people you love. These have a value way over anything you can buy. If you have a creative hobby - use it to make gifts instead of buying them. If you don't - find a hobby or activity that puts you in touch with natural things.

#### 14. Stop using pharmaceutical drugs and chemicals and go natural

We are in a culture where medical consumerism is the norm. Explore some of the alternatives like using your food as preventative and curative medicine, or learn about the herbs and spices that have traditionally boosted mankind's health for millennia. There are many gentle ways to find, promote and maintain health and you will find some excellent examples at the StarFields Network.

#### 15. Join an environmental group

Express your energy in a collective way by joining a group that voices your concerns. Put your energy into changing the situation for the better by directly sponsoring a specific environmental cause.

#### 16. Use natural materials from a sustainable source over synthetic materials

The more natural a product is - the less pollution is usually incurred in its production. Support your environment by valuing natural materials over synthetic, for example (organic) cotton over polyester. Think about where building materials or other resources have come from and the processes it takes to make them.

#### 17. Feed your neighbour

A quick story based on Dante's Inferno:

Dante (or someone like him) visits Hell and finds a room of 'food torture'. The inhabitants are glued to chairs round a large table covered with food, but they all have their arms replaced by 10 foot chopsticks. They lift bits of food high over their heads and drop it down onto their faces in a pathetic attempt to feed themselves.

Later, our hero visits heaven and finds exactly the same situation except for one thing. The people in heaven are feeding each other across the table !

#### 18. Dance, sing and laugh. Look after yourself and have fun

If you are happy, fulfilled, in good humour, enjoying life's journey and so on - the chances are that others around you will be able to feel that way too. This moves us all along.

#### 19. Don't fly in airplanes

If possible, take a ship or train for long hauls or holidays. Aircraft are extremely expensive in pollution terms. Enjoy the sensation of travelling more slowly. Accept the journey as part of the trip.

#### 20. Take an action holiday

Why not donate your energy to a cause like helping indigenous people set up sustainable economies ? There are many companies offering the experience of useful voluntary work overseas. This is a most direct way to contribute to a sustainable world and gives you face-to-face contact with other cultures.

#### 21. Grow more plants indoors

Enhance your pact with nature by turning your home into a plant haven. Even simple spider plants can improve your space by bringing nature in and cleaning the air.

Plants are pretty undemanding compared to pets and they bring life in and produce air. Go the whole hog and grow some trees.

## 22. Consider changing your employment

What does your 'means of income' do in energy terms? If the 'ethics' of your employment is distant from your own values then you have essentially sold your soul for money. Think carefully about the consequences of your employment. Consider finding employment that is near to your core values and you will find a more fulfilled 'you'.

## 23. Review how you are investing in your own future

Concerned about pensions? It is certainly looking like someone has pulled the plug on that one. Anyone under 45 should be looking to exactly what they want in older years and finding ways to achieve it that may not involve money. There are serious flaws in our investment systems that are becoming more and more evident.

Co-operative or communal solutions to support in older years will be an increasing solution to lack of money.

## 24. Review your usage of water

If you have metered water, review how much you use and where savings might be made. For example bath water (without chemicals) can be used to water plants, a brick in the water cistern saves flush water. Can you use the water that lands on your roof that you pay for the privilege of having removed? Water butts are cheaper than ever and some local councils offer price reductions to residents.

There are many water filters on the market that improve the quality of tap-water and water is a key issue in health, we are mostly made of it! Water is a key issue on planet earth in the 21st century.

" Nearly 97% of the world's water is sea water or otherwise undrinkable. Another 2% is locked up in ice caps and glaciers. This leaves 1% to meet all of humanities growing needs, including agriculture, manufacturing, community and personal household needs. Of that 1%, one quarter of the world's fresh water is found in Canada's lakes, rivers and streams." (CPS June 2004)

## 25. Cut down on noise and light pollution

Many birds in cities sing at night as it's the only way they can make themselves heard. Generally birds in cities have to sing louder and the stress this causes gives them shortened life spans.

Listen for a moment now - what can you hear beyond the hum of computer fan? How much of this noise is really needed? Wouldn't just some 'quiet times' be nice?

Get together with your neighbours and see if you can negotiate a local 'quiet time', like a Sunday morning.

Unnecessary light also interferes with wildlife and even worse - it blocks out the stars - a source of wonder till the end of time.

## 26. Start your own herb garden

Grow your own medicinal and culinary herbs. Many of these are easy to grow on a windowsill, in a window box or tub somewhere. The direct growing and use of plants ties you into natural cycles and rhythms - you could even learn about 'moon gardening' cycles and biodynamics!

## 27. Grow your own food

Even simple growing such as mustard cress or delicious sprouting seeds contributes to a good diet. A surprising amount of your own food can be grown in a little space by using 'potato stacks' or climbing fruits. There is no better feeling than harvesting your own crop and eating it with friends. There are many dwarf bush varieties of fruit, some even have more than one fruit type on the same bush.

## 28. Downsize

Think about how you can work less and keep a good quality of life. Balance quality of life with standard of living. Contribute less to GDP and the national/global economy and more to a wholesome local and global ecology. Think global and act local.

29. Go organic

Whatever you consume, source it from a place that values natural processes over industrial ones. There are many enterprises providing organic food, drink, clothing or materials from sustainable sources. Take pride in tracking these down and using them in preference to more exploitative practices.

30. Spend time with nature

Take the time to visit nature and spend time relating with it. Find and adopt special places where you can go to feel the cycles and forces of nature and know that it is an aspect of you, and you of it. Many people are forming 'collectives' to protect or improve special places they value.

About the Author

**SECRETS OF CREATIVITY** by Simon Mitchell

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