

12
Easy Steps
To Becoming
A Highly
Effective
Environmental
Activist

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Twelve Easy Steps to Become a Highly Effective Environmentalist

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Everywhere you turn these days there is another story about an environmentalist working to make the world better, or another scientific report showing us areas where we are failing our world. If you are moved by these reports, you may be thinking about how to become an environmentalist yourself.

The term environmentalist refers to any person who advocates or works to protect the air, water, animals, plants, and other natural resources from pollution or its effects. An environmentalist can be a mom who wants a local chemical plant to stop dumping waste into the river her kids like to fish in. An environmentalist can be a scientist who lobbies Congress to stop global warming.

An environmentalist could be you, no matter who you are. It could be a career choice or simply a fulfilling hobby that will really make a difference in your own life and in the world around you.

Once you have decided you want to be a part of the environmental movement, it can be daunting and overwhelming to get started. However, in twelve distinct steps that are outlined below you can work toward becoming an environmentalist, and an effective one! Read on to learn how to start your journey to becoming an environmental activist. You can change the world, and change your own life in the process.

Step One: Is it in Your Heart?

The first step toward becoming a highly effective environmentalist is to determine if you truly feel a calling toward saving the planet. Is it your life long passion to help the world be a better, cleaner, safer place?

You may be sparked to action because you have seen an ill and you feel compelled to correct it. Or maybe you have family and friends who are always referring to you as the green member of the family. Perhaps you just feel like you want to be involved in a cause you can feel good about.

However, it may be hard to determine if you are really passionate about environmental issues, but you may want to follow your intuition to see if you are truly interested in working as an environmentalist. Try these exercises to determine if environmentalism really connects to your passions.

First, sit down and write out all the earth-friendly causes that make you react. Did you hear a news story about global warming that you just couldn't get out of your mind? Do you see polluted waters near your home and feel outrage? Does a local power or chemical plant make you angry?

On the other end of the spectrum, do you find yourself fascinated and comforted when out in nature? Do you love Discovery Channel specials about the beauty of the rain forest or an endangered species of animal?

If you look at your list, and there are just a few entries, and those entries make you feel only a passing interest, environmental causes may not speak to your soul, and that means you probably won't put much into the cause. In that case, you may need to search other areas for your true passion.

On the other hand, if your list is long, that may be a sign that you are paying a lot of attention to the world around you, and with more than a passing interest. Read your list again, noting next to each entry how you feel about that particular

environmental issue. Do you have lots of strong feelings, either positive or negative? Do you feel lots of outrage, compassion, or hope? These are the kinds of strong feelings that indicate you are truly dedicated to making our planet a cleaner, safer place. This is a good sign that you are ready to move forward as an environmentalist.

After you complete this exercise, if you are not completely sure that you have environmental causes in your heart, you may want to move on to a meditation exercise. Those who advocate meditation and self awareness say that listening to your body's cues can give you insight into your own deepest feelings and desires.

To do this, find a quiet spot where you can truly think freely. Turn off your cell phone, television, and send the kids outside to play. Take your list of environmental issues, or simply think about an environmental cause that you have an interest in, even if it is a passing interest. Imagine yourself working toward solving the environmental problem.

While you are imagining working to solve the problem, how does your body feel? Do you feel relaxed and calm? Do you feel pumped with adrenaline and excited? Either of these positive reactions may mean that you have a passion toward the cause – either because the thought of fixing the problem fills your body with peace, or because the thought of working toward a solution fills you with a jolt of productive energy.

However, if you feel stressed and tense, that may indicate that you aren't ready to tackle the problem. Did your jaw clench and your stomach start to ache? Then the issue may not be for you.

Likewise, if you felt very little, you may not have the passion to take on an environmental cause. Did you feel no serenity, and yet no tense or excited feelings either? If your body was placid and disconnected, that is a sign that your heart just isn't in it.

Why spend all this time determining if your heart is connected to an environmental issue? Well, the most effective people in the world are those who are following their passions. In addition to being more fulfilled in their work and their hobbies, these people also infuse every action they take with an enthusiasm and drive that gets results. The passion becomes contagious, sparking others into action.

Does this passion have to be the overarching purpose of your entire life? No. Not at all. Though it is wonderful if you feel so passionate about the environment that it is the focus of your days, it is not necessary to be a good environmental activist.



Instead, you can still have a day job, a full family life, and other hobbies. A good environmentalist can be one that devotes her career and free time to the cause, or it can be someone who doesn't have that much time but does carve out as special place in her life to work for the planet. This can be a great hobby, if that is what you want to make of it. It helps the environment if you pitch in, no matter how many hours you have to devote.

Don't get dissuaded from being an environmentalist just because it isn't your first love or full time job. You can be very effective by organizing an annual fundraiser for the environmental group you decided to join, or even by spending a couple of weekends a month cleaning up your community.

If you do find that you have passion for environmental work, no matter how much time you have, you can use your passion to get results. You will also find yourself a happier person for following your heart and acting on issues that stir up deep feelings within you.

However, without the passion, you will find it harder to motivate yourself to perform all of the tasks that are necessary to be an effective environmentalist. When things become difficult, you won't have a reserve of passion and dedication to spur you forward.

If you have decided that environmental issues resound with your deeper emotions and tug at your heart, you are ready to move on to the next step in making yourself an environmentalist who can positively impact the world.

Step Two: Educate Yourself!

Now that you are sure environmentalism is in your heart and you want to move forward as an environmental advocate, you need to do your homework. School taught us that we learned more when we worked hard and did all the background work that set us up for success. In the same way some contextual “homework” will help you in your quest to become an effective environmentalist.

The good news is that environmental issues have become hot topics over the last twenty or thirty years. That is great for anyone who is new to environmental causes, because there is a lot of readily available information to get you up to speed.

Most environmental issues can be roughly divided into three categories. The first is global climate change. This encompasses global warming issues, and the impact that this has on plants, animals, land masses, weather patterns, and so forth. This also includes the root causes of climate change, which can include various forms of pollution, potential world overpopulation, and underlying scientific reasons for natural climate change.

The second broad category is the overuse of resources. This can include deforestation, the stripping of fossil fuels from the land, land degradation, and other human activities that negatively impact our environment. This also relates to many endangered species, as they are often endangered because of humans encroaching on their territory.

The third major category is about waste management. This includes most forms of human pollution, including pollution of the water, air, and land. This category covers all forms of pollutants, including chemicals, nuclear waste, and oil spills.