

# **But, What Can I Do?**

Individual Actions That Make a Difference

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## Introduction

Any aware individual knows that an array of environmental problems confront the world. The normal reaction to such a litany is to ask, "But what can I do?"

The short answer is, "a lot". The songwriter, Kate Wolf, said, "Find what you really care about and live a life that shows it." Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." How much you choose to do will obviously depend on your circumstances.

There is a great range of useful actions, from changing one aspect of your life or the world around you to devoting your life to creating change. Even the tiniest change is a contribution. It is also important to realize that you cannot do it all. As you begin this process, be gentle with yourself. Forgive yourself for what you cannot change, at least not now. Give yourself permission to experiment with changes: accept some; reject others, until you find what is right for you. At the same time, be gentle on others who are themselves finding their own balance. Self-righteousness is no fun to be around.

If you can only do one thing what should that be? Only you can answer that. But here's our answer: Share what it is that matters to you. Communicate whenever you have a chance, what you really care about. Can that make a difference? The activist David Harris pointed out that each of us has a circle of people who care what we do: family, friends, co-workers, neighbors.... the list goes on. For most of us this adds up to at least 20 people, who are watching your life. What you say, what you do, will influence them.

It is said that the reason that British Petroleum undertook to become "Beyond Petroleum," to begin the transition from being an oil company to becoming an energy company, now one of the largest renewable energy companies in the world, is that the 12 year old daughter of its Vice Chair told her dad that she did not want to hug him, because his company was dirty. The resulting introspection has lead one of the world's largest polluters to become a leader in reducing its carbon emissions. Two years ago it set the goal of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions ten per cent from its 1990 levels by 2010. This year it announced that it had already achieved the goals it set for itself for 2010, and saved \$650 million in the process. It has now pledged to keep its greenhouse gas emissions at this level while increasing its production 5.5 per cent per year.

Every one of us has the opportunity to tell those closest to us what we really care about, and to live a life that shows it.

You can also practice this in your commercial dealings. Every time you buy something, or make an investment, you are voting with your dollars. Are your dollars working for a better world? Or are they voting for destructive practices. Do you shop where you do because the store has made a commitment to be more environmentally responsible? If so, tell that manager what you are doing. Be sure to thank companies and vendors who behave responsibly. By encouraging corporate responsibility, you are part of a movement

that has made it possible for funds that invest in socially and environmentally responsible companies to outperform the Standard and Poors stock index.

Remember also to communicate with merchants who have not made this change. Ask any merchant with whom you deal if their products are organic, non-toxic, and efficient... whatever environmental quality you seek. Ask if the company has made a commitment to be environmentally responsible. And again, reward companies that make a change.

But what difference will it make if you recycle, and buy green products, and use more efficient devices? You're only one person. The rest of the world is just going on with business as usual, isn't it?.

Very few of the problems facing us now arose from the actions of just a few bad guys. Most of the problems are the cumulative result of millions of individual decisions. It is this cumulative impact of all our seemingly inconsequential contributions that is now threatening every major ecosystem on the planet. It will only be through the cumulative effect of equally "inconsequential" changes by each of us that, collectively, we will turn things around. Even though we cannot see the environmental impact of our personal choices, scientific evidence shows that impact to be very real. Changing what we do is ultimately the only real solution. Explaining that change to those around us is what will spread it to others.

## **Three Types of Action**

### **Technical Changes**

There are many types of changes you can make. Perhaps the easiest place to start is with a technical shift. You can use devices that deliver the same or improved service, but have lower environmental harm, and use fewer resources. Dozens of groups provide lists of such changes (see below).

Think about it. You make such changes in your life on a regular basis as superior technologies emerge. How many vinyl records have you purchased recently? Compact discs did not sweep the market because of some vinyl shortage. They are a better product, so people started using them, and a whole industry shifted. Many environmentally preferable products also work better. And they can save you money. Take, for example, high performance, water efficient showerheads. One friend of mine reported that using such a showerhead enabled everyone in his family to get a hot shower in the morning. To him that was the biggest benefit of all. The showerhead also saved 27 cents a day on water and 51 cents on electricity. It paid for itself in just two months and after that using the device was like finding free money. The University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls retrofitted 450 showerheads at a cost of \$7,000. Doing this saved the University \$67,000 in the first year.

Switching to compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) in your home and office is another technical move that will save both time and money, while reducing your impact on the

environment. A CFL will not only keep unnecessary greenhouse gasses from being emitted, it lasts ten times longer, saving a lot of trips up a ladder. In commercial applications, this saving in labor and hassle is worth more than all the energy savings. As an added bonus, many companies that have switched to energy efficient lighting report increases in labor productivity that dwarf the value of the energy or other resources saved.

And lest you think something as simple as changing your brand of lightbulb cannot make a tangible difference on critical issues, think again. Howard Geller of the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (<http://www.aceee.org/press/op-eds/op-ed1.htm>) writes:

“Lighting accounts for about 20% of all electricity use in the country and about 15% of electricity use in our homes. The typical household spends about \$110 per year on lighting and most of this is wasted on inefficient incandescent light bulbs. These bulbs are actually heaters in disguise, converting 90% of the electricity to heat and only about 10% to visible light.

“CFLs use one-quarter to one-third as much electricity as incandescent bulbs and last up to ten times as long. If widely used, their environmental benefits would be enormous. Where electricity is produced from coal—and most is—each CFL will cut carbon dioxide emissions by about 1,300 pounds over its lifetime.

*“If every household replaced its most commonly used incandescent light bulbs with CFLs, electricity use for lighting could be cut in half. Doing so would lower our annual carbon dioxide emissions by about 125 billion pounds. This action alone could halt the growth in carbon dioxide emissions from the United States, given recent growth rates (italics added).*

“The electricity savings and longer life of CFLs more than justify their seemingly high cost. For example, by paying \$15 to \$20 initially for an 18 watt CFL, consumers can avoid buying ten ordinary 75 watt bulbs and save about \$45 in electricity costs over the life of the CFL. Put differently, investing in a CFL provides a risk-free “return” of 25-40% a year. Not bad, compared to investing in passbook savings, a money market account, or even the volatile stock market.”

## **Lifestyle Changes**

A more profound shift you can make is to change your lifestyle. The organization, Center for a New American Dream, [www.newdream.org](http://www.newdream.org), lists a wide array of changes that you can make that will improve your quality of life and use fewer resources. Deciding to make this sort of contribution, however, will mean changing the way you now do things.

Some changes will be trivial, others more substantial. But you cannot do things the same as you've always done and expect to increase your contribution to the goal of sustainability. You can start small, but you must be willing to change. On the other hand, many people who do make such changes report an increase in their quality of life. For example, families who have shifted to buying local and organic produce often do so because the food tastes better, and they enjoy supporting local family farms.

Starting small doesn't mean that your potential contribution is inconsequential. As you adopt changes and talk with others about what you are doing, new ideas will emerge, others will join you, and your contribution will grow, creating ripples that you cannot anticipate, or probably even imagine. A small group of mothers in England decided that they did not want genetically modified organisms (GMO's) in the baby food they fed to their children. What started as a lifestyle change, agreeing only to buy products that were free from GMO's grew into an activist campaign that changed the world. They organized, using the Internet. Soon academics, and even the Prince of Wales joined their campaign. They asked the markets to label which products contained GMO's. Soon the markets would only buy from suppliers who could deliver GMO-free food. In 1999, Alex Brown, Deutsche Bank advised its investors not to invest in companies producing GMO foods. By the end of the year, Monsanto, one of the companies most heavily invested in promoting GMO's was dismembered as a company. Its Chairman resigned and the company was sold for the value of its pharmaceuticals division (its agricultural division valued at zero). One of the largest dissolution of corporate value in history was caused by a handful of mothers who cared about the future.

## **Become An Activist**

Like those British mothers, you too can become an activist and put participatory democracy to work. Thanks to the Internet, this is now easier than ever. For starts, you can log on to <http://www.gristmagazine.com/grist/dogood/> and find out about action campaigns that need your help in voicing the public's opinion to political and business leaders via email, letter, fax, and/or telephone call. You will find information and links to campaigns being organized by different activist groups around the country and around the world on issues affecting such critical areas as:

- Global Warming & Clean Energy
- Animals & Plants
- Clean Air & Water
- Food & Agriculture
- Forests & Wilderness
- Mining, Ranching, & Drilling
- Nukes & Toxics
- Oceans
- Personal Consumption
- Planes, Trains, & Automobiles
- Politics & People
- Population

- Recycling & Solid Waste
- Rivers & Dams
- Urban Growth

## **PERSONAL ACTION AREAS**

Now that we have outlined the three basic levels of personal involvement, let's take a look at the different areas of your life where it is possible to employ these levels and take action on behalf of a healthier world:

1. Self-Education– How do you learn more?
  2. Personal energy use – How dependent are you on fossil fuels?
  3. Purchasing decisions –What companies and products do you support?
  4. Investment decisions – Where do you put your money to work?
  5. Communication – Who do you tell about what you're doing?
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### **1. Self-education**

The more you know, the more empowered you will be to create positive change. The following books are among those that are “must-read” for anyone wanting to be reasonably literate in the area of environment

*Eco-Economy*, Lester Brown, WW Norton & Co, 2001

*Natural Capitalism*, Hawken, Lovins, & Lovins, Little Brown, 1999

*Biomimicry*, Janine Benyus, William Morrow & Co, 1998

*Midcourse Correction*, Ray Anderson, Chelsea Green Publishing, 1998

*The New Economy of Nature*, Gretchen Daily, Island Press, 2002

*Beyond the Limits*, Donella Meadows, Chelsea Green Publishing, 1992

*Holistic Resource Management*, Alan Savory, Island Press, 1999

*Beyond Rangeland Conflict: Toward a West That Works*, Dan Dagget,  
University of Nevada Press, 2000

*The Heat is On: The Climate Crisis, the Cover-Up, the Prescription*, Ross  
Gelbspan, Perseus Publishing, 1998

*A Guide to World Resources, People and Ecosystems, the Fraying Web of Life* World Resources Institute, 10 G St., Washington DC, 20002, USA. This pioneering analysis of the world's ecosystems was prepared by the UN Development Programme, the UN Environment Programme, the World Bank, and the World Resources Institute,  
Websites for more ideas, tools, and self-education on what actions individuals can take:

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- **Ecological Footprint** — A sobering educational exercise is to calculate your personal Ecological Footprint. Given in terms of acreage, it is the amount of land required to support your lifestyle, based on your use of natural resources. This exercise compares human demands to the interest that the Earth's natural capital generates. Since at least the 1970s, humanity's ecological pressure has exceeded the

regenerative capacity of the Earth so that it now takes 1.3 years to regenerate what humanity uses in one year. This overshoot is liquidating the natural capital on which human and non-human life depends - hence a decline in the Living Planet Index. The ecological footprint is calculated not only for the world as a whole but also for the 150 largest countries and is based on published data sets by the United Nations. You can find the footprint calculation at

<http://www.rprogress.org/programs/sustainability/ef/>

- **The Living Planet Report** — World Wide Fund for Nature International (Switzerland) together with the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UK), the Centre for Sustainability Studies (Mexico), and Redefining Progress (U.S.A.). The report can be downloaded from <http://panda.org/livingplanet/lpr00/>
  - **Center for a New American Dream** — The New Dream Action Network is a project of the Center for a New American Dream that grew out of the belief that positive environmental change is necessary and achievable. The Center developed Turn the Tide and Step by Step to help Americans take simple actions that have a measurable, positive impact on the environment. In making nine powerful lifestyle changes through Turn the Tide, you deepen your own awareness that all consumer actions have environmental consequences. <http://www.newdream.org/>
  - **Earthday Network** — An alliance of 5,000 groups in 184 countries working to promote a healthy environment and a peaceful, just, sustainable world. Earth Day is based on the simple philosophy that ordinary people, acting together, can achieve extraordinary things. Access their website to learn about their campaigns, calculate your own environmental impact, and learn strategies for reducing it. <http://www.earthday.net/>
  - **Grist Magazine** — *Grist*, a project of Earth Day Network, is an online environmental magazine. Their credo: Pull no punches, take no prisoners, accept no advertising. They publish new content each weekday—in-depth reporting, cartoons, summaries of breaking news stories, diary entries from activists, book reviews, green investment advice, and more. <http://www.gristmagazine.com/grist/dogood/>
  - **Climate Change Solutions from the Pembina Institute of Canada** — Individuals and families produce approximately one third of North American greenhouse gas emissions just from day-to-day activities like heating our homes, driving our cars and using electricity. Click <http://www.climatechangesolutions.com/english/default.htm> then click on “Individuals and Families” to read stories about how you can successfully reduce your emissions in the areas of Residential, Transportation, and Lifestyle. The site also provides access tools to help you calculate your own emissions of greenhouse gases and the potential cost savings from adopting alternative behaviors.
  - **Cool Companies** — This is an NGO that tracks businesses that have committed to reductions of CO<sub>2</sub>. [www.cool-companies.org/](http://www.cool-companies.org/)
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## **2. Personal energy use.**

Your personal energy use is an area in which you can made an immediate impact. Here are some specific tips from Grist Magazine to get you started:

### ***Energy saving for the very lazy, Part 1***

Turn lights and appliances off when you leave the room. How many times have you thought you'd be right back, and never were? It's the easiest thing you can do to keep your power bill down, reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses and limit pollution.

### ***Energy saving for the very lazy, Part 2***

If every household replaced its most commonly used incandescent light bulbs with CFLs, electricity use for lighting could be cut in half. Doing so would lower our annual carbon dioxide emissions by about 125 billion pounds. This action alone could halt the growth in carbon dioxide emissions from the United States.

### ***Freezing fridge fries money***

Check the settings: The fridge should be between 38 and 42 degrees Fahrenheit and the freezer should be between 0 and 5 degrees. If your settings are only 10 degrees too cold, your energy bill will be 25 percent higher than it needs to be. Check the seals for cracks and dried-on food. Keep the condenser coils clean. If you live in a city, your refrigerator may account for up to 25 percent of your energy bill!

### ***Finally -- an audit that won't cause you to lose sleep***

Energy audits are a great way to see where the energy (read: money) in your house is going. Your local power company may have an energy-audit program, but you can also do one with the Alliance to Save Energy at <http://www.ase.org/checkup/home/>. Half of the oil that we use in the U.S.—to power our cars, heat and cool our homes and everything in between—comes from overseas.

### ***First, bras for cars -- and now ...***

Jackets for water heaters! Insulating your water heater decreases the energy used to heat it up. They are available at hardware stores and sometimes given away free with a new water heater. While you're thinking of it, make sure the temperature is set no higher than 120 degrees. The average person creates 4.5 tons of carbon dioxide from home electricity use every year.

### ***Are you heating the outside of your house?***

Insulating your home is similar to using a thermos instead of a glass jar—insulation keeps warm air warm and cool air cool. Caulking and weather stripping is a good start, and then insulating your attic, walls, and crawlspaces will make a huge difference in the control you have over the temperature in the house. The average home produces twice as much greenhouse gas pollution as the average car.

### ***Your big chance for stardom***

Look for the Energy Star label on home and office equipment. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy award the label to products leading the way toward energy efficiency. Everything from windows, to lighting, to new homes. If you were to equip your home with only products that have the Energy Star label, you'd cut your energy consumption (and bills!) by 30 percent.

### ***And no one needs to know that you're working in bed***

Employers are becoming more flexible about what defines a workday. By working four 10-hour days or working from home one day a week, you become part of the pollution solution. And over a year, that's 50 days less that you waste in traffic. If your car gets 20 miles per gallon, you produce one pound of carbon dioxide for every mile that you drive.

### ***Do you really need that monster truck with the V12 engine?***

When shopping for a new car, don't forget to factor in fuel efficiency. Reduce your gas costs, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, and reduce the damage being done to the atmosphere. If everyone in the U.S. bought the most efficient vehicle in the class they'd ordinarily buy, the total savings would be about a billion and a half gallons of gasoline every year.

### ***Stylish but silly***

Halogen lamps burn hot enough to catch fire and are wildly inefficient, consuming large amounts of energy.

### ***What is it costing you to store that six-pack?***

Refrigerators are the bad boys of energy use, so consider whether a smaller fridge might suit your needs. Food retains cold better than air does, so a full (but not overcrowded) fridge is more efficient than an empty one.

### ***An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of pollution***

A tune-up on your car will improve its fuel economy by 6 to 9 percent and save you repair costs in the long run. Don't be a speed demon—for every mile per hour slower you drive than 65 MPH, you improve your car's fuel efficiency by about 2 percent. And soft tires make the engine work harder; making your car more wasteful, so pump 'em up!

### ***Rest your screen when you rest your eyes***

Don't wait for your screen saver to kick in—if you are going to be away from your computer for more than 10 minutes, turn the monitor off. Computer monitors use the same amount of electricity as a 60-watt light bulb.

### ***Read, relax, daydream, meet the neighbors ... and save gallons***

Take mass transit as much as you can. When you do, your energy use is 25 times less than if you'd used a car. If you absolutely need your car on any given day, see if you can give someone else a lift too.

***Put your copier at ease***

Look on your copier for a stand-by button or stand-by mode, and make sure that it gets used— copiers consume a lot of energy standing constantly at the ready.

***A dishwasher word to the wise***

Wash only full loads. You'll get more pieces in the washer if you wash the big stuff by hand. Use the air-dry setting or turn the dishwasher off after the final rinse and open the door. Use short cycles. Use the booster heater so that you can turn your hot water tank to a lower temperature.

***It's all in the timing***

So, you want the house cool and well lit when you return from a hot and miserable day at the office? Invest in some timers instead of leaving the lights and air conditioner on all day. You'll never walk into a dark house and your power bills will take a dip.

***Tuck in your pool at night and you'll sleep better***

About 30 percent of pools in the U.S. are heated. A pool blanket can cut the energy consumption of pool heaters by 40 to 70 percent.

***Don't let your money go up in steam, part 1***

Try setting your water heater on "low" -- about 120 degrees Fahrenheit. That temperature is more than adequate to meet all home uses.

***Don't let your money go up in steam, part 2***

Evaporation is a major source of heat loss from hot tubs. When the water evaporates, the tub cools and the remaining water has to be heated again. Cover your tub with a well-insulated cover.

***Curb your car now and then***

Find ways to cut down on the use of your car—make fewer trips, carpool or bus it once a week, ride your bike to the grocery store. Every little bit counts.

***How to make a little air conditioning go a long way***

During the day, close the blinds or drapes so that the sun can't get in and warm up the house. If you're going to be gone for a couple of hours, turn the AC off. Do the same as soon as the temperature cools down outside, and then open the windows so you get a cross-breeze.

***Treat your air conditioner to some shade***

Air conditioners work better when they are cool themselves, so if your air conditioner is outside under any direct sun, build a screen. While you're at it, check the filter. An AC with a clogged filter will use 5 percent more energy than one with a clean filter.

### **3. Purchasing Decisions**

Over the past year, economists have consistently lauded the consumer as the hero of the economy. The economic power exerted by consumers has prevented a relatively mild recession from becoming an economic meltdown. This is an enormous power indeed—the power to make or break an economy. What you buy, and from whom, sends a very powerful message to the market about your priorities. When you start to wield this power in a conscientious way, supporting those products and corporate practices that are consistent with your personal values, it becomes an extremely effective tool for social change.

As an informed consumer, you have the power today to:

- Make your home and/or business environment less toxic and decrease your ecological footprint
- Create markets for natural products that are sustainably produced
- Support those companies that have strong environmental commitments and penalize those that don't, even if there is no obvious “green” alternative for the particular product in question (e.g. Buy your gasoline from BP or Shell rather than Exxon/Mobil)

Here is a list of websites that sell "green" products of all types:

[http://directory.google.com/Top/Shopping/Niche/Green\\_Living/](http://directory.google.com/Top/Shopping/Niche/Green_Living/). According to a report from the Center for Energy and Climate Solutions, simply shopping online may be an effective way to reduce society's reliance on fossil fuels. Whether you decide to make your purchases online or not, this is a good source for alternative product ideas. Following are just a few of the categories of goods and services that have "green" alternatives that are non-toxic, non-polluting, healthy, and sustainably produced:

- CLOTHING and LINENS — Seek out natural, organically grown fibers
- FURNITURE — Ask for certified furniture to ensure that it was not created from illegally or unsustainably harvested wood. You can also buy furniture made from recycled materials (e.g. lawn furniture from recycled plastic bottles)
- HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS — Look for recycled paper products (bath tissue, paper towels, printer/copier paper, stationery, etc.). Replace toxics with environmentally safe alternatives (household cleaners, lawn products). Use phosphate-free, non-petroleum-based detergents for laundry, dishes, etc. Even cat litter has safer versions (<http://www.stutzman-environmental.com/goodmews.htm>)
- HOME IMPROVEMENT — If you are planning to build a new home or remodel your current one, make energy efficiency a priority before you start. With proper planning and design of a new structure, it is possible to practically eliminate the need for heating and cooling systems. Even if you are simply renovating your existing home, seek out products such as sustainably harvested lumber and energy efficient appliances and fixtures. Building or remodeling is a great opportunity to decrease your ecological footprint significantly.

- TRAVEL — Use "A Better World Travel" travel agency for your travel plans. This agency sponsors projects, which eliminate an equal or greater amount of greenhouse gases than that produced from your air travel, thus achieving net zero impact on global climate change. <http://www.triplee.com/index.html>
- FOOD — Look for organic, non-genetically modified agricultural products. (Remember that these do not show up only in the produce section. Check your cereals, pastas and grains, frozen dinners, dairy products, eggs, meat). If you cannot find these types of products in your regular stores, tell the merchant what kinds of products you want to buy. If they are not responsive, switch stores. Switch to non-endangered fish species (e.g. Select white albacore tuna over chunk light tuna and skip the Chilean Sea Bass. Go to the Monterey Bay Aquarium website to learn more about which fish species are sustainably caught and which are not <http://www.mbayaq.org/cr/seafoodwatch.asp>). Finally, remember to seek sustainably grown food when eating out too, not just in the grocery store. Ask your server where those menu items come from. See if there is a community supported agriculture program near you.

Regardless of what you are shopping for, remember take along your own bags. Make it easy—get some reusable cloth bags and store them in your car, so you'll have them whenever you find yourself shopping. Whenever they ask, "paper or plastic?", the best response is "neither."

Finally, a quick word about disposal. Even when shopping for a brand new product, remember to think about what will happen to it when you are finished with it.. Whenever possible, purchase products that are easily biodegradable or can be disposed of safely, preferably with a minimum of packaging in the first place. Also:

- Recycle. This includes not only glass, aluminum and newspaper, but plastic, corrugate, junk mail, plastic bags, etc. (For those that do not have curbside recycling in their communities, that is an excellent cause for activism)
- Create a "battery" jar and store your used batteries there rather than throwing them out. When the jar is full, take it to a local disposal facility (local hardware stores often have drop-off bins). For even greater efficiency, use rechargeable batteries to start with.
- Dispose of used paint, solvents, motor oil, etc. only in suitable recycling facilities. If you do not know where one is, contact your county for information.

#### **4. Investment Decisions**

The last decade has seen a huge rise in what is called Socially Responsible Investing (SRI). Social investment is the allocation of financial resources after the consideration of both economic and social criteria with the goals of maximizing the potential financial and social returns to both the investor and the investee. A 1999 study by the Social

Investment Forum estimated that well over two trillion dollars is invested just in the U.S. using some social or environmental criteria. A 1999 report on responsible investing in the U.S. reported that one of every eight dollars under professional management was part of a socially responsible portfolio. Between 1997 and 1999 total assets involved in socially and environmentally screened investment grew 82 percent; assets in screened portfolios grew 183 percent. One source of information on this trend is the Social Investment Forum <http://www.socialinvest.org/areas/sriguide/>.

Contrary to popular myth, such investments often outperform conventional ones, in part because of the increased integration of CSR practices into companies and preferences of consumers. This is now regularly reflected in the fact that the Domini Index and Citizen Index, which track the stock performance of hundreds of socially and environmentally screened companies, have over the past years regularly outperformed the comparable Standard & Poors indices.

Hundreds of examples of what companies and communities are doing to implement sustainability profitably are chronicled in the book *Natural Capitalism*. And since its publication in 1999, various industry-leading businesses have begun implementing the sort of comprehensive approach it outlines. These include Interface, Nike, Ricoh, Shell, ST Microelectronics, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and Sony. Increasingly, the major brands are realizing that to retain credibility they must make clear to their customers that they have made a commitment to environmental responsibility and that they intend to live by this commitment. This is a significant enough trend that the Dow Jones Sustainability Group Index (DJSGI), [www.sustainability-index.com](http://www.sustainability-index.com), now tracks the performance of the top 10 percent of the leading sustainability-driven companies in the 2,000-company Global Index. In October 2000, this included 236 companies from 68 industries in 21 countries with a total market capitalization of \$5.5 trillion or 19 percent of the Dow Jones Global World Index.

These websites will give you more information on the world of SRI.

- Social Investment Forum <http://www.socialinvest.org/> The Social Investment Forum site offers comprehensive information, contacts & resources on socially responsible investing.
  - SRInvest <http://www.srinvest.net/> SRInvest is a resource guide and information directory for individuals and companies interested in the concept and practice of socially responsible investment.
  - Socially Responsible Investing <http://www.SocialFunds.com/>. SocialFunds.com is the Internet's most comprehensive personal finance site devoted to socially responsible investing. This site offers coverage of social mutual funds, community investing, shareowner action and daily social investment news.
  - Green Money <http://www.greenmoney.com/> Journal devoted to covering issues of socially and environmentally responsible business and investing.
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## 5. Communications: Who Do You Tell

This paper began with the argument that changing what you do, and telling your circle of friends and family is one of the most powerful acts that you can take. Set some ripples in motion.

But don't forget to tell others as well. It may seem utterly ineffective to "write your Congressperson". But remember, the industries and interest groups that have a stake in keeping things the way they are, are doing just that every day. Here again is that link to a long list of campaigns that need the voices of people like you:

<http://www.gristmagazine.com/grist/dogood/>

Also, League of Conservation Voters, <http://www.lcv.org/>, tracks the voting record of all national and many state politicians on environmental issues. The "Action Center" feature on the website let's you type in your Zip code and compose a letter to your own representatives on the featured issues, or on any issue you wish.

## Why isn't everyone making these changes?

In a word, inertia. It's much easier not to make changes in our lives, than to decide how we might do things differently, and then implement that. But such changes are critically important.

In announcing the creation of the new Earth Policy Institute, Lester Brown, the founder of World Watch Institute, said, "We are losing the war to save the planet. Many battles have been won, but the gap between what we need to do to arrest the environmental deterioration of Earth and what we are doing continues to widen. Somehow we have to turn the tide."

Implementing the measures that have been outlined above, and the policy measures outlined in Brown's book would lead to a new industrial revolution. What we need is nothing less, a way to revolutionize our systems and our thinking, to enable industries and societies around the world to deliver the products and services needed to achieve sustainability. Doing this would not only solve the sustainability crisis, but would also give people around the world worthwhile and durable employment.

And it can be done.

Dana Meadows, one of the greatest environmental thinkers of our time and co-author of *Beyond the Limits*, wrote:

"We think a transition to a sustainable world is technically and economically possible, but we know it is psychologically and politically daunting....*The sustainability revolution, if it happens, will be organic and evolutionary. It will arise from the visions, insights, experiments, and*

*actions of billions of people* (italics added). It will require every human quality and skill, from technical ingenuity, economic entrepreneurship, and political leadership to honesty, compassion and love.

“Are any of the necessary changes from resource efficiency to human compassion, really possible? Can the world actually ease down below the limits and avoid collapse? Is there time? Is there enough money, technology, freedom, vision, community, responsibility, foresight, discipline, and love on a global scale?”

“The world faces not a preordained future, but a choice. The choice is between mental models. One model says that this finite world for all practical purposes has no limits. Choosing that model will take us even further beyond the limits, and, we believe, to collapse within the next half century.

“Another model says that the limits are real and close and that there is not enough time and that people cannot be moderate or responsible or compassionate. That model is self-fulfilling. If we choose to believe it, we will get to be right.

“A third model says that the limits are real and close and there is just exactly enough time, with no time to waste. There is just exactly enough energy, enough material, enough money, enough environmental resilience, and enough human virtue to bring about a revolution to a better world.

“That model might be wrong. All the evidence we have seen, however, from the world data to the global computer models suggests that it might be right. There is no way of knowing for sure, other than to do it.”

And that's where you come in.