

## Ideas for a life that thrives in balance with the natural world

In this article, director Keith Badger shares some ideas of how individuals can reduce their impact on the natural world. At this time of climate emergency every person can respond by taking action and feeling empowered in a number of ways. Each individual is a citizen with rights and responsibilities as steward of the society we live in. In this time of climate emergency, urgent action is required by everyone. The 2020s will be humanity's decisive decade and as Carl Sagan said:

*"Anything else you're interested in is not going to happen if you can't breathe the air and drink the water. Don't sit this one out. Do something."*

Keith shares below a number of ideas from his personal experience that can lower impact and lead to a thriving life. The ideas fall under ten categories and like many things in life, it all starts with our mindset...

### How to engage your sustainable mind

- There is a crisis of consciousness. We need to become more aware of what we do and the impacts that result. Try to "soar like an eagle" and see our self in the bigger picture of life.
- Read about issues of concern and develop an understanding beyond social media sound bites. Check out the Rescope Project's database of articles for ideas and inspiration.
- Seek dialogue rather than debate to encourage constructive engagement. The existing system is complex and nobody has all the answers. Remember, we humans are fundamentally collaborative.
- Don't get weighed down and gloomy or let others put us down for not living completely sustainable lives and not being perfect. We can feel good about our efforts to live lower impact lives and bring joy to the world to encourage others to follow our lead.
- Try to build lives in a human, community-centred economy rather than exist within the anonymity of global supply chains. By creating relationships with growers, makers and retailers we gain pleasure well beyond the products and services we're buying.
- Reset and redefine the possible, one step at a time. We ran a one-week residential course in sustainability with 10 people. After seven days and nights and eating all meals on site, we produced a mere 316 grams of landfill. That's less than 5gms of rubbish per person per day.
- Turn off the advertising mind control games - get off the escalator of envy and enjoy who we are. Do we really need the latest gadget?



- Spend time in nature and reconnect with its rhythm - learn from the trees and revere all life. (Check out my book: “Joining Loose Ends – how a long walk revealed a new life” available at the Rescope publications page)
- Revel in the extra time freed from shopping to enjoy more satisfying pastimes – more time for things that bring meaning: Life, Love and Laughter.
- We each need to find our own meaning in life beyond the world of shopping. Listen to the wisdom of elders and recognise ancient indigenous knowledge. People follow different forms of spirituality, myths & fables and we should not mock or criticise those, but find our own form of sense-making.
- Be open and humble. We are but one species within a web of life we do not fully understand and cannot control. Remember that 80% of our beliefs are false!

*Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.” – Chief Seattle, 1854.*

### **How to make your shopping more sustainable**

- Don't buy any new clothes for a year, then repeat it! Like me, you might end up only replacing clothes when they're worn out (one in one out).
- Repair clothes. I can honestly say I have never been prouder of a clothes brand than my darned T-shirt.
- Buy second-hand clothes. I cherish a cashmere sweater bought at an op shop 10 years ago.
- Buy good quality at all times and avoid cheap disposable items – love good stuff!
- Support local traders. Get to know them and build community rather than walk zombie-like down the endless supermarket aisles.
- Be a “bag citizen”. Always carry shopping bags and brown paper bags to reduce waste.



- Always buy your takeaway hot beverage in a keep-cup. It reduces waste and send signals every time we use them that we care.
- There's no need for tissues/paper towels/cling wraps. We could wrap the planet in plastic!
- Try to carry a water bottle and food container to minimise single use plastics.

### **How to make your personal health and wellbeing more sustainable**

- Stay healthy – you are what you eat, so avoid processed foods.
- Spend time in nature most days – walking, cycling, swimming in the sea, etc.
- Listen to messages from your body rather than immediately seeking pharmaceutical drugs.
- Personal hygiene can be just soap and face washer. (Over time I realised shampoo, bodywash, deodorants, shaving foams and gels are unnecessary as our natural body oils and water are better).
- Redefine cleanliness for clothes and around home seek natural products not chemicals.

### **How to make celebrations more sustainable**

- Be creative - a homemade Christmas tree can be even more exciting than a real one.
- Stop giving presents or cards just for sake of marketing inspired dates. It's better to talk to people, tell them we love them every day and help them when help is really needed.
- Experiences rather than stuff make better more meaningful and lower impact gifts – dematerialise our lives, but value the things we have.
- Avoid the 24 hour purchase to waste cycle - avoid rapidly discarded knickknacks and baubles.
- Invent family games like the recycled op shop or handmade 'pass the parcel' for Kris Kringle.



### **How to make your food more sustainable**

- Main thing is not the food, but the conviviality of preparation and sharing:
  - Picnics (great family/friends events and everyone can bring food)
  - Host meals and invite 10 new people to a dinner each month and discuss a sustainability issue
  - Buy box loads of tomatoes at late season prices and get together with friends to make bottled sauces.
  - Cook with friends and create special family recipes (my frittata is to die for!)
  
- Turn old meal memories off and create new recipe stories, ones that use lower impact ingredients.
  
- Eat much less meat and dairy and make fish a once a week treat (become more vegetarian).
  
- Eat what we buy and eliminate food waste.
  
- Stay in touch with the food's origins (grow our own, keep chickens, make kombucha, jams, beer?).
  
- Delight in fresh food grown in season and buy organic where possible.
  
- Spend more on real food – people used to spend one third of wages on food, now its half that. (Spend less on virtual reality electronics, social media and more on real nourishment).
  
- Buy locally grown and avoid airfreight wherever possible - reduce the worst emissions of global supply chains (e.g. local wine and dairy in much of Australia rather than French produce is not a hardship!).

### **How to make your home more sustainability**

- If we can keep our family home, we cut the amount of extra/new stuff we need when we move properties.
  
- Stay in the community where we're connected rather than moving and becoming isolated.
  
- Rent accommodation for holidays rather than buying a second home.



- Get rid of storage units to limit accumulating surplus stuff.
- Try to create garden beds and tubs for veggies and herbs.
- Ignore “common sense” and put in a chicken run rather than a swimming pool.
- Consult permaculture/energy experts for advice about how to organise a house and garden (e.g. rain water tanks, recycling systems, renewable energy systems – solar panels and batteries).
- Insulate old homes and cut down energy usage - turn things off, install more efficient systems, light globes, rechargeable batteries and investigate low energy building techniques.
- Wear sweater indoors to lower the heating thermometer and avoid air conditioning if possible.
- Use washing lines and ceiling hangers in laundry to eliminate the tumble dryer.
- Save water. Flush the toilet less, heat less water in your kettle and harvest cold water before it heats up.

#### **How to produce less waste to make things more sustainable**

- Get rid of it at shops (particularly supermarkets!) by buying fewer pre-packed goods.
- Recycle. Remember there is no “away” when we throw rubbish away – a 6 step process before landfill might be:
  - Recycled waste collection.
  - Specialist items for recycling (soft plastics at supermarket, batteries/electricals, etc).
  - Green waste for compost.
  - Scraps to chickens.
  - Worm farm.
  - Landfill (wrapped in newspaper, not plastic bag).

#### **How to make your travel more sustainable**





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- Use feet wherever possible - it all starts with walking (23% of all world travel is by foot).
- Cycle for life, as well as exercise (if we're safe on a bike).
- If public transport is an option, it's better than driving.
- Cars – play mind games to keep the rev counter down to save fuel, not beating other drivers.
- We need to use cars less (currently they're used for 57% of all travel) and go electric.
- We need to use air travel sparingly and be conscious of ways to avoid it. What about conferencing via Zoom?).
- Be conscious of the little things on holiday – in hotels, don't use the bathroom giveaway products, reuse towels and don't put rubbish in plastic bag lined waste bins, etc.
- Travel as pilgrim not tourist and make sure it's with Life, Love and Laughter in mind.

### **How to make your money more sustainable**

- Think about the role of money in your life (It's important, but not life's purpose and not as important as our Time Bank, the number of days of life we have left).
- We need to avoid consumption borrowing and being confined in the debt dungeon.
- We need to spend money wisely and think about the message we send with our spending. Every time we buy something we support manufacturers, distributors, retailers and the values, emissions and the work practices embedded through their supply chain,
- Relationships are far more important than dollars. ("The reason we can sell off everything for money is that it allows us to NOT SEE the relationships" Nora Bateson).
- Be involved as a steward in our superannuation investments and think about the companies we choose (e.g. what they do, how they operate and the values they uphold) and engage with them as an owner to improve rather than shame, blame or boycott.



- Money creation is now driven by competitive adversarial activity rather than collaborative society enriching activity. To bring change remember “Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them” – Albert Einstein.
- Support community organisations and charities with time and money – society can’t function without them (and it’s vital to our own wellbeing).

### **How to make your life, at work and in community, more sustainable**

- We need to always try to bring Life, Love and Laughter with us wherever we go.
- Do a good job - bring skill and do tasks well and with love to gain respect for our views.
- “Be the change you wish to see in the world” said Gandhi – be brave to challenge the system.
- Try to make the world a better place (“Bring our skills to change what makes us want to cry”).
- Stand up for our views and engage others with love and laughter (but never preach!) to influence the people in our immediate community - family, friends, colleagues, anyone who is around..... and maybe the world (“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”).
- Vote for good people who prioritise sustainability and support well intentioned activists.
- Reconnect children and grandkids with nature, live by good values and provide good education.

“We have to cultivate contentment with what we have. We really don’t need much. When you know this, the mind settles down. Cultivate generosity. Delight in giving. Learn to live lightly. In this way, we can begin to transform what is negative into what is positive. This is how we start to grow up.” – Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo.

