Eco-friendly

Hope Begins at Home

Everyone can contribute to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development -- even without stepping out of the house! After all, what better place to start good habits than at home?

In David Mitchell's 2004 fiction novel, "Cloud Atlas," one character — upon being berated that his life amounts "to no more than one drop in a limitless ocean" — responds by musing, "Yet what is any ocean, but a multitude of drops?"

True enough, people are all but tiny little drops in an ocean. But then again, each drop still has the capacity to create the largest of ripples.

Metaphors aside, while it's humbling how seemingly small people are within nature's big picture, it's still empowering to know that each action, no matter how small, can be fashioned to make a big, significant difference. This is why everyone can still contribute to the BCSD cause — even without stepping out of the house. After all, what better place to start a habit than at home, right?

Want to do your part now, too? Here are a few simple ideas to get started:

Stick with the essentials.

"It's not an investment if it's destroying the planet," environmental activist Vandana Shiva proclaims. She was referring to investment on the institutional level in the interview, but it's also sage advice for individuals for their spending and consumption habits. Every little bit counts, after all.

Manage your waste.

This is an idea that has long been floating around, but still isn't as widespread as we, concerned citizens, would like. Still, that shouldn't stop you from doing it at home. While you're at it, try to convince your neighbors to do so, too, so that your entire local community could have a united approach towards proper waste management.

Oh, and of course, don't forget the "reduce, reuse, recycle" mantra, whenever it may apply (and it applies to more things than you might first think!).

Upgrade to power-efficient appliances and house fixtures.

If you have the means for it, go ahead and equip your home with newer, more power-efficient appliances and fixtures -- from lightbulbs to television sets. Newer technologies are designed with ecological efficiency in mind, more often than not.

Use technology responsibly.

Being eco-friendly doesn't have to mean being left behind by the latest consumer technology updates. You just have to learn how to be a responsible user of the gadgets that you do own. Unplugging when your gear is fully charged is a basic but often overlooked practice, for example. And speaking of recharging, being more modest about brightness settings, for instance, can help maximize battery life and minimize the times that you need to plug back in.

Still, try not to replace your gadgets too often when not really necessary, and when you do, try to find out where your old stuff goes and see if there's something you can do to help make sure it's disposed of properly.

Remember your switches.

Whether it's the lights, the TV set, or your PC monitor, it pays to remember to shut off when these are not in use. Leaving electronic devices such as TVs or PC displays on "standby" mode isn't as eco-friendly as manufacturers claim. They still consume power and cause emissions that prove harmful in the aggregate sense.

Practice regular house/car maintenance.

Keeping your stuff in tip-top shape can help you ensure that you're not inadvertently adding to the emissions problems that are currently adding up to worsening climate change developments. Home air-conditioning units and/or car engines that are no longer running efficiently do more harm to the planet than you might realize.

Buy and support local produce.

Imported goods aren't always superior. Local food, for example, get to your home faster than imports do, so they're fresher and still packed with nutrients. You also help conserve energy in terms of transport, while also helping support local farming communities, who are often also the best stewards of the natural resources that they tend.

Grow a garden.

Got extra, idle space? Add some more life to your home with some plants! It doesn't have to be a full-fledged garden if you can't support it. What's sure though is that you'll be glad you added a natural fresh air "factory" in that garage's otherwise dead corner.

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