

Go Green or Go Home

It's the catchphrase of the new millennium, "Be Green". Come on, man, everybody's doing it – schools, celebrities, entire communities, even politicians. You can't turn on the tube or pick up the papers without seeing an article pontificating the virtues of being environmentally conscious. It's crazy. It's everywhere. And it's about time!

So what does it mean? Where do we start? I mean, we don't have the power of Arnold out in California or our own website like Leonardo DiCaprio (<http://www.leonardodicaprio.org/>) so what's a regular family living in Longmont, Colorado supposed to do?

Well for starters, get those questions out of your head. There is a ton a family can do to help address the sexy new problems of global warming and sustainability. A single household leading a normal life can make some pretty significant changes that will have immediate impact, especially if you jump on the bandwagon and spread the word. You don't want to miss the bandwagon, do you?

Now that we all have the Spock mindset – “the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few” – it's time to get down to business. A good place to start is with greenhouse gasses. We can all do something here. Essentially this just means reducing the amount of carbon dioxide that we pump into the air. We could all stop breathing but then I'd have no one to read my monthly self-indulgent dribble so let's scratch that and think of a few other ideas to reduce our carbon footprint.

Deep breath and here goes – walk to work, bike to the store, take public transit, buy a hybrid car (do you really need that SUV for trips to the mall?), unplug your cell phone adaptors, turn off the TV, blow up the TV, turn off the lights, turn down the air conditioner, change the filter in your furnace, let your clothes air dry, wear your underwear inside out to get 2 days out of them (hey...it worked in college!).

A big theme in all this is electricity. In places where there is not a lot of hydroelectric generated power, much of it comes from coal burning plants. A plant like this acts like dad sitting on the couch after a bowl of chili followed by a jar of pickled eggs – it generates bad gas!

If you can afford it, speak with your wallet where you can – buy locally (less fossil fuels used when transporting the goods), buy organic, replace your light bulbs with those cute little spiral ones (compact florescent bulbs), buy products made out of recyclable material, stop using toilet paper...well, maybe not that radical.

Green products are becoming more prevalent in all stores and this is as welcome a sight as seeing Paris head back to the big house. The fact that money talks can be used to our advantage (for a change) if we are all a little more discerning with our purchasing power.

If cash is tight and your wallet has a little voice, that's OK too; just live by the Big Three – reduce, reuse and recycle. Everyone always jumps to recycle but we should all first be considering the other two first. Think about how much water you use when brushing your teeth, live with an imperfect lawn (only eco-terrorists have green lawns in July in Colorado), water your plants with the remnants of water bottles, use scrap paper, take shorter showers, shower with a friend...whatever it takes. Then consider reusing things like glass or plastic bottles, or maybe composting organic waste in your garden.

Finally, someone said children are our future. And while I wonder sometimes what this i-Pod wearing, video game playing bunch of skate punks can do for us, I say we give 'em a chance. Educate them and make them aware that while previous generations screwed it up, they can save it. Show your little kids the pioneer of this movement – the Lorax. If you don't know who he is, Google him under Dr. Seuss. He was a man ahead of his time.

While it would take a superhuman to take on all the suggestions out there, I encourage you think evolution, not revolution. Gradual change is the way to go and before you know it you'll be riding around in your electric car, dressed only in recycled clothes, smelling like raw sewage because you only shower on odd numbered months, and blowing your nose into a used tissue. Well, maybe that's a bit extreme. I mean, who can afford an electric car?

Anyway, like it or not, the responsibility is ours. We need to change the way we live and teach our children to make this a normal part of their everyday thought process. With the right attitude, we can all help address this very serious problem – and please, let's not have the discussion if it is actually a problem. If you are debating this, I encourage you to go to the edge of the earth and jump off.

Kermit was right, it ain't easy being green...but if it helps my kids breathe fresher air and see glaciers on mountain tops, I'm willing to give it a try. Are you?