

For us who follow the news and care about this planet, this may seem like horrible times. The world wide effects of global climate change are already being felt and taking their toll. Pollution rates are at an all time high with little indication of slowing. Destruction of lands and ecosystems are increasing as well. Even though we hear bad news about the environment, we also hear good news of people, businesses and governments trying to take action and make changes for the better. I believe saving the world and the environment is something everyone can do as long as we follow three simple steps; educate, living green, and taking action.

The first way of saving the world is to educate. But you must educate yourself first. This enables us to be able to educate others. For example, the reason so many Americans remain skeptical to the reality of climate change is that they truly do not understand the science. This is partially due to misinformation by scientists, a lapse in basic science education in our schools, and poor reporting by the media. Knowledge is power. I believe the more you understand the issues, the more you will be able to make informed earth-friendly lifestyle choices and be able to filter false accusations from actual news.

The second way of saving the world is by living green. There are literally thousands of ways we can change the way we live. Many of the things we can do are obvious and easy: turn off lights and unplug electronics when not in use, drink tap water instead of bottled water, take shorter showers, adjust your thermostat, reuse or recycle everything that you can, and the list goes on and on. These are all easy ways to reduce energy use that will have very little effect on our lifestyle, but remember lifestyle changes are never easy. Although If you want to make an even bigger difference and are up for more of a challenge, make even bigger lifestyle changes.

We should start walking, biking, or taking public transportation to work. We should change our eating habits. Raising animals for food has an incredibly larger environmental impact than raising plants for food, so we should consider going vegetarian, or simply just make meat a smaller portion of our diet. By buying local products, or organically grown products we can make a big difference. Or we can simply eat less, and reduce our weight at the same time.

The biggest lifestyle changes we can make may also require a large investment, which sometimes can pay for itself, other times it may not. What I mean by this is consider buying a more fuel efficient car, or perhaps a hybrid or an electric. Consider investing in solar panels or small wind generators for your home. We can also consider moving into a smaller home that uses less energy.

We should be picking up trash off the sidewalk, taking the bus to work, or installing solar panels in our homes, all this is important and all makes a difference. If everyone did the little things and a larger number of people did the big things, we'd be well on our way to changing the world.

The final thing we can do to save the world is to take action. This means being vocal about environmental issues. Industries, especially the oil and coal industries spend vast amounts of money to try and influence politicians and public officials through campaign donations and heavy lobbying. For this reason it is important that the people's voice is heard too. Make your voice heard. We may be young but we can still make our voices heard. We can go to websites like Change.org and create or sign petitions addressing environmental concerns. We can donate

money to nonprofit organizations like the Sierra Club, Conservation International, The Nature Conservancy, and the Wilderness Society, who uses our donations to do important conservation work, as well as to fund lobbyists in Washington to fight for environmental causes. But I believe the most important thing we can do is to write to our representatives directly. We should write our congressman, our state legislators, and our city councilmen, asking them to address environmental concerns. If enough people made their voices heard in Washington and our state capitols, the politicians might start to listen and make policy decisions that have the most ecological as well as economic sense.

Large or small, our actions do make a difference. If more people make the effort to educate themselves, live greener, and make their voices heard, I believe we can change the world.