

Centering Meditation

Allow yourself to arrive here, in this place, in this moment; setting aside for the moment the cares and concerns of the day. Settle into sitting here in the safety and peace of this sangha. Bring your attention inward to your own gentle breathing in and out. And let yourself settle into a sense of your own goodness, your own kindness, or gentleness, or sincere intentions to heal and awaken. If anything difficult or challenging comes to mind, meet it with your own compassion, your own caring. As Sylvia Boorstein says, “May I meet this moment fully; may I meet it as a friend.”

Dharma Talk: Compassion, Compassionate Action, Equanimity

The chapter in the book, and the speakers for the live course, all followed the arc of compassion, compassionate action, and equanimity. So we’ll look at those three tonight. From this year’s speaker, Julia Butterfly Hill, and last year’s, Joanna Macy, you’ll know the level of inspiration and passion we can bring to our compassion and compassionate action practice.

Compassion is the practice of keeping the heart open in the face of suffering. As Lorraine Hansberry says, “*One cannot live with sighted eyes and feeling heart and not know the miseries which afflict the world.*” Whether that misery is our own heartache over the loss of a close relationship or feeling lost about what course of action to take in the world, or facing the deluge of bad news about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan or global warming or the cutting back of spending for education and the social safety net, any time we open our minds and our hearts and see the suffering that exists in the human condition, all over our dying planet, it takes courage to keep the heart open and allow what we see to register, to allow ourselves to feel the pain, to allow ourselves to care and not run away or shut down. Julia Butterfly Hill says “*It hurts to care. The courage to care is the profoundest courage there is.*”

With compassion practice, as with loving kindness practice, or gratitude practice, or forgiveness practice, we begin where it’s easiest to begin, where we can experience the opening of our heart to caring and experience keeping it open. And we’ll do that in an exercise in just a moment. As we practice compassion, or loving kindness or gratitude or forgiveness, every practice is a path to an awareness and an experience of the inter-connectedness of all of existence, the inter-being-ness of all that is. It’s this inter-connectedness that allows any action on our part, however small, if it comes from the intention to care and to serve, our actions ripple out and impact the world in ways we cannot possibly foresee. The inter-connected rippling is what gives us the courage to act, to do anything, however small, with a noble intention, and trust that our wise effort will have a significant impact.

Experiential Exercise#1: to Practice Compassion

Let's take a moment to sit quietly, drawing your attention inward. Notice your breathing, See if you can focus your awareness of your breathing on your heart center. Breathing gently in and out of your heart center. Let yourself drop into a sense of your own goodness, your own kindness, your own willingness to care in your heart center. And begin sending the conscious intention to yourself: May my heart be open; may I feel my heart being open. As you repeat these phrases to yourself, bring to mind a small moment of suffering, your own, someone you know and already care about deeply. Allow a recognition of suffering to come into your consciousness, held in the heart that is already open, and simply keep your heart open, your mind aware, your awareness holding this moment of suffering tenderly, compassionately: I care, I do care, I do wish that this suffering ease; I do wish, if possible, this suffering cease. Feel your own heart staying opening, caring, sending the wishes of compassion for yourself or someone you already care about.

This practice of compassion extends, as the practice of loving kindness does, to ourselves, a benefactor, a dear friend, a neutral person, a difficult person, to any person or group of people suffering, or causing suffering. The traditional phrases: may I be free of suffering; may I be free of all causes of suffering; may I be free from causing any suffering. I would add what I learned from Debra Chamberlain-Taylor at the Spirit Rock daylong for 9/11: May your suffering return you to your wholeness. And then may you be free of suffering; may you be free of all causes of suffering; may you be free from causing any suffering; may your suffering return you to your wholeness.

This compassion practice, done sincerely, repeatedly, eventually becomes a pathway to the flow of kind, compassionate, loving energy that is the energy of all of existence. Compassion practice opens us up to the awareness, and the experience of, the inter-connectedness, the inter-being-ness of all of existence. As loving kindness practice does. As gratitude practice does. As forgiveness practice does.

We are all connected to everyone and everything in the universe. Therefore, everything one does as an individual affects the whole. All thoughts, words, images, prayers, blessings, and deeds are listened to by all that is.

- Serge Kahili King

All of these practices, of opening the heart, open our hearts to the hearts, the longings, the desires for peace and truth and justice, the life force of all beings. Here, now, there, then and to come. It's experiencing this inter-connectedness that gives us the courage, the wisdom, the passion to act.

I've offered many quotes about compassion, compassionate action, and equanimity in your resources, quotes from last September's newsletter about environmental activism and Ripples Make Waves. Here's a preview:

What we need is what the ancient Israelites called hochma – the science of the heart...the capacity to see, to feel, and then to act as if the future depended on you. Believe me, it does.

- Bill Moyers

The life I touch for good or ill will touch another life, and that in turn another, until who knows where the trembling stops or in what far place my touch will be felt.

- Frederick Buechner

It is I Who Must Begin

*It is I who must begin.
Once I begin, once I try –
here and now,
right where I am,
not excusing myself
by saying things
would be easier elsewhere,
without grand speeches and
ostentatious gestures,
but all the more persistently
--to live in harmony
with the “voice of Being,” as I
understand it within myself
--as soon as I begin that,
I suddenly discover,
to my surprise, that
I am neither the only one,
nor the first,
not the most important one
to have set out upon that road.*

*Whether all is really lost
or not depends entirely on
whether or not I am lost.*

- Vaclav Havel

Every moment brings a choice; every choice has an impact.

- Julia Butterfly Hill

Experiential Exercise #2: The Feeling of Action

Turn to a partner, decide who's A and B; take turns remembering a moment for yourself when your heart was moved by something, touched by something, and was moved to act. You acted, and whatever the actual result was, what was the feeling in your heart because you acted. Two minutes each.

Research shows that a major contributor to our own happiness is contributing to the good of others. Compassionate action flows naturally from a compassionate heart when we're not shut down in grief, in pain, in aversion, in confusion, in overwhelm. We join forces in community with the sincere longings and desires of millions of hearts, of billions of creatures, to the benign healing energy of the universe itself, including the healing energy of the earth itself. It's OK to cry, it's OK to grieve, it's OK to acknowledge our fear; it's OK to be outraged at the destruction and injustice that's happening to our planet and to people all over the planet. We become angry because we care. And, it's important to not be de-railed, overwhelmed, stopped in our tracks. We have to keep a balanced perspective. And that's where equanimity comes in.

Equanimity is stepping back from the rawness and intensity of our actual lived experienced, stepped back into the spacious awareness that can hold the bigger picture; this is what is. I can care, and I can choose to act, knowing my actions become part of the 10,000 causes upstream that change the next moment downstream. Equanimity is letting go of control, even as we choose to cultivate the karma of Wise Effort. Equanimity is the deep trust that, as Joanna Macy says, "the smallest act with clear intention has repercussions we can barely discern. And the radical unknowing of how it will turn out is essential to our courage. It allows us to do what calls your heart."

The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's hunger meet.

- Reverend Frederick Buechner

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.

- The Talmud

I long to accomplish great and noble tasks, but it is my chief duty to accomplish humble tasks as though they were great and noble. The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker.

- Helen Keller

Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.

- Vaclav Havel

Experiential Exercise #3: What Keeps Your Heart Open?

Taking turns with a partner, identify what practice is helpful to you in keeping your heart open, in keeping faith in your intentions to act in response to the suffering of the world. Joanna Macy calls compassion the fuel of action; what helps you keep your heart open and continue to engage in responsible action in the world?

Joanna Macy says: *If you are not afraid of the suffering in the world, nothing in the world can stop you.*

Experiential Exercise #4: Practice Compassion with Equanimity

Let yourself sit quietly, drawing your attention inward, settling into the kindness and caring of your own heart. Then send yourself the wishes: May there be peace in my heart as I endeavor to open my heart. May there be peace in my heart as I endeavor to keep my heart open, as I find the courage to care. May there be peace in my heart as I am moved to act; may there be wisdom in my heart to guide my acting wisely. May there be peace and wisdom in my heart and I act, and trust, and let go.

Additional Exercises

We have two resources for exercises to practice compassion tonight:

1) the exercises James' suggests in his monthly practice letter [handout below]

And, because James' guest speakers on Compassion, Julia Butterfly Hill and Joanna Macy have been such passionate and compassionate environmental activists for decades, and because, in a previous lifetime, I used to work for Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, and because Bill McKibben's online organization for global climate change, offers so many easy and effective ways to join others in protecting our environment and saving our planet, I have a focus on environmental protection and exercises for doing that. [handout below]

Closing Meditation

May our sincere efforts to awaken the natural compassion of our hearts, to keep our hearts open in the face of suffering, tragedy, injustice, oppression, the destruction of the very earth that sustains all of existence, move us to act in passionate and compassionate ways for the healing and wholeness of all beings. May we deepen our equanimity, the calm abiding with whatever is, as it is, even as we move skillfully to address what is, keep us steady, and effective. May our joy deepen with the Wise Effort of these practices.

Deepening Joy

Compassion

October 2011

[from James' October 2011 Awakening Joy monthly practice letter]

Four Exercises for the Expression of Compassion

Besides doing compassion practice in formal meditation, as shown above, you can exercise compassion throughout your day whenever you see someone having a hard time. The next pages discuss four other ways you can develop your compassion this month.

Compassion Practice #1: Being a Caring Witness

Often compassion just means being there for someone. Instead of trying to fix someone or take away their suffering, your caring presence is often the most healing thing you can offer someone in pain.

Exercise #1: This month when someone is going through a difficult time, before going into action mode, first take on the practice of just being with them. Listen to their experience. Imagine what it's like for them to be going through it. If you were in their situation what kind of presence would you want from others? Find a centered, balanced place inside that is mainly witnessing them in a loving, supportive way. You may find it useful to ask them questions that help them get in touch with what they're feeling. Let go of any agenda to try to fix them.

Compassion Practice #2: Responding to Those Near to Us

Relieving the suffering around us brings a tremendous uplift of the heart. It's also one of the most effective ways to get us out of our own suffering. For some, focusing on our family or those close to us in need of support is the ideal arena to express our caring. For others, volunteering through some social service program is a source of real joy. Here are some quotes on service that I find particularly inspiring:

"I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve." Albert Schweitzer

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." Anne Frank

"I slept and dreamt that Life was Joy. I awoke and saw that Life was Service. I acted and behold, Service was Joy." Rabindrinath Tagore

"Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves."

James M. Barrie

One research study showed that “volunteering contributes to happiness by decreasing boredom and creating an increased sense of purpose in life. Volunteers, on average are twice as likely to feel happy with themselves as non-volunteers.”

Exercise #2: Consider a simple, doable project that puts you into in an environment of service to someone local to you. It could be spending time with someone you know who needs support or it could be volunteering in a new setting. Don’t do anything that will take an unrealistic amount of time. You don’t want to *resent* your compassion practice! Do it as an experiment in discovering how it feels to step outside your comfort zone. Be present for whatever wholesome (or other) feelings arise as you serve another.

Compassion Practice #3: Responding to a Suffering Far Away

We only need to look at a newspaper to see all the other kinds of suffering in the world. If you are moved by any given situation, ask yourself, what can I do in a small way to express my caring? If you feel outrage over how human beings can be so insensitive or cruel to one another, don’t let the outrage poison you. Go underneath those feelings to the place of real caring for those who are the victims (and perhaps try to feel compassion for the ignorance of the perpetrators). If you feel helpless over victims of a natural disaster, ask how you could you respond wisely, rather than feeling powerless. Stay in touch with your caring heart, which might motivate you to act from that wholesome place.

Exercise #3: Consider responding to some situation beyond your neighborhood. Perhaps climate change or in lands far away (people in Haiti, Darfur or Burma, victims of war or natural disasters). Whatever action you take, whether writing a letter or sending funds, do it as a conscious compassion practice. You might try saying the phrases “May you be free of suffering” or “I care about your suffering” (including Gaia) quietly before or after you write a letter or send money.

Compassion Practice #4: Developing Other Bodhisattvas

One of the most joyful aspects of being a Bodhisattva-in-Training is helping develop other bodhisattvas. Since we ourselves can’t relieve all the suffering on the planet, the world needs everyone who is inspired to act compassionately. A joyful bodhisattva can help

relieve suffering by empowering and mentoring others. It's a real joy to support someone's development and help them blossom into their full potential.

We don't have to be famous or charismatic leaders to make a difference. Each of us can empower others to find their destiny. Every young person who hasn't reached their full potential and has a good heart is a perfect candidate to invest in. Even those who, in their confusion and ignorance, cause suffering to others have great potential. In the best-seller

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier, Ishmael Beah writes about how he transformed from someone who committed unspeakable acts of cruelty into the inspiring presence he is today. His road back was possible through the love and mentoring of others who saw he was capable of something else. It's never too late for someone to change and turn their confusion into wisdom and compassion.

I see the process of mentoring and empowering as the following:

1. See the good in that person, including their unique gifts and talents.
2. See the potential they have to help others.
3. Believe in them and let them know it.
4. Help awaken those gifts through encouraging and supporting them to develop themselves.

By mentoring and empowering that person we are helping a seed of deep compassion and wisdom come into bloom. It's tremendously rewarding and a guaranteed way to bring some joy into your life.

Practice #4: To develop another bodhisattva this month, you might initiate the mentoring of someone, using the steps below.

- Think of someone in your life who respects or looks up to you; someone who hasn't fully come into their own power or realized their full potential.
- In whatever way that feels appropriate, let them know you believe in them and that you're in their cheering section.
- Within reasonable parameters that work for both of you, be there for them as a guide, mentor or pillar of support.
- Notice how this feels inside and how it affects the relationship between you.

Awakening Joy as Bodhisattva Practice

Awakening joy in ourselves can be done as a bodhisattva act in itself. Developing more joy in ourselves is not a selfish exercise. It reminds others of their capacity to do the same as we help awaken their joyful heart. It becomes contagious. If we bring a little more joy into

the world, that is a genuine contribution. Remembering this can be a strong motivation to continue our own joy practice. Rather than being self-indulgent or frivolous it becomes a gift we give to everyone we meet.

Widening Our Circle of Compassion

As Patricia Ellsberg says in the opening remarks of her guided meditation this month, the great challenge and opportunity in our lives is to extend empathy and caring to all people, to all beings and to the earth. This is the challenge and the joy of Bodhisattva practice.

Albert Einstein articulated this eloquently in a quote that I want to share with you as you go

through the month:

A human being is a part of the whole called by us “universe”; a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

10 SIMPLE WAYS TO SLOW CLIMATE CHANGE

1) Drive less and drive smart.

- Take the 2-mile challenge. Whenever possible, bike or walk places that are a 2-mile or less commute. Take public transit or carpool when biking or walking are not options.
- Get your engine tuned up and keep your tires inflated.

2) Be energy-wise at home.

- Buy energy-efficient appliances when you can; besides saving about 30% less energy than ones made 10 years ago, you'll save money in the long-term.
- Unplug rarely used appliances. Many appliances still use up electricity even when turned off.
- Turn off your computer when not in use (especially at night), rather than putting it “to sleep.”
- Turn off lights when you leave the room.
- Change your light bulbs to Compact Fluorescent bulbs.

3) Limit disposables.

- Take your own coffee mug to the coffee shop, instead of getting a paper one. Some cafes even give discounts if you bring your own cup.

- Use cloth napkins rather than paper napkins, and rags and dish towels instead of paper towels.
- For large gatherings try using compostable or recycled forks, knives, plates and cups.
- Switch to rechargeable batteries.
- Solve the “paper or plastic” dilemma by taking your own bags to the store, or say “no thank you” to a bag when making small purchases.
- Instead of buying bottled water, get a filter for household water, and carry around your own water bottle.

4) Buy organic and locally-grown produce, or grow your own .

- Try out your local Farmers Market or a Community Supported Agriculture program, which lets you buy shares in a farmer’s annual harvest.
- Grow your own fruits and vegetables! Tear out part of your lawn and plant an organic edible garden and Food Forest.

5) Practice water conservation at home.

- Check for leaks in your home.
- Install a low-flow showerhead, and take shorter showers.
- Avoid letting the water run while brushing your teeth, shaving or washing dishes.
- Remove your lawn and plant natives instead, which use much less water.

6) Recycle everything you can.

- Review which items can be recycled in your area.
- All electronic waste must now be recycled in California. This included computers, monitors, electronic games, TVs, stereos, cell phones, etc. Check your local phone book to find out where you can recycle electronic waste.

7) Green your house. Residential energy use accounts for 16% of greenhouse gas emissions. You can:

- Control heat, air and moisture leakage by sealing windows and doors;
- Take advantage of local, state and federal rebates and tax credits to insulate your home and buy double-pane windows;
- Consider renewable energy sources like solar electric systems, compact wind turbines and geothermal heat pumps to help power your homes; and
- Consider bamboo flooring, cork tiles and countertops made from recycled wastepaper if you are remodeling your home soon.

8) Follow eco-tips for washing your clothes.

- Use cold water to wash and rinse.
- Save up to launder a few big loads instead many small ones.

- Be the first on the block to use a clothesline on sunny days.

9) Eat less meat.

- Addicted to burgers? You can start slowly by cutting back on eating meals with meat to once or twice a week.

10) Get involved in your community and spread the word about going green.

- Join the Transition Towns movement, mobilizing communities through organizing efforts to be more resilient around the peak oil and climate change crises.

- Join organizations like the Sierra Club, 1Sky, Greenpeace, Bay Localize and Union for Concerned Scientists, who are working around the clock to slow climate change.

- Browse the web for more tips. Grist.org, Idealbite.org and Treehugger.org are some of many sites dedicated to sustainable living.

- Join one of the Ecology Center's Climate Action Teams.

Resources: Quotes from E-Newsletter 9-27-10 Ripples Make Waves

Every single one of us can do something, however small, to make a difference.

- Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Every moment brings a choice; every choice has an impact.

- Julia Butterfly Hill

One cannot live with sighted eyes and feeling heart and not know the miseries which afflict the world.

- Lorraine Hansberry

It hurts to care; the courage to care is the profoundest courage there is.

- Julia Butterfly Hill

What we need is what the ancient Israelites called hochma – the science of the heart...the capacity to see, to feel, and then to act as if the future depended on you. Believe me, it does.

- Bill Moyers

We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results.

- Herman Melville

We are all connected to everyone and everything in the universe. Therefore, everything one does as an individual affects the whole. All thoughts, words, images, prayers, blessings, and deeds are listened to by all that is.

- Serge Kahili King

Relationships are all there is. Everything in the universe only exists because it is in relationship to everything else. Nothing exists in isolation. We have to stop pretending we are individuals that can go it alone.

- Margaret Wheatley

The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's hunger meet.

- Reverend Frederick Buechner

You don't need to do everything. Do what calls your heart; effective action comes from love. It is unstoppable, and it is enough.

- Joanna Macy.

The life I touch for good or ill will touch another life, and that in turn another, until who knows where the trembling stops or in what far place my touch will be felt.

- Frederick Buechner

The least movement is of importance to all nature. The entire ocean is affected by a pebble.

- Blaise Pascal

We don't accomplish anything in this world alone...and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something.

- Sandra Day O'Connor

I long to accomplish great and noble tasks, but it is my chief duty to accomplish humble tasks as though they were great and noble. The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker.

- Helen Keller

Inaction in the face of injustice is as impactful as the actions of others.

- Julia Butterfly Hill

Until one is committed there is always hesitancy,
The chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness,
Concerning all acts of initiative and creation,
There is one elementary truth,
The ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans:
The moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too.

All sorts of things occur to help that would never otherwise have occurred.
 A whole stream of events issues from the decision,
 Raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen accidents and meetings
 And material assistance which no man could have dreamed
 Would come his way.

W.H. Murray, deputy leader of 1951 Scottish Expedition to climb Mt. Everest

You just need to be a flea against injustice. Enough committed fleas biting strategically
 can make even the biggest dog uncomfortable and transform even the biggest nation.

Marian Wright Edelman

It is I Who Must Begin

It is I who must begin.
 Once I begin, once I try –
 here and now,
 right where I am,
 not excusing myself
 by saying things
 would be easier elsewhere,
 without grand speeches and
 ostentatious gestures,
 but all the more persistently
 --to live in harmony
 with the “voice of Being,” as I
 understand it within myself
 --as soon as I begin that,
 I suddenly discover,
 to my surprise, that
 I am neither the only one,
 nor the first,
 not the most important one
 to have set out upon that road.

Whether all is really lost
 or not depends entirely on
 whether or not I am lost.

- Vaclav Havel

Behind every human being who cries out for help there may be a million or more equally
 entitled to attention. How to determine which of one millions sounds surrounding you is
 more deserving than the rest? Do not concern yourself in such speculations. You will

never know, you will never need to know. Reach out and take hold of the one who happens to be nearest.

- Norman Cousins

Do not depend on the hope of results. You may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no result at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect. As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results, but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself.

- Thomas Merton

Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.

- Vaclav Havel

Hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up.

- David Orr

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.

- The Talmud

Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

- Reinhold Niebuhr

The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems.

- Mohandis K. Gandhi

RESOURCES for Compassionate Action from E-Newsletter Ripples Make Waves September 2010

Eaarth: Making Life on a Tough New Planet by Bill McKibben. Times Books, 2010.

The latest brilliant, comprehensive, and unsettling perspective on accelerating climate change that has brought our planet to the brink of destruction as we have known it, and what informed, inspired world citizens can do about it, from Bill McKibben, best-selling author of more than a dozen books, calling attention for more than two decades to the deep economic, political, social changes we need to make – NOW – to sustain life on our planet at all.

Bill is the founder of www.350.org; an international internet community of activists dedicated to saving our planet and human civilization as we know it by reducing our carbon footprint NOW. The name 350 comes from the number 350 – the safe level of CO2 in our atmosphere (350 parts per million) – that could sustain a healthy humanity on a healthy planet. Levels of CO2 remained at 295ppm for most of human history until industrial changes in the last two centuries began causing CO2 levels to rise to the current 397ppm; scientists worldwide are documenting we are now risking irreversible climate change and global destruction unless we reduce CO2 levels to the earth’s “safe zone” of 350ppm by 2050.

www.350.org is organizing 10/10/10 (October 10, 2010) – a “Global Work Party” of 3679 events in 166 countries (and counting) to reduce our carbon emissions by 10% in the next year. The website will lift you right up and plug you right in to tons of ideas for empowered, effective wise action, links to environmental organizations and events, videos and photos of the world wide 350 movement, an utterly delightful 2-minute animated video to introduce the concept of 350 to viewers worldwide who might speak one of the world’s 4,000 languages other than English., and an e-e-e-asy navigation system into organizing/participating in 10/10/10 events in your local community.

Examples of ideas to put a toe in the water, generate a ripple, hang in there and watch the ripple become a wave: www.350.org has links to how to do all of this:

“Low-hanging fruit” in efforts to reduce carbon foot print:

- a. reduce-re-use-re-cycle, which most of us are already doing
- b. energy efficiency: as simple as changing a light bulb and weatherstripping your doors.
- c. volunteer at a local trash clean-up day; local part and playgrounds are a natural.
- d. decorate cloth grocery bags and gift them to your friends.
- e. host an environmental movie screening of Inconvenient Truth; still a good choice

Longer term – for those ready to surf bigger waves.

- a. organize a tree planting on your block
- b. initiate a solar project in your community (like solar water heaters on rooftops of civic buildings)
- c. start a local organic community garden
- d. paint bike lanes in your city
- e. organize composting at your child’s school.

You can find enough ideas and links on www.350.org to channel a lifetime of compassionate action. Check it out, open your heart, and inspire yourself. You can change your life and impact thousands of other lives, right here, right now.

<http://www.ted.com>

TED is a 25 year old non-profit devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. TED brings to annual conferences in Long Beach, California, Oxford, England, and Mysore, India the world's cutting edge thinkers and doers in science, technology, culture, design and the arts, business and global issues. Over 4 days, 50 speakers each take an 18 minute slot to talk about topics as varied as mirror neurons, myths that shape the growth of business in Asian v. Western economies, harnessing water resources in desert climates, encouraging creativity and passion in schools. 450 conference talks, translated into 50 languages, are now easily viewable, for free, from TED's website. Samples of recent environmental talks:

Johan Rockstrom: Let the environment guide our development

Lisa Margonelli: the political chemistry of oil

Rob Hopkins: a transition to a world without oil

Kamal Meattle: how to grow fresh air

Mitchell Joachim: Don't build your home, grow it!

Ray Anderson: the business logic of sustainability

Mark Bittman: what's wrong with what we eat

Steward Brand proclaims 4 environmental heresies

Al Gore: Averting climate crises

Yann Arthus-Bertrand captures the fragile earth in wide angle

www.karmatube.org is a collection of short "do something" videos coupled with simple actions that every viewer can do. Samples: (4-5 minutes each)

The Secret Life of Paper. Paper is costly, in loss of forests, air and water pollution from manufacturing, and the by-product methane gas in landfills. Ways to reduce, reuse, recycle one of the most elemental products in our every day lives.

Flow: A Move about the Importance of Water. Water as a public resource is increasingly privatized, processed, and packaged and sold back to us in plastic bottles at huge profits. Provocative questions about a resource we have taken for granted and that we are rapidly losing.

The Plastic Battle – an eloquent plea to reduce-reuse-recycle rather than drown our planet in plastic bottles, bags, toys, etc.

Earthship Biotechture: about stand-alone homes that make their own energy, harvest their own water, and treat their own sewage.

Ecological Intelligence: How Knowing the Hidden Impacts of What We Buy Can Change Everything by Daniel Goleman, Broadway Books, 2009 and www.goodguide.com

Ecological Intelligence proposes a radical transparency in how consumers “vote” for sustainable manufacturing, distribution and disposal of consumer goods. Literally knowing the hidden impacts of what we buy can change everything.

www.goodguide.com helps consumers know those hidden impacts by crunching data from hundreds of complex life cycle assessment data bases for 70,000 toys, foods, personal care and household products. (Electronics and apparel are in the works.) Good Guide analyzes all the data of a product’s back story: carcinogens, carbon emissions in the supply chain, how the workers who made the product were treated. Then Good Guide assigns all products a bottom line 0-10 LCA rating of sustainability.

The genius of Good Guide is that it’s downloadable to an i-phone. You can be in your local grocery store debating which brand of detergent to buy, click on Good Guide and in about 15 seconds see the ecological footprint of each brand compared to other brands.

www.awakeningthedreamer.org

Watch the 4-minute Symposium trailer to experience new energy and hope for an environmentally sustainable and socially just future for our planet. Symposiums are offered regularly all across the country and around the world, a guaranteed afternoon of inspiration to become the change we seek. Available through the Symposium is The Sustainable World Sourcebook, a wealth of facts about issues, viable solutions, and resources for action.

www.fouryearsgo.org

“The next four years will determine our planet’s next 1,000.”

Responding to the urgency of the changes needed in how we inhabit and impact our earth, Four Years. Go works to catalyze collaborative action among environmental organizations, NGO’s, individuals, companies and communities to reverse the disastrous trends – profound climate disruption, global water shortages, global poverty, loss of topsoil, depletion of fisheries, erosion of democracy, unsustainable population growth, mass extinction of plant and animal species, economic breakdown – by 2014. The 3-minute trailer explores what can be done in the next four year to create an environmentally sustainable, socially just, spiritually fulfilling future for the next 1,000 years.

www.bioneers.org

The annual Bioneers conference, October 14-18, 2010, San Rafael, CA, is a leading-edge forum where social and scientific innovators focus on viable solutions to social and environmental crises. “There is as much cause for hope as for horror.” This conference is

packed with plenaries, workshops, and inter-active events to lead people through the urgent transition to a healthy, sustainable, and just planet. Sample topics:

Human-made Climate Change: A Moral, Political and Legal Issue

The Cutting-Edge of Earth Systems Science: Re-Wiring the Brain with Geo-Visualization

The Organic Challenge: Growing Market Share While Maintaining Ecological Value

Generations Ahead: New Legions of Activists Share How Leadership Is Inspired, Activated and Sustained

The Environment and Its Relationship to Equity and the Economy

Everybody's Planet, Everybody's Movement: Why Equity Is an Environmental Issue and Environment is an Equity Issue

Moving On: Greening Cars and Wheels

Shared Prosperity and Mutual Aid: Cooperatives, Community Building and the Economics of Equity