



Climate Change

By Wendy Marks
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It really makes me crazy when people expect me to panic about something. I generally try to take my life in a more Zen direction, and panic as a way of dealing with things really doesn't work for me— my immediate response is to stiffen up and turn off my brain. And if you're trying to change my opinion using strong judgements, it often just makes me feel either helpless or angry. I wouldn't be surprised if many of you were nodding your head at this perspective. So let's get out of the paradigm and talk about climate change.

Firstly, it's happening. There are few, if any, thinking people who deny that the climate is changing. Anyone who has visited Miami can see that the streets flood all the time, and that this is a new pattern over the past 10 years, not something that is just part of a cycle. Anyone looking at a weather map can see that the glaciers are melting. We can argue about what the impact will be, but it won't change the fact that they're melting.

Secondly, we can argue forever about who is to blame for the situation, but I'm not sure it makes any difference at this point. Judging and finger-pointing are just going to make people back into their corners and harden their positions. What proportion is caused by humans or natural cycles of events or meteorites, doesn't matter much to me at this point. What does seem important is that we have an obligation to at least try to slow things down. I really don't like the idea of leaving this mess to my children, not to mention the children they may have. One might argue that the human race deserves to be destroyed, but in light of



Shakespeare and Martin Luther King and Bach, we've also done some good stuff. So who cares whether we deserve it or not. I think it's time to at least make an effort to move the needle in whatever way we can.

Take some control.

I think the first step is saying “Even if this is helpless I want to at least try to change things in what little way I can.” This may seem simple but as many of you know, I think intention is the most important thing in life. So set one, and then take a look at the options below and perhaps do some of them. Or do something else. Create something brilliant— or just remember to recycle your trash.

Join a group.

Noise matters. It especially matters to politicians. If, in order to gain your vote, you require that candidates do something about climate change, they’re way more likely to do something. Civil action in its many forms can change things. Look at the ozone panic we had that is now a non-issue. Look at the smoking lobby. If you don’t feel like marching in the streets (and I certainly don’t), join the local Green Whatever group and help your town move toward more sustainability. In my town the green lobby got Walgreens to get rid of those damn plastic bags. I was shocked to see people walking out of my local Walgreens with paper bags. Hooray! Those plastic things can take up to 1000 years to biodegrade.

If you don’t feel like joining a local or national group, give them some money. Every group needs money, even if it’s a few bucks. It will help. Tithing in any form is good for the soul.

Eat less meat and dairy.

There’s a lot of scientific evidence about how the burping and flatulence of cows and other ruminants are bad for the environment. I used to fly gliders, and one of the things that every glider flyer knew was that if you fly over a farm you are going to get a thermal lift from the methane gas. That made an impression on me. For many reasons, including the widespread use of antibiotics to treat cattle, I was a vegetarian for 20 years. I no longer am; I do like a hamburger now and then. But by reducing the amount of meat and dairy we eat, and we do eat an awful lot in this country, that small step can help.

Insulate.

It’s cold in Massachusetts, it’s hot in Florida, it’s humid in the Bahamas. Insulating your place of living just makes sense. Most states have programs that can assist you financially in making some changes to your home, even if you are a renter. I can tell you that by insulating my house I am saving a lot of dough. Since changing my windows, and insulating my attic and outside walls, I’ve reduced my fuel consumption significantly— probably by 20%. I have an old house so maybe that’s more than other people will save, but any savings that is also good for the environment seems like a win-win to me.

Install solar panels.

Yes, I confess I’m a nut about solar panels. I love the simplicity and elegance of taking energy from the sun. It used to be really expensive to do this. Now that solar panels are made cheaply and they know how to install them in a way that

doesn't damage anything, why not do it? They will reduce your electric bill significantly. A lot of people don't know that you don't have to buy them; you can lease them from most of the solar companies, which means that they are responsible for repairs. The leasing cost per month is small, and what you save will be greater than the monthly fee. To me this is a no brainer. And by the way, solar companies will make an assessment of your house for free, so you have nothing to lose.

Rethink transportation.

A touchy subject for a lot of people. My son rides a bicycle and wears a helmet that says "One less car on the road." When he needs a car, he borrows or leases one. I think that's the extreme position— although he's way younger than a lot of us and lives in the city— but I have to respect his choice.

At the very least you can get a more fuel-efficient car. This is another way to "vote" with your money. I understand that people have different needs, different size families and things to lug around, but in any car category you can find one that is more efficient. I have dreams about owning a Tesla. They are cool and pretty, but at this time in my life I can only have one car and I don't have the money for a Tesla. So I drive a fuel-efficient car, and I try to use public transportation as much as possible. If you add up the amount that you'll save on gas over a period of a few years, a fuel-efficient car becomes a smart financial move. (And these days they can actually accelerate.) Carpooling can make a big difference, too.

Recycle and reuse.

There are endless ways you can reduce your waste and recycle more. Try switching to glass food containers. They're elegant, they don't emit chemicals, and things just taste better in them. One of my pet peeves is bottled water. Bottled water is just somebody else's tap water. If you don't like your tap water get an inexpensive under-counter filter and buy yourself a water bottle. Plus I'm not sure we need to have water with us every minute of the day. What happened to water bubblers? I know I'm dating myself here, but I really used to like the fact that I could be at a park and go to a water bubbler and get a drink.

It's rather easy to recycle paper these days, but please think about where your plastic is going. Think about reusing it or making sure that it gets to a recycling facility. A lot of people think that plastic recycles completely. Plastic only recycles about 35%— the rest is waste. Aluminum is the only thing that recycles 100%. I thought that was pretty interesting.

Join your local Freecycle group. You'll get online notices about things people no longer need that you can pick up for free, and you can give away things that others can use.

Just bring your consciousness to these things and you can make a big difference.

So the “Wendy take” is don’t panic— just do something. Or a bunch of somethings. Or use your wonderful, beautiful mind to create a way in which we can make less waste or do something with the waste that we have. Somebody invented polar fleece using plastic bottles. I love polar fleece!

Namaste,

Wendy