

The Three Week Challenge



Let's tackle Climate Change together.

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Action is the antidote to anxiety and despair. Climate change feels like an overwhelming inevitability, but if we can find any way to contribute to healing our planet, we can gain a small degree of comfort and feel engaged rather than passive. One 'theory' is that we can change our habits if we stick with it for three weeks.

So here's the challenge: starting with the easiest habits to change, food and waste food. Of course many of you will already be aware of these habits but there are many others who haven't got around to thinking about climate change, especially whilst we also deal with covid, so this might be a nudge in the right direction.

Mark the boxes of one or more changes you can work on, and tick any boxes that you are already doing. This gives you an idea of what areas you can work on. Persevere for 3 weeks to cement your new habit, and of course pass the Three Week Challenge on to as many people as you can. Then you can work on new choices, or move on to the next area. As you move down the list the challenges become more complex and some are costly, so just pick those you feel comfortable to have a try at. There is a bare bones checklist at the end of this document to print and tick as you like.

The idea is that if enough of us make small changes, together we can make a big change. This is not a new idea but definitely worth reminding ourselves that we can make a contribution and it may be bigger than we expect. At the end of each article there are references and links where you can learn more.

FOOD

We all need it, but it is possible to improve the way we shop, so here goes.

- Minimise packaging:** Choose items with less plastic. Recycle soft plastics, check out 'soft plastic recycling schemes' to find your closest drop off point.
- Recycle bags:** Reuse bags from bulk bin purchases, use cloth bags for vegetables etc.
- Meat:** Cutting it back, even a little bit is a good start. Try smaller meat portions, or if meat-free meals are a new idea, try to introduce one meat-free recipe each week.
- Free range or organic:** If you are eating less meat perhaps you can afford to buy free range or organic. Bostocks Chickens work out great value, and chickens and fish do not produce methane.
- Fish:** Eat only sustainable NZ fish, this seems to be Lemon Fish and Gurnard in Hawkes Bay. Sadly Tuna is not a good choice. It seems that Salmon is ok at this point in time.
- Locally produced:** Buy as much food that is locally produced and in season, supporting your local community and cutting back on food miles.

Grow your own: If you don't have a veggie garden, even growing some silverbeet or lettuces in a bucket is a good start. Learn how to grow sprouts, alfalfa and mung beans are easy.

Eat healthy: It's good for you and your family. Takeaways now and then, not every week. Vegetables are cheap and good for you, and often work out less expensive. A general guide is to shop around the outer edges of the supermarket where the unprocessed products can mostly be found. Beans and lentils are a great addition helping to bulk out meals and add nutrients.

FOOD WASTE

Possibly one of the simplest but most effective changes we can make.

Bread: One of our most common items at the dump. Don't throw away bread crusts, freeze them to use later. Dry them for breadcrumbs, turn them into croutons for soups, make a veggie loaf. Make bread pudding or bread and butter pudding. Don't forget to recycle the bags.

Leftovers: Use them up for lunches or freeze.

Cook extra: Cook enough for a couple of nights, even extra pasta, rice or spuds makes the next meal easier.

Shopping list: Shop with a list and buy what you need for the next week or two. Of course your usual staples like rice and pasta get to stay.

Storage: Store food so that the newest is at the back of the pantry or fridge (don't forget the freezer) and you can easily use up the older stuff first. Check your fridge contents every so often to ensure nothing is expiring or about to go to waste.

Stocks and soups: Learn to make stock or soups using the odds and ends of veges, meat bones etc.

Composting: Learn about composting, a worm farm or bokashi bucket is a great way to feed your gardens. Maybe you can set up a system with family or neighbours, or share community gardens.

Best before: You can use food items which are after their best before date as long as they look and smell Ok. Anything past it's use by date is not OK.

Cleaner: Citrus peels can be added to a jar of vinegar to make a fresh smelling cleaner.

Fridge supplies: Try making a "what-have-we-got-left-in-the-fridge meal" instead of having a set plan for what you want for dinner?

www.lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz

www.justtoclaify.com/is-eating-tuna-bad-for-the-environment/

www.thespinnoff.co.nz/food/new-world/food-waste/06-05-2019/supermarkets-create-tonnes-of-food-waste-every-week-heres-what-happens-to-it/

www.kiwicare.co.nz/advice/garden/how-to-make-the-best-compost/

STUFF, STUFF and LESS STUFF

Recycle, reuse or pass it on.

- Habits:** Adopt the new shopping mantra “do I need this?” or “do I want this?”. See the “Buyerarchy of Needs” (it’s a mouthful I know) and also the link below about Fast Fashion and its impact on the environment.
- Quality:** If you are purchasing a new item, try to get the best quality and most durable option.
- Minimise:** Reduce plastics, recycle whatever you can, especially useful if you don’t get your rubbish collected. Check out your local dump’s recycling and also your local Environment Centre. Also reuse your plastic bottles to get refills of hand soap, washing up and laundry liquid, oils and vinegars etc.
- Give away:** Pass on items that are no longer needed to others or op shops, as long as they are in good condition.
- Babies and young children:** If you have a baby or young children, get or make some soft cloths instead of disposable wipes, carry some damp ones in a bag or pot when you go out. Revisit reusable nappies, there are some great ones available now. Check out Trade Me or local online garage sales.
- Mend or repurpose:** There’s loads of info on google these days on how to fix things.
- Sharing:** Are there some items you can share with family, friends or neighbours? A bit challenging but there might be something, make sure you all agree on the terms of sharing such as maintenance and repairs.
- Takeaways:** Use your own coffee cup and keep it in the car, also having some containers for takeaways can be very handy.
- Paper Towels:** Toilet paper and hand towels can be purchased in bulk by mail order and come without extra packaging, Greencane for example supply these made from sugarcane and bamboo.

www.environmentcentre.org.nz/

www.xtremezerowaste.org.nz/

www.recycle.co.nz/

www.recycling.kiwi.nz/

www.opshopdirectory.co.nz/

www.nzopshops.co.nz/

www.corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/fast-fashion/

www.livegreenish.com/the-buyerarchy-of-needs-a-more-intentional-approach-to-consumption/



OUR ENVIRONMENT

Bigger picture stuff, not all of us can do these but any step is a step in the right direction. For those of us lucky enough to have gardens there are some simple changes we can make.

- Litter:** Don't throw rubbish out of your car window, or leave where it can be blown around. Pick up any rubbish you see when out walking. Much of the rubbish on the roadsides gets washed into storm drains, then into our waterways and eventually into the sea.
- Donate:** Give to a cause that supports protecting our natural environment, eg. Forest & Bird, Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund others?
- Educate:** Learn about methods of gardening that do not rely on pesticides and weed killer, as this will encourage a wide range of bugs and birds to live in your garden.
- Lawns:** Mow your lawns less often, now there's a challenge!
- Mulching:** Use old cardboard boxes, newspaper etc topped with dried grass clippings, dried leaves, hay or straw. Bark mulch is ok for flower beds. This all keeps weeds down and prevents water loss in hot weather.
- Trees:** Plant trees, or find someone that has the space to plant them.
- Carbon Offsetting:** A great thing that we can do is to offset our carbon output. For an affordable way to do this here in NZ, see Toitu Envirocare.

www.rnz.co.nz/programmes/fight-for-the-wild

www.forestandbird.org.nz/

www.greenpeace.org/aotearoa/

www.eco.org.nz/

<https://www.toitu.co.nz/>

www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/volunteer/make-a-donation/

www.landcareresearch.co.nz/discover-our-research/land/soil-and-ecosystem-health/regenerative-agriculture-in-new-zealand/

www.calmthefarm.nz/

WATER

A most precious commodity, what can we do to avoid waste and keep it clean?

- Rubbish:** Be aware of your rubbish and where it goes, see previous challenges.
- Turn it off:** Don't leave taps running if you don't need to. Choose eco function on washing machines or dishwashers if you can, only rinse dishes that are seriously dirty.
- Washing dishes:** If you don't have a dishwasher it's more economical to wash dishes in the sink or a bowl rather than under a running tap.

Rainwater collecting: Consider setting up one small rainwater tank, maybe off a shed or garage roof. It could collect into a dustbin sized container and could supply you with fresh drinking water, or water for your plants.

Showering: Challenge yourself and your family to having only a 4 minute shower.

Environmental products: Use eco friendly cleaning products and hair and shower washes, or just plain soap, don't forget the carwash suds (if you wash your car!).

Grey water: Can you set up a system for reusing your grey water from showers, washing machine etc.

Composting toilet: We saved the best to last... why not install a composting toilet? They save water and do not need processing in big sewage ponds which often end up polluting our waters. The compost created can be used after a year or two for feeding trees and shrubs.

<http://www.cleanwaterways.org.nz/>

<https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/1820-freshwater-macroinvertebrates>

<https://niwa.co.nz/sites/niwa.co.nz/files/Benthic%20Macroinvertebrates%20ID%20Guide.pdf> This is a guide to creatures found in freshwater environments and an indication of what level of water health each tolerates.



POWER AND TRANSPORT

Another biggy. There's a lot of information out there about how to cut back our use of cars, which is fine if you live somewhere with walking and cycling access, but much more of a challenge as rural dwellers. Luckily we can all do things to cut back our use of electricity.

Naturally: Use a clothes line rather than a drier.

Turn it off: Switch off lights etc when you are not needing them. If you have a heater on, keep the doors shut, and close curtains at night to keep the warmth in.

Streaming: Apparently if you watch movies at a slightly lower definition it can effectively save power.

LED bulbs: Replace regular light bulbs with LED bulbs.

Screen time: What about a screen free sunday each week for everyone in your home? Perhaps it would be a good time to pursue some other interests, or have some old fashioned family time playing board games or going for a walk.

Oven: If you have the oven on, use it to cook several things at the same time.

Driving: When going to town, try and do all your jobs on one trip, that's an optimistic thought. Carpool for outings.

EV: Explore the option of getting an electric or hybrid car, this is sure to get easier over the next years, and there is a government subsidy for new and imported cars. The pros and cons still need to be ironed out.

Solar Panels: If you own your own house it would be great to investigate getting solar panels. Also check you have good insulation, and generally check out your home's resilience.

Investment: If you have money invested, check to see that it's being used ethically to support the changes we need to see. Simplicity seems to do a good job of ethical investment.

Paint it white: Did you know if you paint your house roof white, an average roof of 100sq metres can reflect enough sun in a year to cancel 10 tonnes of CO2, or approx 2.5 cars worth. The concept has been around for a few years but the jury was out as to whether this helps or not. Now it seems it's a good choice, guess what we'll be doing soon?

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/stuff-to-watch/300342985/greta-thunberg-a-year-to-change-the-world-more-science-less-swedish-teen>

<https://www.seaspiracy.org/>

<https://www.resene.com/blog/jump-aboard-the-white-roof-programme/>

<https://simplicity.kiwi/>

Also check out 'A Life on our Planet' David Attenborough doco.

KEEPING IT ALL TOGETHER

Most importantly in these challenging times, we need to look after our own sense of wellbeing and find some positives. We are so blessed to live in New Zealand, and that's a good start for being grateful.

Support: We all need a support group of like minded friends or family to share experiences with, both good and not so good. You could join a group to learn new skills.



Gratitude: The old cliché of counting your blessings. It's now been proven that focusing on the good things in your day, before you go to sleep, helps to improve your mental health and optimism. What were your 3 best things today? Share them or write them down.

Outdoors: Time in nature has been proven to give us a better sense of wellbeing and more positive health, even seeing trees outside the window counts. Best of all, take time to walk through the bush or along the beach, or simply walk along the road and admire the variety of gardens there.

Creativity: This is great for one's wellbeing, whether it's listening or playing music, doing something arty, writing, gardening, reorganising your space, singing, sewing or knitting, dancing, anything that you can put a bit of yourself into. You don't need to be good at it, just able to lose yourself in it.

Resilience: It's not an easy task, but being mentally prepared, and understanding the predicaments we face, ultimately helps us be stronger and more resilient come whatever may. Resilience is about being prepared in our homes, and in ourselves.

Meditation: Being present in the here and now and not lost in thoughts of "what ifs and wherefores". Check out youtube for some options too.

Keeping afloat: It's a balancing act between keeping up with the latest information on climate change, covid and so on, and not getting bogged down, or feeling overwhelmed. Doing any of the things on these lists will help you to feel a bit more hopeful for our future, and will be adding your small changes to a whole lot of other peoples small changes which adds up to a big change.

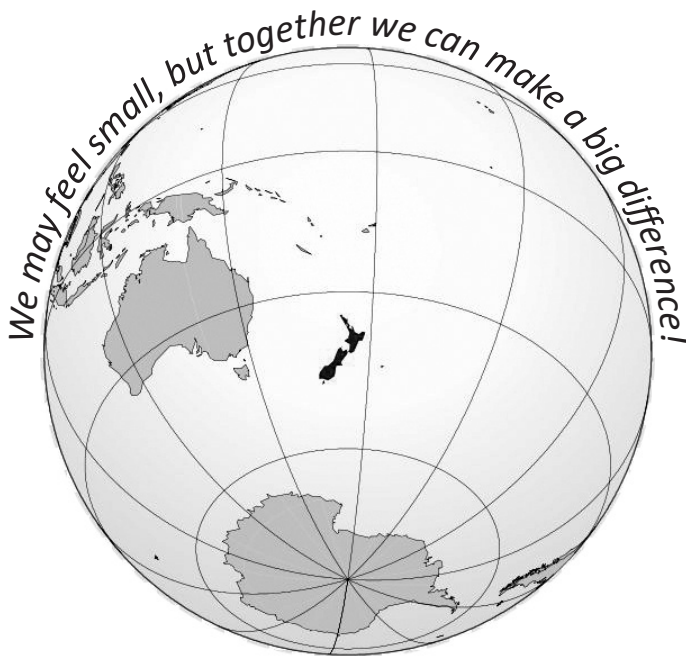
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/stress/developing-resilience/>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/ways-to-become-more-resilient-2795063>

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jun/13/two-hour-dose-nature-weekly-boosts-health-study-finds>

<https://www.projectdoless.nz>

<https://www.resilience.org/>



Climate Change and You

David Attenborough in his book and documentary called 'A Life on our Planet', covers the issues involved in climate change and the moves we need to make to start to redress the imbalance man has created in the last 200 years, and especially in the last 50 years.

The main concept is to embrace the Doughnut Economy, as described by Kate Raworth over 8 years ago, which is only now starting to be embraced as a model for change.

Large marine reserves throughout our oceans would help redress the balance in our seas. Likewise re-wilding large areas and using regenerative agricultural methods can help to heal our World's ecosystems, starting with soil health. This all keys into the "doughnut economy" of providing enough, but not an excess.

For many people, education on growing our own food, cooking, and healthy diet, would be valuable. We can eat less meat and more vegetables without the need for meat substitutes grown in a laboratory. Educating people on the value of healthy food vs junk food, avoiding single use plastics, repairing and recycling resources, instead of buying new, are simple steps we can all take. We need to return to the scale of living as we practiced in the 1950's (as proposed by Prof. Susan Krumdiek).

The biggest challenge is for NZ to make a co-ordinated shift, supported by the majority of people. In order to really begin change on a large scale, people first have to grasp the scale, severity, and gravity of the situation we face. That was perhaps one of the silver linings of 2020, that we can no longer pretend climate change is only in the future, but is actually happening now. We need clear guidelines and some rapid changes, we need broad scale change across the country and we need small scale change suited to different areas in NZ and to individuals. Electrifying our rail system and city transport systems is imperative.

Small groups of people with shared context, small businesses, larger businesses, farmers, councils etc could form hubs to work through changes required and support each other.

Waiting for reports and recommendations is frustrating and time consuming, there are a number of shifts we can start making right now, from grass roots up, how to communicate that and get people on board, that is the challenge. To recognize the urgency needed is the challenge.

Should every school watch "A Life on our Planet" and then act on it? Should everyone watch it?

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- Recycle bags.
- Meat.
- Free range or organic.
- Fish.
- Locally produced.
- Grow your own.
- Eat healthy.

FOOD WASTE:

- Bread.
- Leftovers.
- Cook extra.
- Shopping list.
- Storage.
- Stocks and soups.
- Composting.
- Best before.
- Cleaner.
- Fridge supplies

STUFF, STUFF and LESS STUFF:

- Habits.
- Quality.
- Minimise.
- Give away.
- Babies and young children.
- Mend or repurpose.
- Sharing.
- Takeaways.
- Paper Towels.

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- Donate.
- Educate.
- Lawns.
- Mulching.
- Trees.

WATER

- Rubbish.
- Turn it off.
- Washing dishes.
- Rainwater collecting.
- Showering.
- Environmental products.
- Grey water.
- Composting toilet.

POWER AND TRANSPORT

- Naturally.
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- Streaming.
- LED bulbs.
- Screen time.
- Oven.
- Driving.
- Electric Vehicles.
- Solar Panels.
- Investment.
- Paint it white.

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- Gratitude.
- Outdoors.
- Creativity.
- Resilience.
- Meditation.
- Keeping afloat.