

by Amy Herring

As a counseling astrologer, I deal regularly with the inner terrain of each soul, each person's inner life, one by one. I am comfortable enough in that space. When it comes to the impact of the collective, social movements and change, how one small act leads to a revolution, I am completely out of my depth.

I feel strongly about my contributions (and also lack thereof) to taking care of the planet but I grew up in a disposable world and it's hard to shake that mentality and those habits. Something in me does a little dance of glee at the many options of colored plastic wrap and the pre-sliced, uber-packaged cheese, it's true. So when it comes to changing "consumer behaviors" that I've had all my life, I'm completely overwhelmed. Most of what I hear is how we're on the road to destruction of the planet, going 100 mph, and I find myself doubting that I can make a difference at all.

Today I thought to myself, "I wish there was a guide that could tell me some simple ways to start making a difference." I'm sure it exists, but I decided to research it myself, and write one of my own for people like me; people who don't know where to begin, people who have a short or long lifetime of consuming habits.

I decided to write this article from the space of what I'm good at: what one person can do. As I've grown up and moved into the Seattle area, I've recognized more opportuni-

## A Beginner's Guide to Saving the Planet



**Don't know where to begin to help save the planet? Simply learning to reduce, reuse, and recycle can make a big impact.**

ties to do small things and have had a subtle shift over time in my thinking, and it all revolves around the three R's: reduce, reuse, and recycle.

• **Reduce.** Reduce the waste you are putting out in the first place. Before you have to reuse something or recycle it, consider if you

even need it or if you can find a better way to get it. Are there small conveniences you can forego (like the pre-sliced, individually packaged cheese) to save a lot of waste on the other end? Is there something you use every day that you could reduce the waste on by changing the method?

• **Reuse.** Don't throw it away yet! Can you reuse the item for the same or another purpose? Can you make it into an art project for your child? Can you donate it?

• **Recycle.** Someone like me thinks "paper" and "aluminum cans" and that's where my brain sometimes stops. The key is to educate yourself on what can be recycled, above and beyond what you might think of, such as old appliances, or any can, not just soda cans.

To help you (and me) with the overwhelm, here are 10 simple things you can start doing now that will help save the planet.

1. Reuse/recycle grocery bags, or get some reusable cloth bags. Many grocery stores sell them now or you can just use any sturdy book-bag.

2. Reuse a coffee mug with a lid instead of getting a new disposable coffee cup every morning.

3. Consider the sandwich bags that you use in your packed lunches. A square, plastic container with a lid can be reused over and over.

4. Turn that empty butter or cottage cheese container into reusable storage for leftovers.

5. Buy recycled to begin with, especially paper.

6. Put your name on the list to stop receiving junk mail (see below for the website), or use what you get as packing material instead of packing peanuts.

7. Think before you buy a larger, more expensive object such as an appliance: can you rent or borrow? If you're going to use this object or appliance only once or twice, think about whether or not you really want to invest in it. Also, buying high quality keeps the object out of the landfill longer, which is better for the planet as well as your pocket-book in the long run.

8. See if any of the subscriptions you take can be delivered electronically. Also, get your bank statements and monthly bills delivered electronically, and pay them electronically too.

9. When you want to give someone a gift, give them an experience, not stuff.

10. Use rechargeable batteries whenever you can. Be sure to recycle them when they no longer hold a charge.

One final thought I'd like to share. Saving the planet means saving the people on it, too. After I became a mother, a door was opened in me that I doubt I'll ever be able to close, and am not sure I'd want to. It's a door that leads to the connection we all have to each other.

While watching footage of the New Orleans hurricane aftermath, I saw a mother walking through waist deep water, carrying her 10-month old-infant, and I couldn't stop the tears from flowing. I had to help, even if it was in such a small way that I doubted, once again, that it could make a difference.

It was then that I realized that it's more than just the effect I can have while helping someone to live a better life and to survive in times of crisis. It's more than just recycling my grocery bags to alleviate guilt or to reduce my ecological footprint. It's about the change that happens in me when I reach out, when I become and stay aware, when I reach from out of my own life and my own concerns to help another who is just like me.

My wish for all of us is that we can each find and remember this part in ourselves, and continue to reach out, not just because we should, but because our heart says we must. Continued consciousness makes the change happen.

Maybe we should add a fourth R: remember.

Here are a few of websites for further investigation.

- [www.epa.gov/msw/reduce.htm](http://www.epa.gov/msw/reduce.htm) (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency "reduce reuse recycle" tips).
- [www.ftc.gov/opa/1999/04/green.htm](http://www.ftc.gov/opa/1999/04/green.htm) (tips on sorting out the "green claims" by advertisers).
- [www.epa.gov/region2/recycling/](http://www.epa.gov/region2/recycling/) (reusing computer equipment).
- [www.reduce.org/junk\\_mail/index.html](http://www.reduce.org/junk_mail/index.html) (reducing your junk mail).

*Amy Herring has been studying, teaching, and reading for clients as a counseling astrologer for over 11 years, currently in the Seattle area. See her website [www.heavenlytruth.com](http://www.heavenlytruth.com) for more about her work as an astrologer.*

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### Upcoming Events

- **Wednesday, June 13, 11:30-1:30 General Meeting, Networking & Speaker**  
Topic: learn more about the various legal aspects of owning a business as well as some highlights about accounting and taxes; SCORE representative. Donation: \$5 at the door. No reservations. No lunch served. East West Bookshop, 6500 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle.
- **July 12, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Marketing Seminar**  
Learn more about how to market your business: planning, techniques, tons of ideas. Presented by Marni Rader. \$25 for members; \$35 for non-members. Seating is limited. Ananda Center, 6505 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle. Preregister by sending your payment to: WSHCC, 14911 Chain Lake Rd #431, Monroe, WA 98272
- **Wednesday, July 18, 6:00-8:00 p.m. Networking Social**  
Get together with your peers for conversation, networking, and fun! \$5 donation at the door includes light snacks. Stargazers, 12727 NE 20th, Bellevue.

To learn more about the Washington State Holistic Chamber or to join, go to [www.washingtonholisticchamber.org](http://www.washingtonholisticchamber.org)