



## CHAPTER 7

# IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE

*It is not the strongest of the species that survives, not the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.*

*-Charles Darwin*



Australians and Americans are amongst the highest greenhouse gas polluters per capita in the world, with Australia emitting 28 tonnes per person and America emitting 25 tonnes per person annually (In comparison, China's emissions are approximately 2 tonnes per person and India's emissions are only 1 tonne per person). Most of us are intelligent, capable

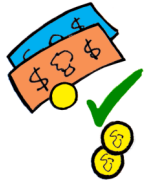
human beings who are aware of global warming. We also know we should be doing something about it right now. But are we? Some of us are, but many of us aren't. Social science research tells us that merely gaining a general awareness of environmental issues such as global warming and changing attitudes towards the environment will not necessarily lead to people changing their behaviour.

What needs to be done to propel us into action?

A review of several energy conservation programs found that the following strategies make a difference in changing peoples' behaviours.

**Energy Audits:** An energy audit is a cheap and easy way to reduce your carbon footprint. It's a way of providing you with feedback on what you're doing right in terms of conserving energy and what can be improved. A professional energy auditor visits your home, school and/or workplace, looks at your energy

consumption and shows you the different ways you can save energy and money.



Studies have been performed on the effectiveness of energy audits in reducing peoples' consumption. One study took two groups of households in which one group was given energy

audits and the other group received no audits.

Researchers found that households who were given the energy audits reduced their household electricity use by 21% more than the other group.

Many local councils are now providing free energy audits to households or you can get one done by a private organization. These audits pay for themselves easily. My family had an energy audit done last year and we saved AUD\$96 on our electricity bill in just the first month through making simple changes such as switching off our home

computers, turning off appliances at the power point and getting rid of a fridge that we hardly ever used.



**Pledge:** Making a pledge (an oral or written commitment or promise) to change your

behaviour and reduce your greenhouse gas emissions can be a powerful action. One study found the households that made a commitment to conserve energy by 10% and received information on how to do it, saved more energy in comparison to those that didn't commit to conserving energy.

Al Gore created the *Live Earth Pledge*, which states:

I PLEDGE:

1. To demand that my country join an international treaty within the next 2 years that cuts global warming pollution by 90% in developed countries

and by more than half worldwide in time for the next generation to inherit a healthy earth;

2. To take personal action to help solve the climate crisis by reducing my own CO<sub>2</sub> pollution as much as I can and offsetting the rest to become “carbon neutral”;

3. To fight for a moratorium on the construction of any new generating facility that burns coal without the capacity to safely trap and store the CO<sub>2</sub>;

4. To work for a dramatic increase in the energy efficiency of my home, workplace, school, place of worship, and means of transportation;

5. To fight for laws and policies that expand the use of renewable energy sources and reduce dependence on oil and coal;

6. To plant new trees and to join with others in preserving and protecting forests; and

7. To buy from businesses and support leaders who share my commitment to solving the climate crisis and building a sustainable, just, and prosperous world for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

You can sign up and print out this powerful pledge at [www.algore.com/pledge](http://www.algore.com/pledge)



**Rewards:** The presence of rewards can influence you and the people around you to take action and sustain positive behaviour change. My friend,

Esther Duffy, led a sustainable living program called *Living Smart*. One of the participants in her program complained that she had trouble motivating her children to turn the lights off once they left each room. Esther encouraged this woman to offer her children any money that was saved from the electricity bill. At the next session, Esther asked her what the result had been. 'We have been living in complete darkness' was the participant's response. The use of rewards had clearly worked!

Be careful choosing your rewards.



You don't want to have a reward that will defeat the purpose of your greenhouse gas reduction goal (i.e.

a plane flight abroad or a new plasma TV screen that emits more greenhouse gases than your previous

screen). The rewards also don't have to be financial or material. Terry Power and Dr Peter Dingle in their book *Goal Getting: The Science of Achieving Goals* discuss how some of the simplest things in life can be the best rewards.

Here are a range of different rewards and incentives you can give to yourself and family for reducing your carbon/ecological footprint:

1. Go for a trip to the beach
2. Have a cup of your favourite tea
3. Take a quiet, local holiday
4. Go dancing with your partner or friends
5. Watch a movie

It may be rewarding in itself to simply know that you personally are treading lightly on the planet and doing your best to look after it.



**Modeling:** Admired individuals (i.e. celebrities) modeling ideal energy conserving beliefs and practices can be incredibly influential and

motivating for some people. Cameron Diaz, Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert Redford and Melissa Etheridge are just a few celebrities that have made changes to their lives to reduce their carbon footprint.



**Goal setting:** This is one of the most effective strategies you can apply to help you achieve results in all areas of your life (the

environment, health, relationships, career, etc). Setting your own goals helps you to stay focused and take the actions you need to take (More on this strategy in Chapter 8).

It has been shown scientifically that the above strategies make a difference to reducing personal energy use. Try them out and see; you have nothing to lose but greenhouse gases!

## Mental and Physical Health



If we don't look after ourselves, how will we be able to look after the planet? It is important that we take care of our mental and physical health so we can be as effective as possible.

Learning about global warming, speaking to people about it and taking actions to combat it can be a stressful and upsetting activity at times. I spoke to over 100 teenagers and teachers recently about what they could do to combat global warming. To realise that very few of them seemed to care about the future was incredibly disheartening. Did this

experience stop me from speaking out in schools?  
No way!

Several months ago I went out to lunch with some friends and they were talking about their plans to travel the world. I mentioned how harmful air travel was for the atmosphere and suggested they consider carbon offsetting their flights. When I saw my friend roll her eyes at my suggestion, ignore the question and then change the subject by asking if there was salt in the dish in front of her, I felt disheartened and embarrassed that I had even made the suggestion. Did this stop me from speaking about carbon offsetting in the future? Of course not, but it may have, had I not known how to deal with the stress and emotions that were coming up for me.



There are lots of different ways you can reduce stress in your life. Watching your thinking is one way. Often what we say to ourselves is negative (i.e. 'I can't do

this', 'I'm stupid' and 'It won't make a difference'). These negative thoughts often lead to negative feelings (i.e. anger, frustration and sadness) and negative behaviours (i.e. give up, swear out loud and violence). If you're not fully convinced, take a look at the negative and positive statements on the next page:

<b>Negative Statements</b>	<b>Positive Statements</b>
I should	I can
I could	I am
I would	I choose
I want	I have
I can't	I create
I'm a loser	I'm a winner

I have observed that saying the negative statements above can have a devastating effect on your mood. Negative thoughts will simply make us feel bad and it will be counterproductive to us making a difference. So start to watch your thinking and if it's negative (the statements above can help you to identify this) try to replace those thoughts with neutral or positive thoughts.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying never ever expose yourself to negative news and events and pretend that everything is absolutely fabulous in the world. My point is that most of the time many of us put ourselves down. This is unnecessary and will hold us back from making a difference. As an experiment, try repeating out loud the positive statements in the right hand column of the table above and see the effect this has on your mood.

Other ways that will help you to relieve stress are to have massages, laugh regularly, meditate, practise



yoga and/or tai chi, exercise and breathe deeply. I have experimented with all of these, and found what works best for me is doing weight training and aerobic exercise several times a week.