LIVE GREEN OR DIE TRYIN'

You're trying to live more sustainably but you're stuck asking yourself whether you should you be a vegan or bike to work? Maybe you've even contemplated not showering, but living sustainably shouldn't necessarily be a moral sacrifice, but rather a design challenge. By design challenge, we don't just mean designing products and technology to do the "greening" for us, such as LED bulbs or electric cars, we also mean designing our lifestyles to not only meet the needs of future generations, but to also meet our own needs in the present. An article by Mother Nature Network (MNN) offered several tactics to help people design their lives with sustainability in mind.

Just do one thing.

The epitome of a "sustainable lifestyle" probably involves a plethora of activities and behavioral changes that for the average person, makes it hard to commit. There are so many things we can do each day to be "greener" like taking shorter showers, using reusable bags when we grocery shop or turning off the lights. But MNN stresses that we don't need to beat ourselves up for taking a long shower now and then. Instead of spreading your efforts thin, they suggest you "weigh the impact" of the many "green" lifestyle changes out there and pick one or two that have the potential to make a big impact. Try picking one green goal such as eating more sustainably, seeking alternative transportation, or reducing your energy use and focus your efforts on accomplishing that in as many aspects as you can.

Commit to your goals.

Sustainability can be a very ambiguous word. In the context of energy and the environment we talk about it in terms of reducing consumption and waste, but it also needs to be addressed in terms of longevity. Choosing to live sustainably is like making a resolution. MNN points out that most of us make a yearly lifestyle change right around New Year's but don't always see it through the year. Setting a goal that you can't accomplish isn't going to be impactful. Make sure that whatever lifestyle changes you decide to make, you commit to them for the long haul.

Set goals you're passionate about.

Goals that get you excited or let you pursue something you're passionate about, will be more likely to be seen through. If you can't live without pepperoni, maybe being a vegan isn't in the cards, but being a "Weekday Vegetarian" is or you can try shopping local, like at your Farmers Market. If you have a long commute to work (for a job you love), maybe biking there isn't an option, but driving an electric vehicle is. Design your life to fit your needs and make lifestyle changes that get you excited and are sustainable for not only the environment, but for yourself as well.

Don't give up your day job.

Most of us spend a lot of time at work. And most of us probably don't work for an organization like Green Peace. However, to live green you don't have to work for an environmental advocacy group or non-profit alike. There is immense opportunity to incorporate green initiatives within the organization you currently work for. In fact, if you are trying to set green goals, you could make one of them establishing a "green team" at your business, or setting up a recycling program.

Money is no object.

There is a common misconception that living sustainably has to be break the bank. Sustainability in its essence is about doing more with less. You don't necessarily have to spend thousands of dollars to reduce your ecological footprint. This can be especially relevant in terms of energy use, since one of the easiest and inexpensive ways to save energy is to just not use it in the first place. Oftentimes simply reducing your consumption of resources can help you tread lighter on the planet and lessen the pressure on your wallet.

We can't do it alone.

Gaining traction around sustainability across the globe is about "systematic change", or change in a methodical progression, according to MNN. For example, one electric vehicle on the road will be more impactful in a fleet of electric vehicles. A fleet of electric vehicles drives demand for an electric vehicle industry. An electric vehicle industry drives innovation within the industry and offers consumers with cleaner, more fuel efficient electric vehicles within the marketplace. As the amount of electric vehicles on the road grows, a system of electric vehicle charging stations grows in demand. From there, a more extensive network of EV charging stations improves access and ease of use around the electric vehicle. This example continues so on and so forth in systematic change. If we all start being the change we want to see in the world, together we can change it.