

Spotlight on Earth Day

by Shari Swanson

Since its inception in 1970, Earth Day marks a global celebration of Earth and the concept of peace. It presents an opportunity to demonstrate support for environmental protection. From lush rain forests to arid deserts, thundering waterfalls to serene ponds, majestic glaciers to craggy mountains and teeming coral reefs, Earth is a complex, interconnected planet, filled with diversity and abundance. New species continue to be discovered, and the relationships among species and ecosystems are increasingly revealed in our understanding as intricate and inextricably linked. To be tenants of Planet Earth is a cause for gratitude, but we also have responsibilities to maintain and protect our planet for each other and for future generations. In this Spotlight on Earth Day, we take a look back at prior DailyGood features and offer some suggestions of how you can support and celebrate this planet we all call home.

PLANT A TREE

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree." A tree is a gift to future generations. And it is quite a gift. Trees have their own language and provide hubs for environmental regeneration. Tree-lined streets are healthy streets. A tree can be an alternate cathedral, helping us reclaim a sense of peace and being firmly rooted in nature. On a larger scale, planting trees can combat climate change, celebrate life, and restore vanishing wilderness.

RECYCLE

Many of Earth's resources are finite and its systems capable of contamination. Accordingly, anything we can do to reduce our footprint can help sustain our planet. Whether it is plastic, paper, food, e-waste, breath, sweat, fabric, markers, getting the most out of everything, considering multiple uses of products, and giving away rather than trashing our belongings can make a world of difference. Additionally, we can mindfully choose products that reduce waste or focus on renewable forms of energy and walk, ride a bike, or take public transport whenever possible.

TAKE A NATURE BATH

Shinrin-yoku, the Japanese art of forest bathing (taking contemplative walks through nature) yields health benefits of decreased stress, elevated mood, and boosts in the

immune system. In lives that are spent increasingly indoors and online, taking breaks to spend time in nature is vital and can help us be kinder, happier, healthier, more creative, and more connected. Children benefit dramatically from outdoor play. Looking deep within nature can even help us come up with solutions to complex puzzles, reduce violence, and discover our place in the meaning of things.

CELEBRATE EARTH'S DIVERSITY

The earth is filled with diversity. All around the world, people are living lives in environments completely different from our own. They eat different foods, experience different weather, face different natural challenges, hear different birds singing, look out at different vistas. Learning how people respond to different natural accommodations is inspiring and can help unite us around the world's challenges. Tools like Google maps, National Geographic, photographs, movies like Planet Earth, and books with distant settings, can help us take virtual tours to distant locales and internalize the successes and struggles of our co-tenants on the other side of the planet. It can renew our awe and appreciation of the world we live in.

BE GRATEFUL

What is the thank you note you would write to the earth? Close your eyes and think about the natural sights and sounds that fill you with joy. What is your favorite time of day? Your favorite place? Your favorite foods? On and on the list goes. Taking time to make your own list of all ways you are blessed by your planet will fill you with a sense of awe, quiet your mind, and give you peace.