

# Easy Does It

Improving our own lives, each other's lives and the planet. Tricky stuff. But there are small, everyday things that if enough people do differently, really can make a huge difference. And other, more individual actions that can transform our own lives. The exciting bit is that most of these cost little or no time or money. Save the planet, save some dosh.

It's all about doing things slightly differently. If you're already going on holiday, buying chocolate, going to an evening class, having a lunch hour, you can make these opportunities more socially profitable.

Here's what you can do to make a difference:

In 0 seconds:

Delight the Bar Mitzvah boy or the bride and groom by getting them a memorable gift in their honour. Could be a bike for an Ethiopian midwife or a phone card for a child in care.

In 5 seconds:

Choose a fair-trade version of your chocolate, bananas, coffee - even roses and footballs now come with a clear conscience

In 5 minutes:

Get a charity credit card, with each purchase producing a donation to your chosen charity

## 1. Spending

Give as you earn, give as you spend, give as you surf - there are loads of ways in which you can make donations to charity without it costing you a penny.

## Make your charity donations go further

Charities Aid Foundation has a bunch of services which make your donations help even more people. Or plants. Or whales. Or Wales. Or whatever.

[www.cafonline.org/individual/default.cfm](http://www.cafonline.org/individual/default.cfm) lists various ways of costlessly increasing the value of your donations including

- Gift Aid - if you make a donation, eg by cheque, you can sign a simple statement saying you're a tax payer, if you are, and the government bungs in a credible 28p for each pound you give.
- Payroll giving - if your employer has or will set up this arrangement, you can decide on an amount to give to your favourites charity or charities each month. This adds a lovely £2.20 - £4.00 for every tenner you give, depending on how much tax you pay.
- Legacies - donating after death. Anything you leave through a CAF Legacy Account could reduce the amount of Inheritance Tax payable on your estate.
- Sharegiving - a great way to deal with the middle-class angst of share-owning: donate some of them. And claim back full tax relief against their value at a similar rate to payroll giving.

## Ethical investing including pensions

Still on the rather grand front, if you're wanting to invest ethically in the first place, this is becoming increasingly manageable to do.

[www.eiris.org](http://www.eiris.org)

## Charity accounts

Perhaps the closest any of us will get to being, or feeling like, Bill Gates or one of the Sainsbury family is to set up our own charity fund. You can have an account with the Charities Aid Foundation and tax efficiently, and with a philanthropic flourish of your pen, write out cheques to the charities of your choice. There are also charity vouchers and a sort of credit card thing as alternative methods.

## Ethical banking

Information about what it is:

[www.ukinternetbanking.co.uk/ethicalb.asp#Ans01](http://www.ukinternetbanking.co.uk/ethicalb.asp#Ans01)

Best known:

[www.co-operativebank.co.uk/](http://www.co-operativebank.co.uk/)

## Charity credit cards

Brighten up a shop assistant's day, spread the word about a favoured charity AND trigger extra donations with a picturesque charity credit card. Pics of exhilarated kids, or mournful dogs or imperious tigers illustrate the beneficiaries of another afternoon at M&S or on Amazon. This website will take you to the charitable cause of your choice, including ones supporting health, environment, disability and kids.

[www.charitycard.co.uk/](http://www.charitycard.co.uk/)

## Click'n'give

Clicking through to another website doesn't need to cost - it can instead give! There are sites sponsored by companies, so that each time someone visits, the companies make a donation. Although these haven't really taken off in the UK, there are some excellent American websites which generate masses of charitable funds. Simply by having these as your home page, or signing up to their occasional email service, you can take a few seconds to visit their website and generate an automatic donation by the website's company sponsors. For example, The Hungersite has generated funds for more than 300 million cups of staple food for people across the world.

[www.thehungersite.com](http://www.thehungersite.com)

## Shopping

At last. An excuse to buy things and feel goooood about it.

### Ethical buying: fairtrade etc.

Boycotting South African produce and Barclays Bank in the days of apartheid; boycotting Nestlé's chocolates, cereals, coffee and everything else because of their promotion of baby milk products in developing countries; some American restaurants recently changing the name of French fries (chips) to freedom fries in protest at France's response to the Iraq war; avoiding anything with a global brand on it because - well, Naomi Klein writes so compellingly about the evils of brand imperialism. All are variations on the discerning, socially just, impactful consumer theme.

And these buying patterns are generally combined with making positive choices for products which have a very kosher heritage, mainly because of healthy labour-force and environmental practices.

The essential websites are:

[www.ethicalconsumer.org/](http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/)

[www.fairtrade.org.uk](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk)

There are a growing number of websites where a percentage of what you spend is given to charities. For example, GiveAsYouGet.net is a shopping portal which helps you compare prices from hundreds of shops and suppliers in the UK and then takes the advertising commissions and donates them to charity.

[www.giveasyouget.net](http://www.giveasyouget.net)

Whether it's retro chic, grunge or a new wardrobe for under £100 you're after, it's a charity shop that you should be headed for. They're increasingly also a fantastic source of second-hand books. Find the ones nearest to you either by going for a stroll down your high street or electronically via

<http://cgi.charityshops.plus.com/locator.php>

## Gifts

Great website, great gifts - presies for friends and family and contributions to charities, ranging from community toilets in Africa to holidays for people in need.

[www.goodgifts.org](http://www.goodgifts.org)

Not just for weddings, [www.thealternativeweddinglist.co.uk](http://www.thealternativeweddinglist.co.uk) is an inspired and well thought out online wedding list service. Instead of toasters and kettles "that you don't really need" that "sit around in your loft and you'd never use", couples sign-up to a ready-made list that contains gifts to a range of charities. How great is that for couples, guests and charities??

'Chocolate with a conscience', 'Heavenly chocolate with a heart' - not that we need any extra incentives to eat and give chocolate, but how much more emotionally enriching to be able to do so and help make the world a fairer and sweeter place.

You choose the chocolate gift and the lucky recipient gets not only the chocolate world globe or map of Africa (yes, really), but also gets to choose which hunger relief project will benefit from the donation you have made.

[www.chocaid.com](http://www.chocaid.com)

You don't need to send off to Ireland to get some good-hearted chox. You'll find Divine chocolates in your local sweetshop. You can feel the triple joy of

melted chocolate in the mouth, released endorphins racing round your brain and the warm glow encasing your heart as you know that each Dubble Bubble, Divine Delights and Darkly Divine brings a fair income to the cocoa growers in Ghana.

[www.divinechocolate.com](http://www.divinechocolate.com)

Hampers with not only delicious fair-traded chocolate and other staple foods, but also handcrafted gifts made by local artisans in developing countries.

<http://www.fairtradehampers.co.uk/>

## Gift catalogues

[CharityGifts.com](http://www.charitygifts.com) describes itself as a (actually it describes itself as *the official*) charity Christmas Card and Gifts shopping mall. It's a quick way of seeing the catalogues of different charities including special offers exclusive to online customers. They have a related service - Goodwill, where several different charities benefit from your purchase.

[www.charitygifts.com](http://www.charitygifts.com)

[www.charitygifts.com/html/goodwill.htm](http://www.charitygifts.com/html/goodwill.htm)

The concept doesn't really need much more explaining, but there's a nice article from the Guardian which describes the pleasures and possibilities of online charity shopping.

<http://shopping.guardian.co.uk/howtoshop/story/0,5802,399457,00.html>

## Charity Christmas cards

Whether you're making a statement (Parents Against Greed At Noel), a donation or an aesthetic choice, there will be what you need produced as a charity Christmas card. Including faith neutral Seasons Greetings cards. Companies, or highly organised individuals, don't have to hide their socially aware light under a Christmas bushel or other plant, and can get charity cards over-printed with their own details. (Name, logo, favourite recipe, news of the offsprings' achievements this year...)

[www.charitycards.co.uk/](http://www.charitycards.co.uk/)

[www.cardaid.co.uk/catalog/](http://www.cardaid.co.uk/catalog/)

## 2. Working

How our bosses treat us, how we treat people we work with and for, who is employed - at each stage there are cost-free ways of making these experiences more emotionally, socially and financially rewarding.

## Employing ex-offenders

It can seem logical to want to avoid employing people who have committed criminal offences. Until we realise that:

- 1 in 3 men over 40 have a criminal record, and this doesn't include all those with traffic-type offences. That's a lot of potential employees to rule out
- there are therefore inevitably loads of people in most organisations who already have criminal records.
- crimes can include the relatively trivial - even officially 'violent' crimes can mean shoving someone rather than killing them.

There are, of course, important issues to consider before employing someone you know has a criminal record, such as:

- how relevant is the crime to the job role and the nature of the organisation? An obsessed bird egg collector would obviously be a no-no for the RSPB but may have exquisite accounting skills which make them perfect for a city firm
- how long ago was the crime committed? How relevant is it today that someone committed a crime 20 years ago?

The business case for employing ex-offenders is well described by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development  
[www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/dvsequl/general/tools.htm](http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/dvsequl/general/tools.htm)

And the social case by Nacro:

[www.nacro.org.uk](http://www.nacro.org.uk)

## Making jobs, offices etc accessible for disabled people - eg using government grants

About 30 years after it became not just naff and daft and prejudiced but illegal to discriminate against women and people from ethnic minorities; there is now a parallel law for people with disabilities. The Disability Discrimination Act hasn't exactly had the nation's citizens sitting on the edges of their chairs with anticipation. And given that it was introduced in 1995 but only became fully operational in October 2004, one can't fire accusations of indecent haste. But... it is powerful legislation, and in relation to employment it applies to employers with 15 or more staff. As with all employment practice, it makes sense to recruit and retain the best

possible staff and (to use the language of the Act) to make 'reasonable adjustments' to do so. This includes ensuring that disabled people with the relevant skills are included as potential employees.

For a dull, clumpy, official explanation of the Act in ugly font, go to:  
[http://www.drc.org.uk/uploaded\\_files/documents/2008\\_227\\_copemployment.rtf](http://www.drc.org.uk/uploaded_files/documents/2008_227_copemployment.rtf)

For a readable and practical guide, check out:  
<http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?r.s=sl&topicId=1074426755>

Access to Work is a very under-publicised but truly excellent source of funding support to enable people with disabilities to be in employment. The website address for the main internet source of information is a real giveaway. Nothing user-friendly like [www.A2W.net](http://www.A2W.net), but:  
<http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/cms.asp?Page=/Home/Customers/HelpForDisabledPeople/AccessToWork> !! Don't be put off. As the website says,:

AtW can help in a number of ways. For example, it can help pay for:

- communicator support at interview (CSI) which meets the full cost of hiring an interpreter to remove barriers to communication at interview;
- a support worker, which allows the applicant to use the services of a helper. Types of support might include reading to a visually impaired person, communicating for a hearing impaired person via sign language (other than at interview which is covered by CSI), providing specialist coaching for a person with learning difficulties or helping a person with care needs;
- special aids equipment to help a disabled person function in the work place;
- adaptation to premises or to existing equipment;
- help with the additional costs of travel to, or in, work for people who are unable to use public transport.

It's a bit of a performance to secure this funding in the first place and then they can be fairly enthusiastic about demonstrating that the disabled person no longer needs that help. But it's well worth the hassle.

### 3. Holidaying

The ethical fun just keeps on coming. Don't leave your desire to spend constructively behind at the airport: ethical holidays are related to ethical shopping - and treating the environment the way we'd like it to treat us. Actually, it's related to most sensible and considerate ways of being, not least enjoying and respecting lifestyles which are very different from our daily ones. Which, as is often pointed out, can be a major reason for

holidaying in the first place. The following points are taken from the websites of organisations such as Tourism Concern and Responsible Travel.

[www.tourismconcern.org.uk](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk)

[www.responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com)

- Read up on the countries you plan to visit - the welcome will be warmer if you take an interest and speak even a few words of the local language
- Think small when booking a holiday - for example bed and breakfasts, village houses and locally owned accommodation benefit local families as well as providing you with a much more interesting and memorable experience
- Ask to see your tour operator's responsible travel policy
- buying local - eg drinking local beers and juices rather than imported brands. Going out to local restaurants - avoiding fully packaged tours
- Bikinis and nipple studs - great for Club Med or our back gardens. But wearing the appropriate volume and type of dress is essential whether you want to avoid getting stoned (as in having stones thrown at you rather than anything hallucinogenic) in very religious areas or simply want to avoid upsetting people. Packing light clothes which cover arms and legs will ensure you can enter all the temples, mausoleums and other places you've travelled a long way to visit.
- Use local transport - including bikes. Better, friendlier, more interesting and greener! Oh - and cheaper.
- Don't overdo the bargaining! A tiny amount of your cash could perhaps feed the trader's family for a week.
- Be laid-back about time. Many parts of the world don't want to, or can't afford to run by manic Western timescales
- Use water sparingly - it is precious in many countries and the local people may not have sufficient clean water
- It would be quirky at best to have someone barge into your office or kitchen and start taking photos of you. So we travellers need to be very sensitive about snapping away at local people. (Especially now that digital cameras make it so easy to take just as many photos as we feel like.)
- Find out where the locals go when they have time off. Visit the main sites but get off the tourist trail too. But when in protected natural sites (eg the rainforest!), don't wander off the footpaths.

## 4. Saving lives

What could be better? Doctors, firefighters, emergency relief workers train for years, risk their lives/sanity/marriages but the rest of us can give up a few minutes and prevent someone from dying. How cool is that?

### Carrying an organ donor card

[www.uktransplant.org.uk/how to become a donor/how to become a donor.htm](http://www.uktransplant.org.uk/how_to_become_a_donor/how_to_become_a_donor.htm)

### Spend your lunch-hour donating blood

[www.blood.co.uk](http://www.blood.co.uk)

People also need donated blood marrow and tissues:

[www.blood.co.uk/pages/marrow\\_info.html](http://www.blood.co.uk/pages/marrow_info.html)

[www.blood.co.uk/pages/tisserv.html](http://www.blood.co.uk/pages/tisserv.html)

### Evening class - learning first aid/CPR

Yes, we can go scuba-diving in the local swimming pool, practice making sugar-spun fairies or learn Ancient Greek, but there's also the chance to learn how to save someone's life. The Red Cross runs a basic seven-hour first-aid course covering simple life-saving techniques, including resuscitation and management of bleeding. They also offer Practical First-Aid (14 hours), Standard First-Aid (24 hours) as well as courses in Emergency Life Support and First-Aid for Motorists.

[www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)

St John Ambulance offers basic training, advanced and refresher courses in all aspects of first-aid, including first-aid for the workplace, for the public, for children and specialist courses, including defibrillator training to restart a stopped heart. [www.sja.org.uk](http://www.sja.org.uk)

### Last resort first aid tips

There's a classic headline from *Men's Health*:

*If you can lay your hands on a bottle of vinegar, a box of tampons or a credit card, you may yet turn out to be a lifesaver.*

Find out how at:

<http://www.menshealth.co.uk/health/fixes/firstaid/artindex.php>

## Campaign against the death penalty

As the World's leading campaigner for human rights, Amnesty International is of course vigorously opposed to the death penalty. Here's what they say:

### Why do we oppose the death penalty?

Amnesty International regards the death penalty as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, and opposes its use in all cases. The death penalty violates the right to life, one of the most fundamental human rights. One of primary defining documents in human rights is the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948. Article 3 of the Declaration states:

*Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.*

We believe that no criminal act or legal proceedings can legitimate the violation of this basic right. The death penalty is simply sanctioned killing--murder by the state.

There are also practical reasons to oppose the death penalty. The death penalty is an irrevocable punishment; once sentence has been carried out, it can never be reversed. There is a serious risk that it may be inflicted on innocent people, and many cases are known where it has been; this should be intolerable. Its application also exhibits severe racial and economic bias. The main argument in favour of the death penalty is that it has a deterrent effect, but despite many studies, it has never been shown to be more effective at deterring crime than other punishments. The use of the death penalty can be psychologically damaging to all those involved, and rarely gives the victims of crime any real satisfaction or sense of closure.

### What actions does Amnesty International take?

Amnesty International campaigns against the use of the death penalty in individual cases, by letter-writing campaigns which appeal to prosecuting authorities not to seek the death penalty, or seek clemency in cases where the death penalty has been imposed.

It also campaigns for moratoria on, and abolition of, the death penalty in all countries. Over half the countries in the world have now abolished the death penalty in law or practice. The latest information shows that:

- 75 countries and territories have abolished the death penalty for all crimes
  - 14 countries have abolished the death penalty for all but exceptional crimes such as wartime crimes
  - 20 countries can be considered *abolitionist in practice*: they retain the death penalty in law but have not carried out any executions for the past 10 years or more
- 86 other countries retain and use the death penalty, but the number of countries which actually execute prisoners in any one year is much smaller.

Over 30 countries and territories have abolished the death penalty for all crimes since 1990.

Amnesty International also campaigns specifically against the use of the death penalty on child offenders. International human rights treaties prohibit anyone under 18 years old at the time of the crime being sentenced to death. Most countries specifically exclude the execution of child offenders. A small number of countries, however, continue to execute child offenders.

Seven countries are known to have executed prisoners who were under 18 years old at the time of the crime since 1990-Congo (Democratic Republic), Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, USA and Yemen. The country which carried out the greatest number of known executions of child offenders was the USA (15 since 1990).

#### Further information:

AI International Secretariat's website on the death penalty:

<http://web.amnesty.org/rmp/dplibrary.nsf/index?openview>

Death penalty campaign website: <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/action/camp/dp/>

Worldwide links to organisations working to abolish the death penalty:

<http://www.reprieve.org.uk/worldwide.shtml>

Online petitions

<http://www.reprieve.org.uk/petitions.shtml>

It's possible to write to people on deathrow:

<http://www.reprieve.org.uk/penpals.shtml>

Excellent list of books, videos etc on death penalty:

<http://www.cuadp.org/>

## 5. Being safer

Protect yourself! Be in great shape for all that ethical travelling, shopping, working..... Here's a taster of the advice available from these specialist organisations

### Personal safety

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust and the Home Office, among others, produce excellent, balanced advice which should help you feel as well as be safer.

[www.suzylamplugh.org/store/index.shtml](http://www.suzylamplugh.org/store/index.shtml)

The Home Office also has some solid advice about personal safety including the following:

- You will be safest in bright, well-lit and busy areas.
- Try to look and act confident - look like you know where you are going and walk tall.
- You might like to spread your valuables around your body. For example, keep your phone in your bag, your house keys in your trouser pocket and your money in your jacket.
- If someone tries to take something from you, it may be better to let them take it rather than to get into a confrontation and risk injury.
- You can use reasonable force in self-defence. You are allowed to protect yourself with something you are carrying anyway (for example, keys or a can of deodorant), but you may not carry a weapon.
- If you decide to defend yourself, be aware that your attacker might be stronger than you, or may take what you are using in self-defence and use it against you. It is often better just to shout loudly and run away.
- Shout 'fire' rather than 'help' - it can get more results.
- If you use a wheelchair, keep your things beside you rather than at the back of the chair.
- Try not to be conspicuous about the valuables you are carrying. Talking on your mobile phone, carrying a laptop, or showing your friend your new gold ring all show thieves that you are worth robbing.
- When out walking or jogging, you should not listen to a personal stereo through headphones, so you can stay more alert to your surroundings.

A summary of Home Office guidance is at:

[http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs2/hs\\_safesecure6.html](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs2/hs_safesecure6.html)

but the full version is in an excellent long leaflet downloadable from:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs2/besafebesecure.pdf>

## Getting help for or supporting someone experiencing domestic violence

Women's Aid is the starting point for advice and support for women subjected to domestic violence

[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

The BBC's Hitting Home campaign website includes the following reassurance for women who are contemplating leaving violent partners:

**There is life after abuse and it does get better.**

- Most formerly abused women don't regret leaving, they regret not having left earlier. Even those that went back rarely regret leaving temporarily, because it lay down a 'marker' in their relationship (and, of course, most of them later left again).
- Although it can sometimes be hard at the beginning, it's usually no worse than living with him, and when you re-establish your life, it is usually much better than living with him.
- Ending any relationship, especially one with children involved, is hard irrespective of the reasons and how 'right' it may feel. Healing is rarely immediate; it will take time but it does get better. Remember also that you may be especially vulnerable to the charm and flattery of predatory men at this time, so be aware that you may need some time to fully recover from the abuse before getting involved in another committed relationship.

[www.bbc.co.uk/health/hh/index.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/hh/index.shtml)

The website also includes this advice for people wanting to support friends who may be experiencing, or at risk of, domestic violence:

People often feel awkward about 'taking sides' and try to keep out of it, saying 'it's not really any of my business'. Friends and family may think that they are being 'neutral' but ignoring it doesn't help. There are things you can do.

- If you think a friend or loved one is being abused, try telling her that you're concerned, say why you're worried and ask if she wants to talk to you about it. Let her know you want to help. You don't have to know all the answers. The important thing is to break the isolation.
- Always prioritise safety - yours and theirs. The abuser won't appreciate you getting involved so be careful about what you do and where and when you do it.

- Support your friend in whatever decision she's currently making about her relationship, whilst being clear that the abuse is wrong. Remember, what you are trying to do is be supportive, not to make her feel judged. It's not always easy for women to just leave.
- Maintain contact with her overtime and help her to explore her options. Let her guide you in how best to support her.
- Help her to build her self-esteem; remind her of her good points, challenge her if she puts herself down or blames herself, praise her for every step she takes and let her know she has your support.

### ***Practical Tips***

- Agree a code word or action that if she says to you or you see, you know she's in danger and cannot access help herself.
- Offer to keep copies of important documents and other items (see Crisis plan) so that if she has to leave in a hurry, she doesn't have to waste time collecting important belongings.
- Find out information for her so she can make informed choices.
- Get some support yourself. You have to be strong if you're going to be able to help her. Most domestic violence services are happy to help with any worries you may have or provide suggestions as to other actions you might take. (See Who can I talk to? for contact details).
- Most importantly, don't give up on her. You might be her only lifeline.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/hh/how01.shtml>

## **Avoiding accidents**

For advice about how to avoid everything from finger trapping to firework accidents, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents is clearly the place to go:

[www.rosipa.com](http://www.rosipa.com).

Here are some of their tips on avoiding accidents at home:

### **HOME SAFETY Checklist**

- Avoid trips, slips and falls by ensuring halls & stairways are always well lit and free from clutter.
- Change light bulbs safely, without the risk of falling by using a stable step-stool. Avoid using old chairs to climb on.
- Stay safe from fire by testing smoke alarms monthly and be sure all the family know how to escape in the event of a fire.
- Avoid burns and scalds, particularly to children, by always using the cooker's back ring or hotplate first and position panhandles so that

they can't be pulled over and by keeping hot drinks out of reach of children

- Reduce the likelihood of household fires and carbon monoxide poisoning from faulty flues or equipment by having gas, oil or solid fuel heating appliances professionally serviced once a year.
- Reduce the risk of electrical fires and electrocution by never using appliances with cracked plugs or worn cables. Avoid overloading electric sockets with too many appliances.
- Avoid fire risks by using guards with all fires and heaters and keep clothing, furniture and curtains away from all heat sources, including candles,
- To minimise the risk of falls from windows, install and use restrictor catches on all upstairs windows and place furniture away from windows
- Reduce trips, slips and falls by always quickly cleaning up spills.
- Poisoning or chemical burns can be prevented storing medicines and household chemicals out of sight and out of reach of children, preferably in a secure, high-level kitchen cupboard.
- Avoid bath time scalds by running cold water before hot and carefully testing water temperature, particularly before bathing children who should never be let unattended
- Don't risk electrocution by taking electrical appliances into the bathroom. Water is a good conductor of electricity so you should never touch electrical appliances with wet hands.

### ***GARDEN SAFETY Checklist***

- Protect yourself from electrocution by always using a Residual Current Device (RCD) when operating electrically powered garden tools and mowers
- Avoid poisoning and chemical burns by storing chemicals for use in garage or garden safely out of sight and out of reach of children, preferably in a secure cabinet
- Reduce the risk of small children drowning by securely fencing or filling-in garden ponds or water features and always supervising children near water.
- Avoid accidents and injury when doing DIY tasks by always operating within the range of your skills, ability and experience. Always use personal protective equipment including gloves, goggles, helmet, and facemask and safety shoes as appropriate and recommended for the task and follow manufacturers instructions.
- Avoid injury from falls by always checking a ladders condition before use and using at a safe angle (1 in 4).
- Avoid injury from sharp garden tools to users or children by keeping them in good repair and safely tidied away after use. Keep children safely away whenever using lawnmowers, doing DIY projects or household repairs.
- Prevent accidental poisoning or injuries to yourself or others by carefully following manufacturers instructions when using weed

killers, adhesives and solvents. Never transfer to alternative containers that could confuse and lead to poisonings.

- Prevent injury from trips, slips and falls, by providing safety rails and barriers to changes in garden levels and ensure all paths and steps are level, stable and free from moss
- Avoid uncontrollable fires by always siting bonfires and barbecues well away from fences, sheds and trees. Supervise children all the time.

Kids manage to find incredible ways of injuring themselves - and each other. There's some good advice about protecting them on the Child Accident Prevention Trust's website

<http://www.capt.org.uk/pdfs/sample%20active%20steps.pdf>

## 6. Being saner

Being in a better state emotionally within a few seconds is a tall order, and the more our need for this relief, the harder it can be to achieve it. Our best bets are:

- letting off steam, getting supportive understanding and possibly gaining a different perspective by talking to a good friend about what's stressing you
- meditation or yoga
- the equivalent of meditation or yoga for those of us who can't quite get it together to do anything as calming as that. Listening to music, spacing out for a few minutes, immersing ourselves in an escapist book or TV programme can help create temporary stress relief.

The self-explanatorily titled book *60 Ways to Relieve Stress in 60 Seconds* has some (well, 60 to be precise) portable, discreet, free (of money and calories) ideas, such as:

- walk around the office while remembering in detail all the ingredients of one of your favourite meals
- drink a glass of water in exactly 30 sips
- balance something on top of your head
- crumple a piece of paper into a ball and play 'basketball' using your wastebasket or other receptacle

You could also spend a relaxing further 60 seconds thinking of other words for 'receptacle'.

For information about stress management, the mental health charity Mind is a good place to start:

<http://www.mind.org.uk/Information/Booklets/Mind+guide+to/Mind+guide+to+managing+stress.htm>

People might want to stereotype the central organisation for yoga as being worthy and dowdy and having a correspondingly dour website. The British Wheel of Yoga's website is, it turns out, rather gloomy. But don't let that put you off!

[www.bwy.org.uk](http://www.bwy.org.uk)

More stylish, and more mainstream, is Paul Wilson's website. Wilson is the author of the very fabulous Instant Calm and the website has lots of calming tips and techniques.

[www.calmcentre.com](http://www.calmcentre.com)

For more specific mental health problems, such as depression, severe anxiety, phobias etc, the BBC website is an excellent source of advice and contacts.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/mental/>

## 7. Being greener

How lovely that being green is now hip rather than hippy. Virtually everything we do from the moment we get up to that delicious moment when our sleepy heads hit the pillow, can be done in a way that bashes up the environment rather less.

### Water

No big surprises here with the advice we're all given:

- don't use toilet as wastebin
- don't run water unnecessarily
- wait for full load before running dishwasher
- water your lawn once a week - overwatering can weaken lawn by bringing roots to the surface
- consider having a modern garden with no lawn - save time as well as water. And it's much hipper than stripy Wimbledon-type lawns
- use a water butt
- only use dishwasher/washing machine with a full load - save money

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/waterres/286587/287169/?lang=e>

### Waste

Don't waste 'waste'. One person's waste is another's treasure.

- turn kitchen waste into compost
- take old mags to dentist or doctor's surgery
- paper:
  - use both sides of paper

- print two pages on one sheet
- instead of buying notepads, re-use back of old stuff
- buy recycled paper
- recycle waste paper

<http://www.wasteonline.org.uk/topic.aspx?id=21>

## Energy

Save Energy has a virtual home tour. Sadly, this doesn't have dramatic reconstructions of all that heat escaping out of your draughty windows or of zillions of kilowatts of electricity leaking out of your standing-by TVs. But it's still a useful guide to saving energy and a fair bit of cash.

[www.saveenergy.co.uk/howto/yourhome.cfm](http://www.saveenergy.co.uk/howto/yourhome.cfm)

- use energy saving light-bulbs
- only boil as much water in the kettle as you need
- add heating controls to central heating
- switch off lights
- Greenpeace's electricity supply, via Juice  
[http://www.npower.com/html/juiceandwindpower\\_4467.htm](http://www.npower.com/html/juiceandwindpower_4467.htm)

## Transport

It's all pretty obvious - use the car less, use public transport more and ideally walk or cycle as this is good for your health as well as the planet's. Transport 2000's website has some jolly and inspiring examples of local authorities incentivising healthier travel - including a map which shows how many calories you burn off on various walks around Liverpool, and Walsall's Groundmiles scheme. People registering for Health Walks, guided walks and other events involving physical activity receive a booklet in which they collect discount stamps, handed out each time they participate. Pages of stamps can be traded in against discounts in local shops and other activities. Fab!

[www.transport2000.org.uk](http://www.transport2000.org.uk)

## DIY

A good online store:

[www.greenbuildingstore.co.uk](http://www.greenbuildingstore.co.uk)

And the sort of thing that makes for green DIY:

- Left over paint:
  - don't flush down drains
  - experiment with mixing several colours together
  - offer to donate it to the charity Re-paint (which gives donated left-over paint to local charities), or to the probation service to use in their community service work
  - take it to the local recycling depot

## Nice neighbourhoods

No steaming piles of dog poo:

- If you have a garden, teach your dog to "go" there before you leave your home.
- Always carry a bag to clear up after your dog. Always keep a supply of plastic bags near your dog's lead - supermarket carrier bags make great poop scoops - so you don't forget to take a poop scoop with you on every walk. Simply insert your hand in the plastic bag and pick up your dog's waste. It's easy and not as bad as you think
- Every time your dog fouls, "bag it and bin it". Dispose of your bag in a 'Poop' bin. Contrary to popular belief, dog waste can also be put into a public litterbin if a specific dog wastebin is not provided
- Never let your dog out alone.
- Keep your dog regularly wormed to prevent passing on infections to other dogs

Get a poop scoop which is integrated into a lead!

[www.petplanet.co.uk/category.asp?dept\\_id=132](http://www.petplanet.co.uk/category.asp?dept_id=132)

The Dog's Trust (owners of the classic A dog is for life, not just for Christmas slogan) has a delightful website, with engaging games rather than hectoring information.

[www.dogstrust.org.uk](http://www.dogstrust.org.uk)

Some local councils provide free poop scoops and most are responsive to people reporting graffiti, litter and abandoned cars.

[www.london.gov.uk/mayor/litter/litter\\_fairies.jsp](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/litter/litter_fairies.jsp)

## 8. Inclusive attitudes

The cheapest, friendliest, most important of all our everyday actions?

There are some challenging quizzes and under-known facts about prejudice, racism and genocide at

[www.understandingprejudice.org](http://www.understandingprejudice.org)

'Bitesize' revision notes on the attitudes of Christianity, Islam and Judaism to prejudice and difference

[www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/re/prejudice/index.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/re/prejudice/index.shtml)

## Anti-racism & cultural diversity

- ask people - their preferences re: personal care, language (including self-descriptors), religious practices
- making links with local (or national...) black and ethnic minority organisations for issue-based advice, professional specialists from minority communities, networking...

One of the loveliest ways of finding out about other communities, whether on the other side of the street or the other side of the world is through 'twinning'. Of course the best-known form of twinning is between cities and towns, but why stop there? We can make links through:

- organisations (companies, charities, leisure etc)
- faith communities
- schools
- sports clubs

and nurture these through:

- exchanges
- writing
- job swaps
- professional advice

## Offenders

A great way to challenge attitudes (including our own) about offenders is to arrange for a project to be undertaken by offenders who have been sentenced by the court and are being supervised by the probation service. (The specific court order is unfortunately called a community punishment order. Not exactly designed to enhance relationships between an offender and the local community by de-demonising the offender.) If your charity or community group, or even your kid's school, needs help with decorating, gardening, cooking, cleaning... get in touch with your local probation service. Here's what the London probation service say about community service by offenders:

<http://www.london-probation.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=363>

## 9. Voting

Someone called Bobby Jennings has produced this rather nifty list of Top Ten Lame Excuses Not to Vote

10. My dog ate my registration card.
9. Reruns of the Simpsons are on TV.
8. Martin Sheen of "West Wing" is not running. (Well, maybe that should be a good reason...)
7. I forgot to register to vote.
6. I have a right not to vote. You can't make me.
5. I don't know who is running.
4. I don't have a ride.
3. I am too busy.
2. All politicians are corrupt.
1. My vote won't make a difference.  
(They may not even count it.)

He then continues with:

#### Top Ten Reasons To Vote

10. You might meet the man/woman of your dreams in the line to vote.
9. Use it as a reason to leave work early.
8. Voting costs money and you are paying for it. If you don't vote your oney will be wasted.
7. Avoid feeling guilty if the "other guy" wins.
6. Be a contrary. Many special interest groups would prefer you did not vote. Upset their plans.
5. Many people have spent a lot of money to buy your vote. Disappoint them by voting your conscience.
4. Make a homage to our ancestors. Many have died and suffered to gain the right to vote.
3. If enough people vote the "right choice" will be made.
2. Civil participation "breaks the back" of violent confrontation, disruptive behavior, and corruption.
1. You will feel personally empowered.

We'd like to contribute a few more reasons to vote, although the one about meeting the man/woman of our dreams seems a good enough one for those of us currently 'between relationships'.

Bright reasons to vote:

- It makes the results of the election more interesting, more personal. We've got more personal connection with and investment in it
- It makes actions of elected politicians (and sometimes those who failed to get elected) more interesting
- Suffragettes were continuously imprisoned and viciously force fed, in response to their campaign to have the right to vote. Emmeline Pankhurst said: *You have to make more noise than anybody else, you have to make yourself more obtrusive than anybody else, you have to fill all the papers more than anybody else, in fact you have to be there all the time and see that they do not snow you under, if you are really going to get your reform realized.* And all we have to do is

- wander down to the local school hall and bung a mark on a piece of paper
- Visualise the lines of South Africans queuing in the sun for hours and hours to vote in the first election after apartheid
    - <http://www.mppa.org/mppa/1994/news-story1.html>
  - Teeny numbers of votes can make big difference, especially in local elections. For example:
    - Winchester 1997 - The declared result had Mark Oaten (Lib Dem) winning by 2 votes over the Conservative candidate, Gerry Malone. The result was successfully challenged by an election petition and a by-election resulted in Mark Oaten being returned with a majority of over 21,000.
    - Peterborough 1966 - Sir Harmar Nicholls (Con) beat Michael Ward (Lab) by 3 votes.
    - Carmarthen Feb 1974 - Gwynoro Jones (Lab) beat Gwynfor Evans (PC) also by 3 votes.
  - It's an opportunity for an election party - go and vote with a group of neighbours and/or meet up after for takeaway and results watching. (These might turn out to be Vote and Gloat parties, or Ballot and Blubber parties, depending on the results.)
  - Being better informed and interested makes it more likely you'll interest and motivate others

## 10. Lots of Stuff

There are two organisations, in particular, whose websites have compelling, and enjoyable, information about improving our communities and our own quality of life.

Common Purpose's Just Do Something website is at [www.justdosomething.net](http://www.justdosomething.net). It includes information on everything from how to become a magistrate to guidance about how to start your own campaign.

And you may well have seen, or ideally bought, the fab book *Change the World for a Fiver*, from We are what we do. They describe themselves as a new movement which inspires people to use their everyday actions to change the world. Who wouldn't want to do that? For the full, funky, fun colour version of the 50 actions that they're motivating the country to undertake, visit [www.wearewhatwedo.org](http://www.wearewhatwedo.org). In the meantime, here's their list:

1. Decline plastic bags whenever possible
2. Read a story with a child
3. Fit at least one energy-saving light bulb
4. Learn basic first aid
5. Smile and smile back
6. Take public transport when you can
7. Plant a tree

8. Have a bath with someone you love
9. If it says 30MPH, do 30MPH
10. Turn your thermostat down by 1 degree
11. Get fitter, feel better
12. Turn off appliances at the mains
13. Recycle your mobile phone
14. Spend time with someone from a different generation
15. Register online as an organ donor
16. Give your change to charity
17. Try watching less TV
18. Learn to be friendly in another language
19. Learn one good joke
20. Find out how your money is invested
21. Turn off unnecessary lights
22. Use your will to good effect
23. Have more meals together
24. Put your gum in the bin
25. Use a mug not a plastic cup
26. Give blood
27. Pay more when you buy at charity shops
28. Seize the moment
29. Recycle your computer
30. Bake something for a friend
31. Turn off the tap whilst brushing your teeth
32. Do something you think you are unable to do
33. Recycle your books
34. Buy fairly traded products
35. Write to someone who inspired you
36. Take time to listen
37. Let in at least one car on every journey
38. Don't overfill your kettle
39. Shop locally
40. Join something
41. Hug someone
42. Recycle your specs
43. Grow something with a child
44. Report dumped rubbish to your council
45. Give your phone number to 5 people in your street
46. Use both sides of paper
47. Buy a copy of this book for a friend
48. Send us an action
49. Learn more, do more
50. Do something for nothing