

I'm just asking them to dare to dream of a place that can be created over the next ten years to cut carbon.

What scientists say has happened over the last 150 years or so, as the people of industrialized nations have extracted Earth's vast buried stores of fossil fuels and burned them. Since the start of the Industrial Revolution the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide has increased by nearly 30 percent, methane has more than doubled, and the concentration of nitrous oxide is up by about 15 percent. All those extra greenhouse gases mean more and more solar energy is being trapped in the atmosphere, exacerbating the greenhouse effect and making things warmer.

First a reality check: Everyone has to understand and accept that whatever we do today is an investment for the future – we will probably not make a noticeable difference against global warming in our lifetime. Rather, it will take many decades, if not centuries, to slow down or reverse the trend. Taking action means adopting a much more long-term view than most people, corporations and governments are in the habit of doing. It also means being aware of the different forms of energy we use and where it comes from.

Riding a bicycle, walking, carpooling, combining trips, telecommuting or buying a more efficient car, remain some of the most direct ways almost anyone can cut their fossil fuel use and greenhouse emissions. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that by leaving a car at home just two days each week, the average commuter can reduce his annual carbon emissions by 1,590 pounds.

A less obvious lifestyle change that has a big effect on carbon emissions, is diet. According to a recently published study by Eshel and his colleague Pamela

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Martin, the carbon emission difference between a vegetable-based diet versus a typical American diet – which includes a lot of meat and dairy products – is about the same as the difference between driving an SUV versus driving a small sedan. The fossil fuels and carbon emissions involved in farming, transporting, processing and distributing food is enormous, said Eshel. Also, because it takes 10 times more energy to grow a pound of beef than to grow a pound of corn, it's a lot more efficient for humans to eat the vegetables directly, when possible. It's not necessary to become a vegetarian to make a difference. Just reducing the amount of meat or animal products eaten every week can chip away at your personal carbon emissions.

Then, of course, there is that pernicious monthly energy bill: for heating and cooling your home. Aside from renewable energy, almost any house can be made more efficient by replacing old appliances with energy efficient models and those incandescent light bulbs with new fluorescent bulbs that use a fraction of the electricity and last much longer. Well for the sceptics who believe climate change is a myth, I would like to quote Albert Einstein when he stated, "*Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former.*" ❀



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