

For you, Dear Reader,
with so much love &
appreciation   

deep green

walk your talk, save the world
increase your health,
wealth, & happiness
take back your time & your space

by jenny nazak

Preface, February 2024

Beloved Reader,

Since 2017, when I first published this book, the PERSONAL motivations for practicing a thrifty low-footprint lifestyle have increased, as extreme weather and economic precarity are hitting more & more of us.

And, the PLANETARY benefits of reducing our (collective) footprint were demonstrated (though accidentally) via the sharp reduction in consumption during the Covid shutdowns.

Over time, it's become more and more clear that what we do to benefit the planet and fellow beings, benefits ourselves as well.

Onward, fellow DEEP GREEN citizens!

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INTRODUCTION

The capacity of people to self-mobilize for a worthy cause is remarkable. Right now, as I'm putting the finishing touches on this book, everyday people from all over the United States are organizing relief efforts for the victims of Hurricane Harvey in Texas. Some people are even loading up their kayaks and other small boats to go to Houston themselves and help with rescue operations.

This book is my effort to contribute to a grassroots mobilization also. It also involves rescue, though of a different kind. I'm setting out to save our earth from eco-crisis by popularizing a low-footprint lifestyle in the United States. I firmly believe we green-minded folk can solve most if not all of the physical problems we humans have created on this planet, and a lot of the spiritual and

emotional ones as well, if we can get this lifestyle to catch on in the USA.

An actual grassroots mobilization for a low-footprint lifestyle is already in progress; two heroic women named Sharon Astyk and Miranda Edel started it back in 2007. It's called the Riot for Austerity, and you'll be reading about it in this book. In fact, it's the core of this book. In writing *DEEP GREEN* I'm setting out to give a boost to the Riot for Austerity movement. We need more people! And the Riot lifestyle is rewarding in a direct personal way, besides benefiting the planet. By the way, my working title for this book when I first started writing was "Grassroots Green Mobilization."

Crisis and Craziness

Pick up a newspaper or turn on the TV, and you're likely to get alternating doses of shock, terror, and rage at what's happening in the world.

According to some of the most highly regarded climate scientists, human activities are influencing the climate so much that our planet could literally become unlivable—its air unbreathable; its waters poisonous—by the end of next century.(1)

In the United States, consumer demand for fossil fuels has fattened the extractive industries into the proverbial 800-pound gorilla, which is increasing pressure for mining, fracking, and drilling on our national parklands and other public lands. The week before this book was launched, the U.S. federal government had announced it was looking at a list of national monuments and other parklands as candidates to be sold off, including Giant Sequoia Monument.(2) After a loud public outcry, the government said it would not eliminate the monuments. But it's still considering reducing the size of some parks and monuments and expanding the

range of activities that are allowed within their borders.(3)

The climate-change article and the threat to wildlands are just two recent examples of why I felt called to write this book. Hardly a day goes by that I don't stumble on some news item that reinforces my decision to take on the task of writing *Deep Green*, a book about how to radically reduce your footprint while enriching your life and helping the planet.

Horrific and sick-making news headlines aside, there's the sheer craziness of things I see around me every day that are considered by modern society to be "normal." The mainstream North American lifestyle defies common sense in many ways:

- We spend countless hours commuting to our jobs, which we need to make the payments on our cars ... which we need in order to drive to our faraway jobs.

- We live in houses that are in walking distance of nothing.
- We drive our kids two hours to a play-date because there are no kids living in our neighborhood. Actually there probably are, but we live so much of our lives behind closed doors that the kids have no way to find each other. As for us adults making a priority of knocking on doors and meeting our neighbors ... well, that's just not normal, right?
- We expend exorbitant amounts of money and energy to heat and cool the air of our buildings and vehicles so we never have to experience a moment of discomfort—nary a degree of heat in summer nor cold in winter. When someone's air conditioner breaks, it's an emergency. The bill comes to hundreds or thousands of dollars, and is paid unquestioningly as a necessity. (In my next life, I want to be an air-conditioning repair technician. No, not really—but the

guaranteed steady income and the feeling of always being needed must be nice!) Also largely unquestioned is the monthly utility bill, which can soar into the hundreds of dollars.

- We spend good money and countless hours sweating on exercise treadmills. This we do to burn the excess calories that our affluent culture enables us to consume cheaply, and that our door-to-door automotive way of life keeps us from burning naturally. But when a person rides her bike seven miles to work or school, she's a weirdo and a renegade. Sweat on the treadmill for no purpose other than burning calories, and it's normal. Voluntarily subject yourself to sweating outdoors in the sun as a means of free reliable transportation, and you're a nutball!

- Our food comes from thousands of miles away, wrapped in plastic. I live in Florida, one of the biggest citrus-producing centers on the planet. Does it make sense to you that a bag of

California oranges would even make it to my state? Somewhere out on I-10, there's surely a tractor-trailer full of them heading here right now.

- As I sit writing this, a large noisy truck is getting ready to re-pave my street—a street that doesn't need re-paving. The current road surface, faded to a soft light-grey by the Florida sun, is about to be "improved" by a coat of smooth black asphalt that will make the street at least 10 degrees hotter. (Micro-climate is a powerful thing!)

- On any given day in a typical neighborhood, someone with a fiercely loud lawn-mower and an even louder weed-whacker will spend an hour (or hours) mowing his lawn and then edging it. Then comes the leaf-blower for another high-decibel hour or so, chasing particles of dust and clippings around the lawn and the driveway. The extreme noise, waste, and fumes intruding on a breezy summer

afternoon are considered by mainstream society to be a fair trade-off for having a neatly maintained green square of turf. For what? Busywork in the service of a pointless conformity! (Sometimes when I see a meticulously buzz-cut, fiercely fertilized lawn, I ask myself how many pleasurable hours of reading or fishing or family time it cost the owner.)

- Somewhere, in front of a school building, a long line of cars winds halfway around the block. Each car is driven by an adult who's dropping off one child. This ritual is repeated at the end of the school day when the parents come to pick up their kids. What happened to school buses or walking? In many places, those things are no longer normal. Chauffeuring by private auto is.

- Some offices are so harshly air-conditioned in the summer that people bring jackets and space-heaters to work!

- Although the United States is a ridiculously wealthy nation full of labor-saving devices, just about everyone regardless of income bracket seems constantly pressed for money and time. What's wrong with this picture?

- We pride ourselves on our high standard of living, yet the mainstream American lifestyle is extremely poor in terms of community cohesion and other elements of social capital. As Robert Putnam points out in his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, more people are bowling than ever, but rather than bowling in leagues or with a friend they are bowling alone!(4)

You can probably think of many more examples right off the top of your head. All of these are things I see as symptomatic of the mainstream rich-industrial-world lifestyle of waste, hyper-consumption, and alienation, largely courtesy of a seemingly

endless supply of cheap fossil fuels. And all of them I see as things that we, everyday individuals, millions and millions of us, can best address by radically reducing our footprint.

I count myself as one of the fortunate ones who have largely unhooked from the worst of the craziness. I have time to go for walks, and I have friends who have time to join me. I have enough money for necessities, and my needs are simple. The things I value most are cheap or free. You, too, as someone who's chosen to walk a greener path, might already be part of this fortunate minority. Still, the high-footprint, high-overhead consumer madness is all around us and even those of us who've managed to disentangle ourselves to a degree cannot help but be affected by it.

It's Not Your Fault

If you're aspiring to reduce your footprint and you live in North America, the deck is stacked against

you in many ways. Policies that subsidize junk-food and automotive transport. Buildings that are designed for constant climate control and are virtually unlivable without it. Roads and shopping centers that aren't designed for bicyclists or pedestrians. Social norms that ridicule conservation and thrift. These are just a few examples of our culture's built-in impediments to practicing an extreme-low-footprint lifestyle. Such challenges can feel terribly daunting but they are surmountable. I wrote this book to help you surmount them. The factors we can control are much larger than the ones we can't.

Who Am I?

So who am I to be writing this book? I'm a United States citizen who's cut her eco-footprint to about 10% of the U.S. average, while fully participating in society and enjoying a comfortable standard of living. I'll share the details of how I maintain

this low footprint. I'll describe the personal benefits I've gained from my extreme-low-footprint lifestyle. And I'll share practical tips and resources to help you craft your own version of an extreme-low-footprint lifestyle.

No matter what kind of dwelling you occupy, what you eat or don't eat, or what your life-circumstances are, you can radically reduce your footprint without sacrificing a good standard of living. In addition to offering a practical do-able way for an individual to help the planet, an extreme-low-footprint lifestyle also has great personal benefits. The long list of personal benefits I've experienced include huge amounts of time and money freed-up for the things that give meaning to my life; enhanced health and wellbeing; inner peace; and disaster-preparedness.

My Bad!

For a long time now (at least a decade), I've been thought of by friends and colleagues as someone who lives a low-footprint life and "walks her walk." Until very recently, I was attributing my footprint-reduction success entirely to my own passion and commitment. And this made me a little bit impatient with other people. If other people admired my lifestyle so much, why weren't they living it?

Well, for starters, I wasn't making it look very easy or attractive. I wasn't taking the time to find out what kind of support people might need.

I wasn't acknowledging how much I myself was being helped by resources that other people had worked hard to create. Books, websites, courses, videos, events. Granted, it was my passion and commitment that led me to these resources—when the student is ready, the teacher appears, right?—but it only recently (very embarrassingly recently) started to

dawn on me that there was a reciprocal action at work; that the resources I uncovered were in turn helping me go further in reducing my footprint.

That's when I decided to write this book. *DEEP GREEN* represents my best effort to distill 20 years of learning and experience into a brief practical manual. To avoid making this a multi-hundred-page tome, I've chosen to err on the side of conciseness rather than try to anticipate every possible question. Any deficiency arising from lack of detail, I've attempted to remedy via pointers to extensive, highly detailed, publicly available online resources. You'll find these resources listed, with links, in the appendix. You'll also find links to online community where you can ask me questions and also meet others who are practicing this lifestyle.

(And in case you want extended one-on-one time with me, to get a whole bunch of questions answered or discuss

details about your life that you'd rather not share publicly, you'll find at the back of the book a coupon for a "Deep Green Tech Support" phone session!)

As I promised in a pre-launch announcement, I've laid out the core concept of the book right here in the first section rather than bury it somewhere in the middle. Here you go:

THE BASIC FORMULA FOR WALKING YOUR TALK AND SAVING THE WORLD =

Minimize Your Footprint (negative impact)

+

Maximize Your Handprint (beneficial impact)

Things That'll Help You Reduce Your Footprint

- Have compelling motives. Absolutely key to ongoing success in pursuing a low-footprint lifestyle is to have a set of motives that are deeply

meaningful to you. You'll read about that in the next section.

- Get concrete targets. The targets need to be ambitious yet do-able and flexible. I found people who had taken great time and care to develop just such a set of targets, and practiced them so passionately that they ended up sparking a movement, which they dubbed the "Riot for Austerity," also known as the "90 Percent Reduction Challenge." This book would not exist without their work. You'll read about the Riot, and you'll be able to start using the targets right away to calculate your current footprint and make reductions.

- Find supportive community. In this book I highlight some social movements (in addition to the Riot) that I've found inspiring, nurturing, and energizing.

- Get your inner landscape in shape: address mental and emotional well-being. While a detailed treatment of this subject is beyond the scope of this book, I talk about it in Chapter

V, and in the appendix I point you to some books and programs that have benefited me immensely.

- Tap into your creativity; make your unique contribution. I'll share some resources that have helped me overcome self-doubt and resistance, so that more of my ideas attain escape velocity from my head and make it out into the world. You may not think of yourself as creative, but you are; it's a fundamental attribute of human beings.

Deep-Green Tech Support for Fellow Americans

I'm writing this book mainly for fellow North Americans. Why do I single out Americans?

- Because I believe in starting at home, and the USA is my homeland. (Canadians, your footprint and way of life are similar to ours, so you're included in my primary target audience too.)(5)

- Because the United States has so much waste and inefficiency baked into its policy and infrastructure. People wishing to live green need all the practical advice and moral support they can get!
- Because the USA is a trend-driver: Where America goes, for better or for worse, the rest of the world tends to follow. So, getting the U.S. footprint under control is the best way to bring the human race into balance with other species and our planet.
- Because it's simply the right thing to do: stop hogging more than our share of the world's resources, and start behaving like the "world leader" country that we call ourselves.

Much of the world's population is already living at a tiny fraction of the U.S. footprint, but in this case the "lifestyle" is not a choice; it's imposed by dire poverty. Billions of people are living under conditions that aren't even adequate to sustain the physical needs of the human body,

let alone provide anything resembling a decent quality of life. And yet, simply exporting the U.S. mainstream lifestyle worldwide would be disastrous. Our modest share of the world's population is already wreaking havoc with ecosystems all across the globe. Imagine multiplying that impact by billions more people.

As I see it, we eco-minded Americans have a moral obligation to the rest of the world to model an extremely-low-footprint lifestyle that includes all the elements of a good standard of living, such as reliable access to good food and safe water; clean reliable energy for cooking, lighting, and other needs; clean and sound transportation infrastructure; telecommunications infrastructure; safe dwellings; adequate sanitation; health care; education; a good and wholesome livelihood.

Although I'm writing mainly for North Americans, people in other countries

might also benefit from the suggestions and resources in this book. Everyone, I welcome your feedback.

CHAPTER I. CLARIFY YOUR MOTIVES

Trying to live a low-footprint life is a challenge, especially if you live in a place where the infrastructure and social norms are working against you. The absolute first step for me, in this endeavor or any other, is to clarify my motives.

On some occasions you might well find yourself faltering or burning out. But when that happens, don't panic: You can instantly regain your energy and focus by reminding yourself of your "Why's": your motives for pursuing this lifestyle.

For best results, your "Why's" should include personally rewarding motives as well as planetary/humanitarian motives. For a saintly, ascetic minority, planetary motives may suffice. But most people (myself included) need to have personal, "selfish" motives in order to stay motivated.

I've found that even the very compelling motive of wanting to live up to my own moral standards isn't always enough; I really rely on immediate self-interest motives to keep me going. Here's a current list of my "Why's":

Global/planetary motives:

- Moral imperative to only use my fair share of the world's resources.
- Help my country, the United States, set a better example for the world.
- Do my part to avert climate disaster, food shortages, government-imposed rationing, energy shortages.
- Do my part to reduce human encroachment on wildlife habitat.

Personal "selfish" motives (I put "selfish" in quotes because many of the things that seem selfish also make us better members of society):

- Reduce my financial overhead so I have freedom to pursue creative

projects and part-time gigs rather than having to go out and get a full-time job that's not aligned with my life purpose. (This is actually important in more ways than one: As a person in her 50s who's been self-employed since 1995, I wouldn't likely be considered a desirable candidate for a conventional job anyway, even if I were to seek one.)

- Reduce irksome busywork (lawn-mowing, cleaning and maintaining a large house, etc.); this gives me more time for things I enjoy, such as taking free online classes, swimming in the ocean, taking walks on the beach with friends.

- Free up time for civic participation and volunteer work, both of which I consider essential to my definition of a good life.

- Aesthetics: Create a home environment that's quiet and free of distractions from visual clutter, electronic noise, etc. Always get to be connected with the sights, sounds,

and smells of outdoors (by keeping my windows open most of the time).

- Preserve some of the sweet simple flavor of my childhood.
- Feel more secure, having reduced my dependence on things I can't control (air-conditioning breakdown, car failure, etc.).
- Inner peace that comes from living in harmony with my core principles.
- A constant, tangible way to practice my religious and spiritual beliefs.
- A form of worship; communion with the divine.
- Enhanced disaster-preparedness! The low-footprint lifestyle turns out to be good training for just about any kind of disaster, whether natural or personal. In a hurricane evacuation I was able to sort my stuff calmly, secure my home, and evacuate quickly. Faced with personal financial collapse, I was able to keep a level head and navigate through it.

“YMMV”: Your Motives May Vary! Feel free to use any of mine that resonate with you.

Background: How I Got Started

My “extremely-low-footprint lifestyle journey” started about 20 years ago. It began as a quest to demonstrate that it was possible for a person living in the United States to maintain a high standard of living while having a low enough footprint that her energy needs could feasibly be met by renewables. I’d become involved in the environmental movement, and I was seeing a major problem with our approach. We were waving signs and circulating petitions trying to get the government and corporations to change their behavior, but we as individuals (consumers) weren’t giving them any incentive to change.

We wanted to shut down coal mines but very few of us were willing to boycott electricity or even cut our usage

significantly. We opposed oil drilling but very few of us were willing to boycott gasoline or even significantly reduce our driving. It seemed the environmental movement was looking to the government to just snap its fingers and mandate a switch to renewables. And looking to corporations to stop producing fossil fuels even though we were continuing to create the demand for them. Granted, we had a lot working against us if we wanted to effect change via our daily habits and choices. But someone had to get the ball of change rolling, and I thought we were crazy to expect that "someone" to be the government or corporations. I was convinced it had to be *us*: consumers. Millions and millions of us, with our millions and millions of wallets.

Besides the wish to prove that a renewable-powered life was feasible, I was also motivated by concern about climate change and Peak Oil. Note, I wasn't actually using renewable energy

(other than my solar oven and twig-fired Rocket Stove); I was simply shrinking my footprint to an extent that it would be *feasible* to run my life on renewables alone. I didn't actually have any metrics for this; I was simply going by gut feeling and common sense.

My low-consumption lifestyle paid great dividends. I was deriving satisfaction from doing my part to help address a global problem. I was feeling an enhanced sense of security from reducing my dependence on entities and factors beyond my control.

And I was saving a great deal of time and money, which I channeled into creative projects, education, and volunteer work. I experienced, much of the time, the deep-seated inner peace that comes from living in accordance with one's highest principles. I had created a home environment of great beauty (to my tastes), where every

object was loved and regularly used; where the unadorned walls served as a projection screen for the dancing shadows of the tree branches stirred by the night breeze; where the line between indoors and outdoors was blurred; where I could always hear the crickets and the train whistle and the laughter of neighbors. I also realized, over time, that my low-footprint practices had, for me, the calming and restorative effect of a spiritual practice. In short, I was discovering how deep the personal, purely "selfish" benefits of this lifestyle were, and how strongly they kept me motivated.

The Downside

The drawback of my approach was that, since I didn't have any metrics to go by, I never knew for sure whether I was reducing my footprint enough. I couldn't even allow myself a can of beer or an ice-cream cone without thinking, "There's another nail in the coffin of the planet. There's another

tree felled in the rain forest!" and so on. I even worried about using toilet paper; how could it be sustainable?

Another drawback was that I was doing this alone. I found myself wishing that the government would impose a mass green mobilization, along similar lines to the rationing of World War II, except in this case the war would be on climate change and environmental degradation. We could have a modern version of those old glory days and redeem our nation's post-World War II excesses. Oops, there I was, falling into the fallacy I'd criticized before: looking to the government to make change happen! But I yearned for camaraderie and community, and felt that a green mobilization would solve most if not all of our problems.

Speak of the Angel

Little did I know that I was about to have my wish granted, though not quite in the way I envisioned. While I was

living my best guess of an extreme-low-footprint lifestyle that would turn the tide of climate change and enable a switch to renewables, other people had actually developed detailed metrics for such a lifestyle. And their metrics were derived from the work of reputable climate scientists. And the people who had developed these metrics were practicing this lifestyle and blogging about their experiences, which in turn inspired many other people to jump on the bandwagon. A grassroots self-mobilization movement aimed at saving the environment and averting the extinction of humankind was already under way! You'll meet these eco-angels in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II. MINIMIZE YOUR FOOTPRINT

For achieving and maintaining an extreme-low-footprint lifestyle, I consider the following two things extremely helpful, even necessary: 1) a set of concrete targets, ambitious but do-able; and 2) a supportive community of other people who are on the same path. I've found both of those things, and in this chapter I share them with you.

II-1. A Grassroots Movement for Radical Reduction: The Riot for Austerity

Back in 2007, two eco-conscious bloggers, Sharon Astyk and Miranda Edel, were extremely concerned about climate change and other impacts of overconsumption. (Astyk, who also happens to be a farmer, has since written several excellent books on food preservation and other aspects of sustainable living.)

Astyk and Edel had read a book by George Monbiot titled *HEAT: How To Stop the Planet from Burning*. Monbiot, a journalist and climate activist, asserted that in order to avert global climate disaster, the wealthy industrial nations needed to reduce their footprint by an average of 90%. He contended that this was do-able, and he set forth recommendations. Monbiot's recommendations were focused on the realm of big government and corporations: regulation; policy reform; technological advancement.

When I got around to reading Monbiot's book, all of his recommendations made good sense to me. He wrote in a very level-headed manner and supported his assertions with data. But at the same time, I was a bit disappointed in Monbiot's book because I was expecting it to include Monbiot's own personal lifestyle practices based on the numbers he suggested. I wanted to know what a 90% reduction lifestyle looked like in real life! All I had was my

own version, which as I've mentioned wasn't based on any hard data.

(Fast-forward to 2017: *DEEP GREEN* is the book I was looking for 10 years ago: Someone's personal account of what it looks like to live at 10% of the average U.S. footprint. Since that book didn't exist, I wrote it!)

Anyway, back to the Riot founders Sharon Astyk and Miranda Edel. The two women took it upon themselves to translate Monbiot's recommendations into *personal* actions that they as everyday people could take. They did meticulous research to gather the U.S. average figures and compute the Riot target values. The numbers are in seven categories reflecting everyday needs such as electricity, water, food. You'll find those numbers in the next section and get a chance to calculate your own.

In his book, Monbiot points out that "Nobody ever rioted for austerity!"

Astyk and Edel adopted "Riot for Austerity" as the tagline for their personal experiment, which ended up turning into a grassroots movement. At one point several thousand people in a number of countries were participating. (As I mentioned, Astyk and Edel were both bloggers. That's how I and others found out about them and got inspired to join the Riot.)

Astyk summarizes the spirit of the Riot as follows:

Someone, we agreed, had to take the very first steps to conquering the underlying doubt that we can change. Someone had to do the basic work of establishing a vision of a life in the Global North that doesn't include conspicuous consumption of energy. More importantly even, as long as we felt that our response to climate change and energy depletion had to wait on policy measures – to wait for the high speed rail lines and superinsulated new homes, to wait for

carbon credits or whatever, we would not act. We needed to find a way to show that you can act right now – and make not a little tiny difference by carrying your cloth bag, but a big and measurable one – a change that nobody else thought was possible.

We stole from George Monbiot the wonderful line “Nobody ever rioted for austerity!” He was right – no population in human history has marched and demonstrated to have less. We figured we’d be the first.

Miranda and I set out to document our project and spend a year reducing our energy consumption by 90% over the average American’s. What we didn’t expect was that first dozens, then hundreds, and by the end, several thousand people joined us. We had expected to struggle. We hadn’t expected to find community, and most of all, to have fun. Perhaps we should have, though – as historian Timothy Breen has shown, rituals of non-consumption replace rituals of

consumption and are as satisfying to most people as the consumption. That is, while during wartime, people might miss meat or sugar or drives in the country, that the communal exercise of substitution becomes a good in itself – so exchanging recipes for cakes that use less sugar and playing cards instead of taking drives becomes just as satisfying when you are acting together for a collective purpose.(6)

A Pleasant Surprise

When I found out about the Riot and started doing it, I got an extremely pleasant surprise. I saw that I could reach the targets without making any big changes from the way I was already living! In some categories I was near the targets; in some categories I was already there; and in some categories (food, gasoline) I was somewhat above the Riot targets but found it easy to make progress. Overall, the Riot took a load off my shoulders because when I was living my "best guess" life, I didn't know what to aim for and didn't

know where to stop. I mention this because a lot of you who are very committed to living green might be in the same boat as I was: never feeling like you're doing enough, and sometimes feeling burnt-out by it all. When you have targets and a community, which you're going to get in this chapter, you might find it a great relief! Things might actually get easier and more fun for you! And when things are easier and more fun for you, you'll naturally transmit that to others in your attitude, which in turn will help to popularize an extreme-low-footprint lifestyle. I consider this "pleasant surprise" to be one of the key take-aways of this book.

And now, the Riot categories and targets!

II-2. Calculating Your Riot Numbers

A Few Pointers

- As you look at the target values and calculate your own numbers, remember you're aiming for 10% of the U.S.

average, not 10% of your current level. Since you're on a green path, your footprint might already be quite a bit smaller than the U.S. average in some or all categories. You may be well on your way to a 10% footprint already.

- Don't be surprised if you find it easy to reach 10% in some categories and not in others. It's an ongoing effort. Think of the multiple categories as multiple opportunities to reduce your footprint. Also it's typical for the numbers to fluctuate over time, as you're faced with different life-circumstances: a new job in a different location; having kids; needing to care for an aging parent; and so on.

- Tackle one category at a time, or start on all of them at once, whichever you prefer. Either way, know that you're doing good for yourself and for the planet.

- Note that some of the numbers are figured per person (water is one example, garbage output is another);

and some are per household (electricity; gas).

- Keep in mind that those of us who've been in on this since the beginning have 10 years' head start on you! Many of us took a year or more to achieve 10% in even one category, and many of us have at least one or a few categories in which we have not yet achieved the 10% target. Don't beat yourself up; just focus on the overall purpose.

- Have fun! When the people around you sense that you're feeling energized and enthusiastic about something, they'll ask what you're up to and might even want to join you. Great way to get your spouse, kids, friends, neighbors, and co-workers involved. You can even turn it into a friendly competition!

OK, are you ready? Here are the seven Riot categories and target numbers. Note: This is an extremely abbreviated version of the Riot description developed by Sharon Astyk and Miranda

Edel. You can find the original, full-length version online, either on the Riot for Austerity group (Facebook) or the 90 Percent Reduction email list (Yahoo), both mentioned in the appendix.

1. Gasoline. Average American usage is 500 gallons PER PERSON, PER YEAR. A 90 percent reduction would mean you're using 50 gallons PER PERSON, PER YEAR.

Notes: Public transportation and waste veggie oil fuel are calculated at 100 mpg. No extra credit for ethanol or biodiesel; calculate them the same as gasoline. If you ride-share, you get to multiply your miles per gallon by the number of people in the car (unless you're getting a ride from someone who wouldn't otherwise be going that way; then the gallons consumed are all yours).

Don't worry if you're at the U.S. average or higher in this category. In some places it's virtually impossible

to avoid owning your own car and driving everywhere. Things you can do: Consider moving to a more walkable place, where you might not even need a car. Do you like the place where you live? If not, seriously consider moving. Life is too short to live somewhere you don't like. I realize that's not an option for everyone; you might be caring for an aging parent; you might be underwater in your house. Still, keep your attention on resolving the situation, and something will emerge.

If you like where you live and want to stay put there, you can see if your employer would let you telecommute. Or you could find a way to make a freelance living online. Or you could start a business that serves people in your local area. (For example, if you live in a rural area, you could set up a store or a taxi service or an in-home eldercare service to serve the immediate area.) For the longer-term good of your community, you could get

involved with your local government and work on recruiting small businesses and other services that would make your community more resilient and less dependent on long-distance driving, without losing its rural character.

In most places, it's possible to make at least some trips on foot or by bicycle. If you haven't bicycled in a long time, I suggest you take a bicycle safety course. Many bike shops offer them, or you could take a course online. And read "How Not To Get Hit By Cars" on Michael Bluejay's website referenced in the appendix. Walking and cycling are great ways for family members to spend time together while getting exercise and getting errands done. They're also excellent ways for an individual to have time to think. A lot of creative ideas seem to come to me while I'm walking or cycling.

You can coordinate with neighbors to save car trips by consolidating

errands. If you have simpatico neighbors, you might even be able to share ownership of one vehicle.

Finally, you may have noticed that this category makes no mention of air travel. Monbiot considers air travel to be out of the question. Regarding this, I have some thoughts and practical suggestions in the next section, where I talk about my numbers.

2. Electricity. Average U.S. usage is 11,000 kWh PER HOUSEHOLD, PER YEAR, or about 900 kWh PER HOUSEHOLD PER MONTH. A 90% reduction would mean using 1,100 PER HOUSEHOLD, PER YEAR or 90 kWh PER HOUSEHOLD PER MONTH.

Notes: If you use solar, the Riot gives you a 50% reduction. So for every 100 kWh of electricity you use, count it as 50 kWh. For hydro and wind, the "discount" is 75%: Every 100 kWh counts as just 25 kWh toward your total.

The low-hanging fruit here is home heating and cooling, which together constitute almost 50% of a household's energy footprint. If you want a huge instant reduction in your footprint, switch off the climate control and let each occupant handle his or her own heating and cooling with personal heating and cooling devices. Socks and hats, blankets and warm drinks for heating; lighter clothing, fans, and cool drinks for cooling.

Not ready to go that far? Fortunately you can keep your heat or a/c running and still reduce your footprint greatly by using insulation, window shades, door-sill barriers (a lot of your expensively heated or cooled air can escape through that gap under the door!), and adjusting the thermostat by even a few degrees. Fans also help enormously, not only with cooling but also with circulating warm air in the winter. I used to be skeptical that such things really made that much

difference, but I've heard of huge variations in people's electric bills as a result of these low-tech low-cost measures.

Other ways to reduce electricity for heating and cooling are living in a smaller place; or only heating/cooling the room you are actually using. Caution: You can't do this by just closing ducts; it's bad for your central air system. It needs to be done with space-coolers and heaters. ("Mr. Electricity" Michael Bluejay michaelbluejay.com is my main go-to site for such important facts.)

Another way to reduce your summer cooling footprint is to take a page from the permaculture design book (see permaculture references in the appendix) and create a living shade structure: put a trellis in front of your window and grow edible fruit vines and flowers up the trellis! Putting a barrier between the sun and

your window reduces solar gain much more than does an inside window-shade.

If you live in a place with cold winters, make sure you don't have vegetation or anything else blocking the sun from coming in the window in wintertime; that sunshine streaming in is a prime source of free heat! It can be bitter cold outside and still feel toasty warm in a sunny south-facing living room. (If you live south of the equator and happen to be reading this book, you would of course substitute "north-facing" for "south-facing" and vice-versa.)

Experiment with the thermostat and use low-tech personal comfort devices (cold drink or ice pillow on a hot night; a sweater or a cup of tea on a cold day). Unglamorous and plain as it sounds, that old 1970s-era image of Jimmy Carter donning his sweater in the White House pretty much sums it up. Heating and cooling a room is very energy-expensive compared with heating

or cooling one's own body. And it has the added advantage of empowering every member of the household to take charge of his or her own comfort.

If you live alone in a big house or apartment, an instant way to lower your energy footprint for home heating and cooling is to get roommates. The footprint for home heating and cooling is shared among everyone. Some people say they could never live with roommates (which is why they live alone in spite of how expensive it is), but the prospect of significant money savings from splitting expenses with others might sway their opinion in favor of trying roommates.

A word about tiny houses, buses, trailers, and other portable dwellings: They're neat but they can be expensive to heat and cool for their size! Insulate as much as you can. Other than that, try to situate near trees, buildings, or other

structures that help mitigate temperature extremes.

After air heating and cooling, other significant components of your electric consumption are the water-heater, clothes-dryer, lights, and refrigerator.

Consider not using a dryer, or save it for long rainy spells; otherwise use a clothesline or drying rack. Sun-dried laundry smells clean and fresh; many people including myself are passionate devotees. If you live in an apartment and have no clothesline, there are many different styles of drying-racks which you can use on the balcony (if your management aren't fanatics who disallow all signs of human life from the balcony) or set up near a window. Your more delicate clothes especially will thank you for using the air-dry method.

A great way to reduce your electric water-heater usage is to wash clothes

in cold water rather than hot or warm. According to Michael Bluejay, who gets his data from reliable sources such as the Department of Energy, 90% of energy used to wash clothes is from heating the water! Says Bluejay: "Washing your clothes in hot instead of cold for a year wastes more electricity than leaving the fridge door open 24 hours a day for a year." Wow, who knew!

And of course another way to reduce the electricity you use for hot water is take shorter showers. (By the way, in his essay "Forget Shorter Showers," radical environmentalist Derrick Jensen contends that there's no use cutting our personal consumption as long as the entire system has waste and dysfunction baked in.(7) I don't buy that argument. Yes, we should keep up our efforts to address waste and dysfunction at the infrastructure and policy level by signing petitions, engaging with companies and elected officials, and so on. But our personal

habits are a key element also; they influence the system by sending signals to the energy companies and manufacturers. It's not an either-or; it's a both-and.)

Experiment with the temperature of your showers as well as their duration. You might find you don't really need hot showers, especially in summer.

Lighting is a significant electricity-user also. I compared light-bulbs of different wattages: One 100-watt bulb that's in use 20 hours a day for 30 days consumes 60 kWh per month. For a 60-watt bulb, that number is 36 kWh. For a CFL or LED bulb, the number drops to just 9 kWh per month.

I was surprised at how one solitary 100-watt incandescent light-bulb could potentially use up about 75% of my entire Riot target for electricity, if I were not careful to turn it off when leaving the house. And of course, most

households have far more than just one light-bulb!

For a lot more detail about electricity and potential savings, visit Michael Bluejay's "Mr. Electricity" website. You'll find pie charts, data tables, and extremely thorough tips, including the pros and cons of different kinds of appliances (tankless water heaters, etc.), and how much money you can put in your pocket by making green choices. If I could only bookmark one energy website it would be this one! Bluejay goes into so much depth that it'll save you and me both a lot of time and effort if I simply refer you to his site rather than try to replicate his level of detail in this book. (And if you find his site helpful, which I'm sure you will, please show your support: click on his advertiser links, share his page, email him a thank-you. This goes for all the other websites and other resources I link.)

Most electricity is generated by burning coal or natural gas, so reducing electricity use gives high payoff in terms of reducing your carbon footprint. Also, the process of generating electricity requires water, so when you reduce your electricity consumption you also reduce your water consumption.

3. Heating and Cooking Energy. The Riot divides this into three categories: gas, wood, and oil. (Electric stove or electric heat goes under electric usage.)

- Natural Gas (used by the vast majority of US households as heating and cooking fuel). Calculate propane the same as natural gas. U.S. average natural gas usage is 1000 therms PER HOUSEHOLD, PER YEAR. A 90% reduction would mean a reduction to 100 therms PER HOUSEHOLD PER YEAR.

- Heating Oil (used by only a small percentage of US households, mostly in the Northeast): Average U.S. usage is

750 gallons PER HOUSEHOLD, PER YEAR. A 90% cut would mean using 75 gallons PER HOUSEHOLD, PER YEAR. Biodiesel is calculated as equivalent.

- Wood: Locally harvested wood; deadwood; trees that had to come down anyway, are all deemed carbon-neutral and you can use as much as you want. If the wood comes from far away or isn't sustainably harvested, 1 cord is equivalent to 15 gallons of oil or 20 therms of natural gas.

You can see your therms on your gas bill. If you don't have a gas bill (for example, if your landlord pays the gas), then I suggest the following two-step process. First, calculate the electricity consumption of each appliance. Michael Bluejay's "Mr. Electricity" website gives details for each appliance type. Once you've got those numbers, convert them to therms. I found a kWh-to-therm calculator online at unitconversion.org (I realize this method is a bit cumbersome, but you don't have to

calculate the consumption for every last little appliance; just do it for the biggies: air conditioner, heater, dryer, water-heater. But if you want to be really thorough and calculate the number for every single appliance and other electricity-using device, by all means go for it!)

One thing that's really exciting to me about this category is that people in some geographic regions have the opportunity to generate a significant amount of heat for home heating and cooking by using a carbon-neutral source: deadwood or trees that were being cut down anyway. In my part of Florida, that's not much of an option, as most homes here don't have woodstoves or fireplaces. But in some parts of the North American continent, woodstoves and fireplaces are in common use.

4. Garbage. The average American generates about 4.5 lbs of garbage per person, per day. A 90% reduction means

0.45 lbs of garbage per person, per day.

The easiest way to reduce your garbage volume dramatically is to keep food out of the garbage can. Think about it, the heaviest stuff that goes into your garbage is typically food scraps. And the easiest way to do that is compost your food scraps. You can think of a compost box as Mother Nature's recycling bin! This also virtually eliminates smell and sliminess from your trash cans. As a bonus, because the trash becomes so dry and lightweight, you can stop buying trash-can liners. (If you really feel you need to line a trash can, make a bottom-liner out of newspaper or cardboard; it's more than adequate to absorb any liquid or goo that might still find its way into your trash cans. I line my wastebaskets with cardboard from boxes that have been discarded at curbside.) Many cities now are offering

incentives for citizens to compost. Some are even mandating it.

Another heavy (and bulky) category of trash is yard clippings, leaves, etc. Keep those out of your garbage can; they don't belong there. Yard clippings and leaves aren't trash; they're compost or mulch.

Whether or not you're a gardener, composting is a great way to reduce your garbage, and a great service to the planet. Joseph Jenkins' *The Humanure Handbook* is an excellent guide to composting, even if you never do the "Humanure" part. The book is straightforward, humorous, and packed with all the supporting scientific data you could want.

If you live in an apartment it may be difficult or impossible to compost. You might consider setting up a bin at your school or church. Or ask a neighbor who lives in a house if he/she is interested in composting and

you could help him or her in exchange for being able to compost your food waste. Cardboard and other paper can also be composted, thus further reducing your trash volume. Of course, in many places cardboard and paper are recyclable.

If your city doesn't have a recycling program, it's tough because then all your food containers and other packaging has no alternative but to go in the garbage and add to its weight. Always try to get least-packaged foods and other items possible. Thankfully a lot of manufacturers these days seem to be really cutting down on their packaging.

Good news for scroungers: If you're throwing away something that you'd originally diverted from the waste stream (such as a sweater being thrown away by a friend, or a TV you scavenged from the dumpster or curbside that turned out not to work so now you're throwing it away), it

has zero footprint and doesn't count in your waste volume.

5. Water. The Average American uses 100 Gallons of water PER PERSON, per day. A 90% reduction means 10 gallons PER PERSON, per day.

If you get a water bill, it's easy to know how many gallons you use. Otherwise you can calculate it roughly. For the bathroom, multiply the flow rate of your shower-head by the minutes of your shower duration. Your sink water usage should be negligible unless you're always letting the water run while you shave, wash your face, or brush your teeth. (Which you're not doing, right?)

A fun way to limit shower length and encourage all family members to take ownership of their water consumption is to set up an outdoor shower stall in your backyard, and give each family member a solar shower bag. This provides free hot water heated by the

sun. Each family member is responsible for his or her own bag. Kids have fun seeing how the sun heats up their shower water! (And you have the fun of not having to pay for it in your electric bill!) And because the water goes out onto the ground rather than down the drain, it doubles as irrigation water.

If you use a washing machine, the number of gallons per load is probably indicated on the appliance. Or you can look up your make and model online or call the manufacturer to get that number. Older models might use 30 gallons per load or more. A lot of the newer, more eco-friendly washers use only 15 gallons of water per load. I've even seen little countertop models (some hand-cranked rather than electric) that look as though they only use about five gallons! If you wash your clothing by hand (most people generally don't, but if you do), you can use a tub or pot to collect the water, allowing you to

meter how much water you're using. (For extra eco bonus points, empty the pot outside to give your trees and shrubs a drink.)

For kitchen faucet water, your faucet might have the flow rate indicated somewhere on the unit. Or you can use a pot to catch the water while you're washing a dish, washing your hands etc., and thus measure how many gallons you're using.

The 800-pound gorilla of household water use is outdoor use. (I've seen estimates anywhere from 40% to 60% of a household's total.) If you have a yard and water it, but you don't get a water bill (for example, if you're a renter, and water is included in your rent), you could ask your landlord for the total number of gallons used by the apartment complex and divide that out to get a rough estimate for your portion.

You can reduce outdoor water use by cutting your lawn less often (try cutting it once every two weeks instead of once a week, for example) and by leaving the grass clippings in place rather than raking them up. That way the ground retains more water and doesn't need to be irrigated as frequently.

If you have money to spend, replace the lawn with native and water-wise plants if you haven't already. If you have little or no money to spend, a low-to no-cost idea for reducing your yard's irrigation needs is to convert part or all of your lawn to mulched ground. In many places, tree-trimming companies or the power company will bring you free mulch by the truckload. Before you put down the mulch, spread sheets of cardboard or fabric underneath (old canvas that's otherwise headed for landfill, etc.). This will retard growth of grass and weeds while still allowing water to penetrate. Edge the mulched area with

stones, logs, or other materials to make it look neat and deliberate. You can add plants over time as you get the funds, or as friends have clippings or plants to share. Often you can find transplantable plants that people have put out with their trash at curbside.

Another major culprit in water use is, of course, toilets. Older models can use as much as 8 gallons per flush—yikes! Fortunately most toilets these days seem to be the 1.6 gallon-per-flush variety. Still, the water use adds up! One way to cut down on water use is the old “If it’s yellow, let it mellow” rule (as in, only flush after pooping). Not everyone can stand the smell of multiple batches of urine sitting in the toilet, even if it’s in the name of great water savings. But this is one way to get closer to that 10-gallon target.

The best way to avoid using the earth’s limited supply of potable

water in this way is to use a composting toilet. If you're in an area that allows composting toilets or doesn't expressly forbid them (in many places the laws are vague), you can cut your water use to a tiny fraction of the average by using one. The best resource I know for setting up a compost-toilet system is the *Humanure Handbook* by Joseph Jenkins. It's a great read, mixing humor with solid science. Jenkins calls out our culture's fecophobia ("possibly inherited directly from Queen Victoria herself") and explains in readily understandable terms the science of composting, including composting human poop. After having my eyes opened by this superb book one day back in 2004, I set up a simple system that same day.

Because I'm not clear on the regulations where I live now, I use a regular flush toilet and will continue to do so unless compost toilets become legal in my area. Joseph Jenkins is

truly an eco-hero in my book. I've given away more copies of the *Humanure Handbook* than I can count. Even if you're not ready to try humanure composting, you might find it interesting to read about it. Knowing a safe reliable way to take care of sanitation even if utilities go down is a good way to boost your household disaster-preparedness.

And give a copy of Jenkins' book to your city government leaders too! Composting toilets are now being used in some public facilities, including state and national parks. Humanure composting toilets certainly offer a solution to one financial and logistical bugaboo of local governments, by providing an alternative to expensive and failure-prone sewer infrastructure.

6. Consumer Goods. The average American spends \$10,000 PER HOUSEHOLD, PER YEAR on consumer goods, not including mortgage, health care, debt

service, car payments. Include clothing, gifts, toys, music, books, tools, household goods, cosmetics, toiletries, paper goods, etc. A 90% cut comes to \$1,000 PER HOUSEHOLD, PER YEAR.

Goods purchased from thrift shops or church rummage sales are assumed to have zero carbon cost; you're diverting these goods from landfill. For used goods purchased from previous owners, give yourself 10% of the purchase price. For example, if you buy a sofa on Craigslist or at a yard sale for \$50, you've spent \$5 of your Riot allowance for consumer goods. The reasoning behind this is that used goods bought from previous owners put money back into circulation that is then spent on new goods.

A lot of people these days, seemingly representing every income bracket, love to get stuff from thrift shops and garage sales, particularly clothing and toys as well as everyday

household items like pots and pans. People (even people who aren't particularly green-minded or financially constrained) seem to get a real kick out of it, not only for the huge money savings but also for the quality and aesthetic appeal of older goods. I wouldn't be surprised if the thrifting craze were contributing to a significant reduction in the average American's consumption footprint.

Another good way to reduce your consumer-goods footprint is to choose used smartphones and other devices rather than new ones whenever possible. And recycle your electronics; many repair shops will do this for you.

Also, there are many so-called "necessary" products you can do without: trash-can liners, paper napkins and paper towels, sandwich bags, fabric softener, specialized cleaning products (tub and tile cleaner, etc.). Many people these days

are finding that plain old vinegar and baking-soda are excellent all-purpose cleaning products. Add a drop of essential oil for scent if you like.

You can greatly reduce your use of dish liquid by diluting it. I can make one 99-cent bottle last six months or more.

You can even do without shampoo and conditioner! Yes, believe it or not, there is actually a "no-shampoo" movement. It might sound gross but many "no-'poo" adherents swear that their hair has never looked or felt better because its natural oils aren't being stripped away. Some people find that their hair stays clean using just water. Baking soda and vinegar are also great for cleaning the hair and scalp. Whichever one you use, dilute it: a couple tablespoons of baking soda or vinegar to a two or three cups of water. Not quite ready to try a no-shampoo or baking soda/vinegar method? No worries, just dilute your shampoo.

You'll save a lot of money and store trips. You'd be surprised at how far a bottle of shampoo goes. In fact, the amount of shampoo remaining in a bottle which most people judge to be "empty" can provide several more hair-washings—just add water to the bottle and shake it up.

Another tip for reducing in this category: "Use down" your existing stuff. The typical US American household has whole garages and pantries filled with "backup" stuff. (One of my sideline businesses is cleaning houses, and helping people declutter and downsize. So I see this stuff up-close and personal.) Extra bottles of detergent; extra paper; extra bags of this or that. Use it down, and resolve from now on to stop buying so much that you forget what you've bought! Using down your stuff is like getting free stuff. You'll enjoy not having to go to the store for a while. People buy in bulk to save money, but you don't save time or

money if you then end up needing a bigger place to hold all your stuff. Or if you end up spending a lot of time looking for stuff and then having to buy new because you can't find the one you already bought.

I once went about a year without having to buy a single new pen! I didn't realize how many extra "backups" I'd accumulated, to the point that my box of stationery supplies was bulging and disorganized.

7. Food. The Riot divides food into three categories.

#1 is food you grow yourself or that is produced locally or organically (or mostly – it doesn't have to be certified, but should be low-input). The Riot defines local as within 100 miles. This includes produce, meats, and dairy that are grass-fed or produced with locally grown organic feed. It would also include locally caught wild fish or game, berries and

edible weeds you forage, and so on. Chicken produced locally but fed with conventionally farmed corn from a faraway state is not local. A 90% footprint reduction would involve this category constituting at least 70% of your diet.

#2 is dry, bulk goods, transported from longer distances. That is, dry beans, grains, pasta. You can also include small light things like tea, coffee, and spices if they are fair trade and sustainably grown, and if the tea is bulk rather than in little bags. Otherwise include those items in category #3. Aim to have this category be no more than 25% of your total purchases.

3 is wet goods: meat, fruits, vegetables, juices, oils, milk, cheese, eggs that are industrially produced and/or come from far away. Also include processed foods like soda and snack foods. Right now, this category makes up more than 50% of the

average U.S. diet. The Riot target is to buy no more than 5% of our food in this form.

Example: Out of 20 food items purchased in a week, you'd have 14 home-produced or locally produced items, five bulk dry items, and only one processed or industrially grown/faraway thing.

There's a lot of potential for footprint reduction (not to mention fun, and good eating) in the food category. It may quite possibly be overall the most promising category for eco-transformation, since all humans have to eat. There are many avid gourmet locavores even among the segment of the population who aren't particularly focused on reducing their footprint.

Low-hanging fruit (pun intended) in the food category is growing some of your own. Fresh produce weighs a lot (because of its water content) and is

perishable, so its transport has a relatively high footprint. Therefore, whatever you can grow at home or buy locally will go a long way toward reducing your footprint. Food gardening seems to have become a lot more popular over the past few years. I suspect that many of you readers already grow at least some of your own food, and get much of the rest from your local farmers' market.

Another low-hanging fruit in this category is to reduce your meat intake, especially conventionally farmed beef since that requires a lot of land to raise. I'm an omnivore but I've significantly increased my percentage of vegetarian and vegan meals. I've been surprised at how many good vegan and vegetarian meals I can come up with.

Most of the food recommendations that are good for the planet are the same old ones you've heard before, and they're the same ones that are good

for our personal health: eat more fiber; reduce intake of processed foods; limit salty and sugary snacks; eat local and in season; eat more slowly so you don't end up eating after you're already full; eat with friends or family instead of eating alone.

A Few More Notes to Assist Your Riot Practice

- I suggest you calculate your numbers and write them down as your baseline. You might find it helpful to use the super-handy Riot calculator, posted by one of the more active and longtime Riot participants at <http://www.greenknowe.org/r4a/> Re-calculate your Riot numbers anytime you feel the need or the wish. I re-calculate them whenever there's a significant change in my life-circumstances or routine.

- In creating this guide I've erred on the side of conciseness. Rather than bog you down with minutiae, I just

want to get you started with a "reduction mindset" and some tips on the highest-payoff areas. For more detailed guidance and a supportive community, please join me and others on the Riot for Austerity Facebook group. The Yahoo group is also an excellent resource. Though the group hasn't had much activity for a while, you'll find an embarrassment of riches in the archives.

- In trying to figure out ways of reducing your footprint, keep in mind that simply having a set of concrete targets, which the Riot provides, will get you far. I know it made a world of difference for me! I once heard of an experiment where households ended up conserving a lot of electricity simply by having their electric meters located in the front hall rather than in back of the house. "Out of sight, out of mind" ... and having that meter in plain sight made the residents more mindful. They naturally found

themselves doing little actions that added up to significant savings.

A Riot "Cheat Sheet"

GASOLINE

US Avg: 500 gal/person/year

Riot: 50 gal/person/year

ELECTRICITY

US Avg: 1,100 kWh/household/month

Riot: 90 kWh/household/month

HOME OIL/GAS

US Avg: 1000 therms/household/year

Riot: 100 therms/household/year

GARBAGE

US Avg: 4.5 lb/person/day

Riot: 0.45 lb/person/day

WATER

US Avg: 100 gal/person/day

Riot: 10 gal/person/day

CONSUMER GOODS

US Avg: \$10,000/year

Riot: \$1,000/year

FOOD

Riot targets:

Local & organic 70% of your diet

Bulk, dry 25% of your diet

Processed, industrial 5% of your diet

II-3. My Riot Numbers and How I Get There

Now I'll tell you how my numbers stack up to the targets and how I make that happen.

Caveats:

- My examples are just one person's version of this lifestyle. You can find many, many more examples, from people of all circumstances and walks of life, by tapping into the Riot community online.

I'm incredibly thrifty and in some ways ridiculously lazy. My approach to the Riot, as to life in general, tends

to stick with one simple principle:
When in doubt, do without, and avoid
needless effort! Faced with a choice
between buying item A or buying item
B, I will almost always pick option C
- Buy Nothing, Do Without, and Adapt!

The ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes was a legendary minimalist. He was so hardcore that he lived in an urn in order to save on rent. One day he was drinking from his cup (a reusable one, not a disposable plastic or styrofoam one, this being ancient Greece). He was perfectly content until he saw a little boy drinking water from his cupped hands. At that point Diogenes threw down his cup in disdain. Now, I'm not that extreme. I have a cup. And plates, and silverware even! Still, this anecdote is such an apt illustration of my approach to living green that when I read about Diogenes I was convinced that the man was my long-lost ancient Greek twin.

What I'm trying to say here is that when you see how I do things, don't panic! There are many many ways to cut your footprint. You don't have to live in a tiny place. You don't have to do without air-conditioning or give up your car. Many Riot participants have all those things. And TVs and video games too! And brand-new consumer goods, even! Read my examples and get a kick out of them, and try them out if you like. But also do go online, tap into the Riot community, and find out how others are doing this lifestyle.

The plus side to my approach is that it requires no up-front investment and it starts saving you time and money and headspace right away. And you can test it out for a short time anytime—what have you got to lose?

- I can be wrong! I *am* wrong, on a regular basis. I tend to give very cautious advice that errs on the side of "eliminate; do without." I used to

think solar panels couldn't power an air-conditioner, so a person who wanted to power her life on renewables had to swear off air-conditioning. But I was wrong. In fact, today I heard about a woman who's living in a 2-bedroom apartment here in Florida and has an \$11 electricity bill! She has solar panels, and they are adequate to power the air-conditioning.

OK, now my numbers:

1. Gasoline. U.S. average 500 gallons per person per year; Riot target 50 gallons per person per year.

For the past few years, my usage has hovered around 10 percent of the U.S. average, thus reaching the Riot target of 50 gallons per year.

How I do it: The main way I get around is by bicycle. For long-distance I take trains, buses, or ride-shares. On rare occasion I rent a car, use a taxi, or pay a friend to drive me

somewhere. All of this is included when I calculate my transportation footprint.

For pretty much my whole adult life (30+ years), I've made a priority to arrange my life so that I can get just about anywhere I need to go by walking, bicycling, or public transport. This is a deal-breaker for me in terms of quality-of-life, so I've stuck with this practice even during the time periods when I've owned my own motor vehicle.

Even when I owned a motor vehicle, I generally only drove it every couple of weeks or so. A turning point in my decision to forgo private vehicle ownership was finding out about the existence of high-capacity cargo trailers for bicycles. When I found out that there were long bicycle trailers capable of carrying several hundred pounds of cargo, I quickly ordered one and sold my truck.

Despite my walkable living situation, I admit that the transportation category is a challenging one for me, as I enjoy road-trips and also I travel to another city a few times a year to teach workshops.

Special note on airplane travel: The Riot makes no provision for it. Speaking for myself, I haven't flown in an airplane since 2010 but cannot swear that I will never again do so. There are places I want to visit. For example, I want to walk the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage trail. I'd love to attend an Arabic-language intensive in Cairo. Still, should I decide to fly, it will be an extremely careful choice; I will purchase carbon offsets; and I will set out to give back something worthwhile from the trip, whether it's writing a book, teaching a workshop in my community, reporting to my local government about what other towns and cities are doing, contributing to international friendship and understanding by

learning another language, or something of that sort.

I personally have benefited greatly from travel; it's made me a more compassionate, sensitive, tolerant, and aware person; a world citizen. I wouldn't want to deny other people the benefits of travel. If travel is a part of your life—whether for education or work or leisure or some combination thereof—and you exceed the Riot target (or maybe even exceed the U.S. average), don't stress out about it. You can help mitigate the footprint of your travel by purchasing carbon offsets. And you can increase the handprint (beneficial impact) of your travel by always taking care to bring back knowledge, experience, or something else of value to share with your family and your community.

I once purchased offsets to carbon-neutralize my annual train trip up north to see my family. I was able to use a button right on the Amtrak site

that took me to a carbon-offset merchant. The price of offsetting my 1,300 mile round trip? A whopping \$2! Are carbon offsets a perfect solution, can you use them to zero out everything ever? Maybe not, but they help. I still counted the full distance in my Riot gasoline count, though.

The topic of gasoline brings me to an eco-dilemma that many people face: Keep the old, gas-guzzling car or buy a new, more fuel-efficient one?

Of those two options, I would choose Option 3, which would be keep the old car 'til it's reached the end of its useful life, but drastically cut the number of miles you drive. Better yet, get rid of your car entirely. This might take some serious life-restructuring—such as moving to where you can walk or bicycle to work; or negotiating to be able to work from home. And it might just seem out of the question to you. I'm not trying to

take your car away, but I will tell you many people find there's a great liberation in being car-free. If you're open to experimenting (while still owning a car), you might try it out for a day or a week and find that doing without a car is easier than you think. Yes, even if you have kids! A neighbor of mine has been riding a bicycle with her son to his school 3 miles away. By the way, I see several people in my area who seem to get around mainly by bike, and they transport their kids on bicycle trailers that are designed for that purpose.

The trouble I see with the "efficient car/hybrid" option is that the fuel mileage is impressive, but the problem is, I'm not structurally changing anything about my life, so other than saving money and carbon footprint on gasoline I don't get any of the benefits of going car-free. Such as spending less time sitting in traffic; getting to know my neighbors better—

building social capital (because I'm walking or riding a bike and people can see me); getting more exercise and fresh air; getting a deep knowledge of my town and bioregion by not having metal and glass walls between me and the passing scenery.

My gasoline total for 2017 as of the end of August:

- Annual holiday trip to Virginia to see family - in 40mpg car shared w one rider: 16.25 gal. (If I had taken that trip by train, which I usually do (public transport gets 100mpg), it would have been 13 gal.)
 - 5 trips to vet when my kitty got sick: 18 mi rt in 20mpg car 4.5gal
 - 400mi roadtrip in 40mpg car 10 gal
 - 10 excursions w friends @avg 10 mi in a 20mpg car 5 gal
 - 2x Orlando trip in a 40mpg car shared w 2 other people 1.67 gal
- TOTAL SO FAR THIS YEAR 37.42 gal

If this year ends up being typical, my total will reach about 50 gallons by the end of the year.

I estimate that I save about \$8,000 a year by not owning a car. This includes car payments, insurance, gasoline, and repairs. I free up my time too, probably 10-20 hours a week by not owning a car. How can that be? Doesn't it take longer to get around by bicycle than by car? Well, yes and no. For one thing, I arrange my life so I can get almost all my needs met in a close, bike-able radius. For another thing, time on the bicycle doubles as workout time. I no longer spend any time in the gym. And then there's the time I don't spend waiting around for tow trucks when a car breaks down, sitting in the waiting rooms of auto mechanics, and so on. I didn't even figure that in my total.

By the way, in calculating my money savings for forgoing private auto ownership, I didn't count the amount

of money saved by not needing a gym membership. (I used to be quite the gym-rat in my younger days, though admittedly that was more due to extreme vanity than it was for legitimate health purposes.)

2. Electricity. U.S. average 11,000 kWh per household per year or 900 kWh per household per month; Riot target 1,100 kWh per household per year or 90 kWh per household per month.

I come in at 7% to 9% of the U.S. average, at 60 to 80 kWh per month.

Low-hanging fruit: I don't use heat, air-conditioning, or a clothes-dryer. I also use almost no hot water. I wash dishes and clothes in a minimal amount of cold water, or occasionally use hot water which I heat up in the kettle by adding extra water to the kettle when I'm boiling the water for my morning coffee. I have minimal electronics; just my smartphone and laptop computer which I use for work. I live in a

small apartment that only needs four light bulbs, and they're not used except at night and they're always turned off when not in immediate use.

The fact that I use no heat or air-conditioning may seem impossible or even insane to some. Granted, I live in Florida so it's no great hardship to do without heat. Even doing without a/c isn't as horrible as people think, because the body adjusts! Most people just never give it a chance. It's great to be able to enjoy the outdoors even in the height of summer because my body is acclimated to heat. Sitting in my apartment on this warm summer night, I feel warm but not uncomfortably so. With the windows open, I hear soothing summer sounds of night insects, laughter of neighbors, the distant blues-harmonica of the freight train passing.

Living open-air also means I can also be in a better position to hear and respond if there's some untoward

activity taking place in the neighborhood. Rainwater harvesting guru Brad Lancaster likes to sleep on the roof of his Arizona home. Besides getting to sleep under the stars, he can hear all the outdoor sounds easily. In a video(8) showcasing his sustainable home, he mentions one night when he heard someone trying to break into a neighbor's car. He slid down the fireman's pole(!) in a jiffy and scared off the would-be thief. "Hey! Hey! Get away from that car!" he shouts in the video, all slim, fit, energetic and full of joie de vivre. Priceless!

Although I live without heat in Florida with little difficulty, I always figured it would be impossible for people in colder climates to do so. But I read a fascinating article a few years back, about people who are choosing to do without heat in New York and other places with super-cold winters. In New York City, a group of urban artists living in a warehouse

said they find it a great way to live in a desirable area, while saving several hundred dollars a month which they would rather spend on taking classes, staging performances for the community, or buying art supplies. A group of people living in a farmhouse in snow country reported similar aspirations.

Doing without heat in a cold place seems to come down mostly to devices such as insulation, space-heating, creating a "room within a room." And really being determined to save money!

A note about water heating: When I was younger, I was very thin and was cold a lot of the time. One of my biggest fears (you might laugh, or you might nod in agreement) was that some unspecified apocalypse would descend and I'd never again be able to take hot showers. Literally, in the dead of winter, I'd do "disaster practice" by forcing myself to take as short a shower as I could. I dreaded winter,

period. Even the relatively mild winters of Austin, TX (where I lived before moving to Florida) struck terror into my heart.

Then at some point, I went through a shift. Part of it was that I started to swim in Barton Springs, a natural spring-fed pool in Austin where the water temperature is 68 degrees Fahrenheit year round! In winter, steam rises from the water. At first I did the "normal" thing which was to take a swim and then shower in the bath house. But after a while, I realized I felt clean just from the swim and didn't feel the need to shower afterward. And the swim warmed me up! Without consciously aiming to do so, I actually had become able to swim in cold water year-round, and not need a hot shower afterward!

This practice of having my swim or dip double as my primary bathing method stayed with me even after I moved to Florida. The ocean makes me feel

clean. I feel cleansed and healed by the salt water. I rinse my face off a bit when I notice a bit of salt. And I pour fresh water (from the rainbarrel) onto my feet to rinse the sand off when I get home from the beach. The beach is three blocks away and I walk there barefoot, year round.

Of course, I still find that some areas of my body require a bit more attention (and soap!) to keep clean and fresh. Those areas I find easy to clean with a sponge-bath or small pan of water.

And of course, when traveling (such as visiting family), I will take showers. Typically my shower lasts a total of about two minutes (I do the "Navy shower", turning off the water while I soap up) and uses about four gallons of water if the faucet is low-flow, which most of the ones I encounter are these days.

Not everyone is blessed with a natural, swimmable body of water near their home. I wish this for everyone. Maybe as we clean up more of our rivers and other waterways, a higher percentage of the population will have access to daily natural baths.

In the dead of winter, on the few cold days we have in our mild climate, I may not get in the water for a few days. By modern American standards that consider one or even two showers a day to be necessary, this may sound appalling. But it's actually been very good for my skin, to not have its natural oils stripped away constantly. I'm almost 55 but people comment often on how young I look. I share my simple approach: swim in a natural body of water; avoid hot showers; minimal use of soap - just enough for basic hygiene. Soap hardly ever touches my face. Interestingly, over the years, I have run into more and more people who have the same bath habits I do—even people who have no connection with the

Riot movement and are not particularly environmentalists! People go shower-free and shampoo-free for lots of reasons, some having to do with skin allergies; others having to do with being pressed for time.

Another low-hanging fruit in the water category is laundry. I wash a few things in a time in a large pot I keep for that purpose, and then I hang them on the line where the sunshine gets them nice and dry and fresh-smelling. I wash in cold water (remember 90% of the energy used in doing laundry is used to heat the water), and the amount of water I use is generally only about 1-3 gallons.

Some people might object: "But what if you've got a large family and lots of laundry to do?" Michael Bluejay's wonderful answer: "Well then you've got lots of people to help with the laundry, right?" Anyway, just because you've got a large family doesn't mean everyone has to have a lot of clothes.

One of the best ways to avoid doing huge amounts of laundry all the time is just not to have that many clothes. It seems like the amount of time would be the same—you'd just be washing your small number of things over and over, as opposed to washing a large number of things less frequently—but somehow it doesn't seem to work that way. I feel like I save about 3-4 hours a week on laundry by my method. Part of it is not having to take time out from my day to go to a laundromat. Besides the time savings, there's the fact that I don't have to fork out \$5 or \$6 a week in quarters! My laundry method might seem labor-intensive but it actually takes only about five minutes a day or less. And between wringing out the clothes and hanging them, I get a good arm workout. This time also doubles as time to enjoy my backyard. I get to see what the birds and squirrels are up to, check the ripeness of the papayas.

I can't be sure about this because I've never made a study, but I suspect that people who have a washer and dryer under their own roof end up doing more laundry (and spending more time doing laundry) than people who have to go to the laundromat. If you test this out, let me know what you find!

High-hanging fruit: The following are all minor things that probably don't save me more than a couple kWh or a couple of dollars a month, but I derive great satisfaction from them for aesthetic as well as "green" reasons. I use little or no artificial lighting except at night; I greatly prefer natural light. Sometimes even at night I enjoy doing without lights; I might have a phone chat by moonlight with a faraway friend, while enjoying the shadows of the trees cast in moonlight on my wall. Or I might read a book on my smartphone (a flashlight and a book all in one—gotta love it!). I also have a pretty large

stockpile of "freegan" candles; it's amazing what people throw away! Boxes and boxes of unused tealights; half-burned candles.

(By "freegan" I mean things that were scrounged from curbside, or that people were getting rid of. You'd be surprised, or maybe you wouldn't, at how well a person can live on the discards of middle-class American society. It might seem like I spend hours scrounging the garbage for all this stuff, but actually most of it just comes to me. Literally in some cases! I once found a bag of about 200 mini bars of soap that someone had left on top of my Little Free Library. People sometimes treat the library as a drop-off for things other than books, though I don't encourage it.)

I don't have any fancy appliances, just a stove/oven and a small blender. When cooking (my stove is electric), I use little energy-saving practices such as turning off the stove early

and letting the food finish cooking by itself. This takes a little practice but once you get the hang of it it becomes second nature. I heat up my coffee water using an old-school kettle. It's short and squat, designed to capture maximum heat from the stove burner in the shortest time. I've learned exactly how the kettle sounds when the water temperature has reached my preferred temperature for my coffee. It's quite a bit short of boiling. I've never measured it but wouldn't be surprised if it's only about 185 or 190 degrees Fahrenheit.

My lowest-ever electricity consumption was during one month last winter when I was doing a fridgeless experiment; my consumption came in at 14 kWh for the month. That is about 2 percent of the U.S. average—and it was no big inconvenience really! That's the main take-away here, not that we should all try to do without a refrigerator but that we could if we had to for a short period (especially in the cold season)

and it would be inconvenient but no big deal. Or if we suddenly had electricity for only four hours a day as they do in some countries, we would adjust our routines accordingly.

A word here about on-grid vs off-grid. I believe that the most low-footprint choice at this time is to stay on the grid, while radically reducing electric consumption. Second place would be grid-tied solar. A solar-panel system with batteries has a certain footprint that seems like it has to be greater than just staying on the grid and radically conserving. (This is one of those areas where I could be wrong, especially as solar technology evolves over time.) Still, I really feel that by staying on-grid, I'm using the least possible resources and piggybacking on existing infrastructure. Also, by being connected to the grid, I'm constantly transmitting data to the utility company about demand.

3. Heating and Cooking Energy. My cooking energy is included in my electricity footprint, as is my heating energy (if I used heat). Many people I know in the Riot community have access to deadwood which gives them an unlimited supply of zero-footprint fuel for cooking and heating.

4. Garbage. U.S. average 4.5 lb per person per day; Riot target 0.45 lb per person per day.

This category is no problem for me. I regularly come in at zero to a half-pound every couple of days. Also, even when I do have trash, a lot of that trash is in the form of packaging from free stuff that I've diverted from the waste-stream to begin with, so it doesn't count toward my total. A shower curtain I found by the roadside, still in its original packaging; some canned food that a neighbor gave me because she was moving and wanted to lighten her load;

and so on. I don't accept any disposable bags at the store.

I get my news mainly online and don't subscribe to a printed newspaper, but I do sometimes read my neighbor's newspaper with him in the morning, and when he's done with it, I compost it! Or I use it for a wastebasket liner and then compost it later.

Low-hanging fruit: I eliminate most of my garbage's weight by composting. I refuse over-packaged products. I rarely have to buy anything that has much packaging, and when I do, I recycle or compost as much as possible. Sometimes I'm able to up-cycle a package. For example, my smartphone came in a neat little box that's good for keeping business cards in. Anyway, companies seem to be getting better about packaging these days.

I don't buy any plastic bags, trash-can liners, etc.

5. Water. U.S. average 100 gallons per person per day; Riot target 10 gallons per person per day.

My typical water use:

Cooking and drinking: 1.5-2 gal

Washing: 1-2 gal

Shower: 0-2 gal

Toilet flushing: 5 gal

For cooking and for washing clothes and dishes, I come in at 3 to 4 gallons per day without much effort. The albatross for me is toilet flushing. Even with "let it mellow," I still have to flush at least a couple times a day at 1.6 gallons per flush. So, my total water usage generally hovers around 10 gallons a day but can reach 13-15. If I happen to be at a conference at a hotel with "exploding toilets" (you know, the ones that spontaneously flush all the time), then my Riot target goes right out the window. I don't dwell on it; I just do my best.

At home, I have a rainbarrel that holds about 30 gallons. In our rain-rich part of the world (we get 49 to 50 inches of rain a year!), that barrel stays pretty full of fresh water for most of the year. I count my rainwater consumption as part of my Riot total. Some Riot participants don't count rainwater or pond-water in their total. But I do keep track of how much water I consume, simply because I like to know what my habits are adding up to. But, I do consider this to be free, captured water - and all of it goes right back out onto the yard, rather than down the drain. And of course, it doesn't require electricity to be pumped into my home since it just falls off the roof and into my rainbarrel.

Kitchen faucet-water too, I do my best to capture in a one-gallon pot and pour it out on the yard. My yard requires little or no artificial irrigation, other than the few annual

vegetables and herbs I grow in pots. Most of my yard is natives and wildflowers.

I wash my clothes in a large pot and use the collected water on the compost bin or dry patch of yard.

Even if you prefer not to use my primitive method (though it's great exercise for the arms, and more fun than pumping iron at the gym), no worries—the most high-efficiency washing machines nowadays use only about 15 gallons per load. If you have an old washer, which can use up to 45 gallons a load, set it on the lowest water setting and (to save gas or electricity) stick to cold-water washing.

With little difficulty, you can set up a means of collecting the used water from the washer rather than sending it down the drain. (I was able to this in the communal laundry room at one place where I lived.) This water can be used

out on your yard. For more details about such setups, see Art Ludwig's Greywater Oasis and Brad Lancaster's Water Harvesting books, mentioned in the appendix.

Doing a quick search online, I was pleasantly surprised to find quite a selection of countertop hand-cranked mini washers. They look as though they only use a couple gallons of water. If I weren't in a place with ground-floor access to the outdoors, I would use one of these machines to get the water out of my clothes before hanging them on a drying rack. (Right now i just wring them gently and hang them on the line, where they dry quickly in the hot Florida sun. Sheets, I hang dripping-wet and allow the sun to "iron" them.)

6. Consumer Goods. U.S. average \$10,000 per household per year; Riot target \$1,000 per household per year.

Lately I come in at about \$200 to \$500 per year in this category. Some years it's been \$800 or a bit more. I just don't need or want that much stuff, and what I need I prefer to buy used for reasons of quality and aesthetics.

As part of my research for this book, I went to the supermarket and walked through all the aisles listing things I don't buy that are commonly considered necessities. A short list of the things I counted: air freshener; air filter; anything automotive; insect repellent; bug-killing spray; floor cleaner; tub & tile cleaner; bleach; fabric softener; disinfecting wipes; paper towels; paper napkins; any plastic bags of any kind (sandwich bags, freezer bags, trash-can liners, heavy trash bags, etc.).

The total value came to \$116.50, of which I tallied up \$35 just for various kinds of plastic bags! (These included sandwich bags, trash-can

liners, etc.) The \$116.50 would have been for roughly a two- or three-month supply of these things. Depending on your income level, the money savings may not seem even worthy of mention, but there's also the savings of time and my own personal energy, thanks to not having to spend as much time in the big, cold, noisy, fluorescent-lit grocery store. It's great to be able to get just about all of the everyday stuff I need by making just one 30-minute trip to the open-air Saturday farmer's market.

Instead of paper napkins and towels, I use cloth ones which I make from old sheets or towels. Cloth works far better than paper, and feels better on the skin. Over time as the napkins or towels become too worn and dirty to serve for that purpose, I downgrade them to household rags for various purposes. They might start as food-prep countertop wiping cloths; then get downgraded to floor-scrubbing, then finally be used for bicycle-

chain-cleaning. I call this my "cascading hierarchy of household rags." Once they're totally grubbed-up and worn out, they get composted.

7. Food.

#1 is food you grow, or which is produced locally and organically. According to the Riot, a 90% footprint reduction would involve this category constituting at least 70% of our diet. #2 is dry, bulk goods; Riot target is no more than 25% of our total food purchases.

3 is Wet goods: conventionally grown; processed; long-distance, etc. Current U.S. average is over 50% of the diet; Riot target is 5% or less.

Category #1: I buy just about 100% of my groceries at my local farmer's market. But, some of the farms are over 100 miles away. Some are 150 to 200 miles away, and not certified organic. I still count them as local and organic, because they are small family farming operations. Some of the

produce I buy is from the larger, co-op buyers who draw from a wider geographic area and include produce that is grown full-on conventionally. With all this in mind, I estimate my current "#1 category" as about 45% to 50%, in comparison with the Riot target value of 70%.

A few years back, when I lived in Austin and was volunteering a couple of days a week on a small organic farm there, my percentage in this category easily reached 70%, because in exchange for my work I received all the fresh in-season produce I could carry home. Though my footprint has varied with my living circumstances, the overall trend is positive.

Category #2: About 25% of my total food purchased are in this category so I'm right in line with the Riot target.

Category #3: This is an area where I still have a lot of room for

improvement. I estimate my percentage as 25% in this category, compared with the Riot target of 5% or less. That said, the conventional packaged goods I buy are mostly from a sole-proprietor reseller at the farmers' market. I figure these goods have had most of their profit value already extracted in the supply chain, and have just about reached "throw-away or donate" status. While I'm not quite rescuing them from the waste stream, I am acquiring them at a low state on the chain, and am supporting a local businessperson's livelihood.

Another source of the conventionally processed food I eat is food that I'm diverting from the waste stream. A local church does a weekly food distribution for low-income residents. At the end of the day, the leftover food which will be thrown away is left out for anyone to take. I get a surprising amount of this throwaway food, which counts zero in the Riot footprint. This food-diverted-from-

the-waste-stream is sometimes known as "freegan." The freegan lifestyle has a significant following and there are many websites dedicated to it.

A thing I do bear in mind, when I'm enjoying my free or low-lying processed food, is that even though it has a lower footprint because of the circumstances, there's still value in steering myself away from such food and toward less-processed choices in the long run. It's better for my health and for the planet's health if I'm not hooked on sugary treats and other processed foods.

(By the way, "better for the planet", needs to include "better for other people." I heard recently that in Costa Rica, some 20% to 25% of sugarcane field workers have kidney disease due to dehydration from working so hard in the hot fields—fields that have been made hotter by climate warming—and their hard work

is surely the result of high *demand* from consumers here in the USA.)

I'm not a very adept gardener (have a brownish if not outright brown thumb), but still through persistence I manage to grow a bit of my own food. Greens, herbs, a few sweet potatoes. And at the moment, I have a number of papaya trees in my yard (which sprouted and flourished and bore fruit no thanks to me), and which produce a steady supply of fruit while in season. (Well, I say "no thanks to me," but it could be that my compost helped encourage them.) Gardening takes very little of my time and effort and is very rewarding for the amount of work I put in.

I also forage for wild edibles and what I call "sidewalk edibles"—fruit trees hanging over the public walkway, and/or the owners have given me permission to walk onto their yard and pick the fruit. I once got permission to pick oranges from a front-yard tree in exchange for giving the guy a jar

of homemade marmalade from the fruit. I dropped off the marmalade on his porch a few weeks later.

And wherever I am, I make a point of learning about the local edible wild plants that most people call "weeds." Many of what we think of as undesirable plants are in fact highly nutritious and delicious edibles. At some times of the year, about 70% of my tiny yard is edible, and I didn't have to do any work to grow it! Every day, people throw away money by destroying these so-called "weeds." I prefer to call them free fresh vegetables, first-aid products, and nutritional supplements.

(Very Important Note! If you're going to explore wild edibles, always consult a local expert who knows his or her stuff. There are books about wild plants for pretty much every region. By all means check out those books, but also do a weed-walk, seminar, or other realtime event with

an actual live expert face to face. Never just try eating a plant you don't know or have only read about in a book! Many edible plants have poisonous lookalikes. I can't emphasize this enough: Safety first! Fortunately, wherever you are, there are likely to be local experts offering workshops and walks.)

Here's a commonplace eco-dilemma in the food category: which is better (or less bad): plastic-wrapped organic spinach from thousands of miles away; or locally grown but not-organic produce? My answer is, ditch the plastic-wrapped faraway stuff, even if it is organic. Talk with your individual growers at the farmers' market; ask what kinds of chemicals and processes they use. Sometimes your supermarket will have this information about its produce too. Oftentimes you'll find that although not officially certified organic, many of your local growers are de facto organic or very nearly so, simply

because a small operation can't afford to invest a pile of money in agricultural chemicals. I'm lucky to have at my local Saturday farmers' market several farmers I trust.

So these are the seven Riot targets and a snapshot of how I live them. These days I seem to be running into many people who happen to share a lot of my lifestyle practices, even people who are not necessarily labeling themselves environmentalists. So I can only suspect that a more than a few of you who are reading this already share some of my deep-green habits also.

8. Another Suggested Riot Category: Financial Footprint. I've recently thought of another category to add to my personal Riot practice: financial footprint. Tentatively, I'm classifying financial footprint into three subcategories: debt; overhead; and asset storage. I haven't decided whether it's better to calculate this one by individual or by household.

Since I'm a household of one, they are one and the same anyway in my case. Feel free to let me know how you'd approach this!

I'm far from being a financial expert, so I'm sure I'll need to revise and refine my thinking over time. But I feel it's worth including this category even in its roughed-out form. Finances are a major driver of people's lives, and I've come to notice that they can have a huge impact on one's eco-footprint. For example, student-loan debt can keep a person tied to a steady high-paying corporate job, even if that job isn't helping the world much; even if they would rather quit that job and learn a different trade or start a local business that's needed in their community. And that job keeps the person tied to a car commute, and having to buy a steady supply of expensive clothes for work, and so on.

The more we get a handle on our finances, the more we can reduce our footprint. And come to think of it, it's a reciprocal relationship: The more we reduce our footprint, the better handle we'll have on our finances!

Debt

Debt is how much money you owe. For purposes of assessing one's current state and marking one's progress, it might be useful to further divide this into consumer debt (credit cards, car payment, and so on); mortgage; medical debt; and student loans.

I have about \$3,800 in credit-card debt. It's all for business rather than consumer goods, but I'll still count it as credit-card debt. I have no other debt.

For average U.S. debt, I found statistics from nerdwallet.com, which uses data from several sources such as census data and the Federal Reserve.

According to nerdwallet, the average credit-card debt among those households that are indebted is \$16K; mortgages \$180K; car loans \$29K; student loans \$51K. The average household with any kind of debt owes \$136K. According to valuepenguin.com, average credit-card debt for all U.S. households is \$5,700.

Obviously the ideal is to have as little debt as possible. Debt limits people's options and inhibits their willingness to take creative risks. When a significant segment of society, particularly young people, are inhibited from taking creative risks, the individual loses and society loses.

Debt expands one's footprint, as it forces a person to work longer hours just to service the debt. My aim is to be free of both personal and business debt. I would advise anyone who doesn't already have student loans, to avoid them as much as possible. And of

course, if you already have student loans, try to shrink your other overhead to a minimum. That's something a low-footprint lifestyle can help with.

Sound advice I've heard from others is, forget college, go to vocational school and learn a trade. Obviously that advice isn't for everyone. I was fortunate to have been able to attend a good college at a time when going to a good college didn't necessarily mean taking on a lot of debt. Were I just graduating from high school now, I might well follow a trade-school or apprenticeship path myself.

Overhead

Overhead is the bare minimum amount you need to earn to pay for necessities. It doesn't include savings or what you spend to take a vacation.

It's tricky to put forth an average and a target value for this, since

cost of living varies significantly from one place to another. You could take the average national income and multiply it by the average percentage that Americans save. Or you could do the same calculation using data from your particular geographic area. And then take 10% of that value.

My overhead right now is about \$800 a month. If I were making \$1,500 or 2,000 a month, that means I'd have \$700 to \$1,200 available to save or invest every month! Right now I'm not making much more than the bare minimum I need to pay my basic expenses, but I'm working on increasing my income to the point where I consistently make \$1,500 a month. If this sounds ridiculously low to you, I know other freelance sustainability educators who are aiming to make even just \$1,000 a month! Monetizing our products and services is a challenge for many of us, but we are committed, and the low-footprint lifestyle has helped me stick to my intentions.

Note, just to be clear, I am not out to promote an extremely-low-income life. I firmly believe in reducing my *need* to earn, but I don't wish a poverty income on anyone. Hand-to-mouth is a hard, depressing, and dangerous way to live. Dangerous for the individual, and for society too. If you don't have to go there, don't! I also don't believe in being poor as a way to stick it to society. I declare all my income and pay my fair share of taxes. (At one point, I explored being a "war tax resister", but I didn't prevent any wars and it didn't simplify my tax returns any, which was my other objective. I decided that on balance it'd be best for myself and for society if I could find a palatable way to earn more income, even if it meant paying taxes for war and other things I don't support.)

That said, for a couple of years when I found myself well below the poverty

line in terms of income (one year I made just \$7,000 before taxes), I was able thanks to Riot practices and other sustainable practices to still live fairly well and pay my own way for food and housing, not be dependent on government subsidies for anything. If you find yourself having to live at or below the poverty line (I hope you don't, but if you do), an extreme-low-footprint lifestyle can give you breathing-room to take the training, education, health/wellness program, or whatever else you need to help you get back on your feet, and can help you live decently in the meantime. Besides enjoying a decent standard of living myself, I was able to continue my participation in civic activities and helping out in my community.

By the way, if you want examples of comfortably middle-class people who are financially stable, with plenty of assets, yet are living happily at a tiny overhead, check out two highly

popular bloggers, Early Retirement Extreme and Mr. Money Mustache.

Asset storage

Asset storage is just what it sounds like: how your financial assets are stored. Many everyday people in the United States have a substantial chunk of their money stored in the form of home equity (if they own a home). The rest tends to be stored in some combination of banks and financial instruments which are tied to the stock market.

I personally have no financial assets to speak of right now, though I'm working on it. In the early 2000s, I lost a chunk of my financial assets in a stock-market downturn. I invested the rest of it in sustainable-living education, charitable donations, activism, and getting a solid handle on my mental health. I'm now working on building up financial assets again. When I accumulate money again, I plan to invest it locally (for example, in

a rental property or business in my community) rather than storing it in banks or investing it in financial instruments tied to impersonal faraway entities that have no stake in the wellbeing of my community.

My personal opinion is that local investment is a missing puzzle-piece in our national economic wellbeing. I sometimes wonder what it would be like if all, or even a significant percentage, of the money that everyday people currently have tied up on Wall Street were instead invested on Main Street! Surely we'd have a lot more lively Main Streets all around the country.

I don't have any metrics for asset storage right now. I do know that I want to know exactly what I'm investing in. Local investment (for example, putting my money into buying a vacant historic building in a blighted area and starting a business there) would score very high. Keeping

money in a local credit union would seem to be better than keeping it in a bank. I'm tentatively aiming for at least 90% of my financial assets to be invested locally, meaning invested within a 10-mile radius of where I live. By the way, if you're a homeowner, I would suggest you include in your "local investment" percentage the amount of equity you have in your home.

In my financial footprint, I'm aiming for transparency. In the past, 100 percent of my assets were in banks or mutual funds. (I remind myself that if my money is in a bank, it doesn't just sit in the bank; it gets invested in things that are non-transparent to me. Things I might not approve of, such as the war sector or the pharmaceutical industry.)

The ideal is to be able to see all the way to the corners of my own life; know what my assets are doing out in the world. Long ago I remember

thinking, "I want to see all the way to the corners of my own life! There are too many impacts I'm having that I don't know I'm having!"

A Final Word about the Riot Movement

For a few years after Sharon Astyk and Miranda Edel launched it in 2007, the Riot flourished. The email listserve was active, with several hundred to a thousand participants. (Although the listserve still exists, it's not active, and the main vehicle for communication is now the Facebook group.) In the past few years, the number of active members has dwindled. This is how movements go. There's a burst of energy at the start. Then the movement ebbs and flows; new people arrive and old ones drop off. One of my goals in writing this book is to recruit a new infusion of people to the Riot. This is a great movement; we just need more people!

CHAPTER III. MAXIMIZE YOUR HANDPRINT

If you've done all you're able or willing to do right now to reduce your footprint, work on increasing your handprint. Here are some suggestions:

Increase Your Handprint in the Riot Categories Themselves

1. Gasoline: Organize a workshop on bicycle safety. Start a neighborhood culture of offering others a ride when you're going somewhere. Invite neighbors to walk or cycle together to the neighborhood meeting rather than drive. Teach your kids how to use public transportation.

2. Electricity: Share Michael Bluejay's website. Share it widely! michaelbluejay.com
Read about passive solar heating and cooling, and share your knowledge to help other people use low-tech, inexpensive strategies to reduce the

footprint of heating and cooling their homes.

3. Heating & cooking energy: Read up on solar ovens; get a solar oven for your school or church; run a cooking class or bring sun-cooked cookies to the potluck and let everyone know how they were baked. Find out about Rocket Stoves and Rocket Mass Heaters, haybox cooking, and other DIY alternative heating and cooking technologies; share your knowledge; start a creative tinkers' group to build things!

4. Garbage: Divert other people's castaway stuff from the waste-stream, then brag on social media about your great curb-scores! Contact a company about reducing its product packaging. If you compost, teach others how. If you don't already compost, learn how and then teach others how. Start a compost bin at your school or church. Get together with neighbors and form a buyers' co-op so you can buy more food in bulk rather than packaged.

5. Water: Read Brad Lancaster and Art Ludwig to learn about water harvesting. Set up a rainbarrel and show your neighbors. Ask your city to use more native and water-wise landscaping (if they haven't been moving in that direction already—many cities have).

6. Consumer goods: Donate toys, clothes, art supplies and books you're no longer using to a school, church, or shelter. Arrange for a screening of "The Story of Stuff" in your community. If you know someone who's struggling with excess stuff, offer to help them find worthy homes for it.

7. Food: Organize a local-food meetup. Visit a local farm; volunteer on a farm; boost your skills and knowledge and share with others what you've learned. Host a plant- and seed-swap in your neighborhood. Write an article about food-sustainability issues for your local paper. Talk with your city

leaders about the sustainability of your local food supply. Some cities have set up sustainable-food policy boards; yours might too.

These are just a very few examples to get your creative wheels turning. And finally, a general overall suggestion: Start a Riot for Austerity study group!

Increase Your Handprint By Tapping Into a Social Movement

There are a number of social movements aimed at retooling human settlements and ways of life to create a sustainable civilization. The ones I've found most effective and engaging are the permaculture design movement, the Bioregional movement, and the Transition movement.

You'll find descriptions and links to these movements in the appendix.

The advantage of tapping into a social movement is that you expand your menu

of opportunities to make a difference, beyond just reducing your footprint. You also get the support of a community. This is particularly true if you join or start a local chapter in your geographic area. But it's even true if you only participate online.

Increase Your Handprint by Getting Active in Your Community

Give your time, talent, and energy to your neighborhood and your town. Volunteer for citizens' boards and neighborhood committees. Do you know your neighbors? Go knock on their doors and meet them, at least the immediate ones. (And in case you have any doubt about whether you'll meet with a friendly response, go armed with some fresh-baked cookies, or some sun-ripe tomatoes from your garden!)

You could start a community potluck (like Jim O's, a longtime South Austin tradition) or turn your backyard into a weekly community salon for music and

conversation (thanks, Howie and Linda!)

Increase Your Handprint By Unleashing Your Creativity; Find Your Right Livelihood

“Right livelihood” is a phrase I first learned in permaculture class. It’s basically your ideal occupation, where your creative talents and inclinations intersect with some need in the world. (The community you serve could be in your immediate neighborhood or it could be online, scattered all over the world, as is the case for many writers, artists, and educators these days.)

If you have a good steady day-job but it doesn’t feel like your right livelihood, you don’t have to up and quit your job in order to start exploring what might be your right livelihood. Just start reading, researching, maybe taking classes on the side.

Then again, I know of many successful entrepreneurs who mentioned that a key factor in finding their right livelihood was that they suddenly lost their steady day-job and had to come up with another way to pay the bills! Two examples of such businesses, off the top of my head, are The Soup Man in Austin (which started out as a bicycle-based soup delivery business and grew into a brick-and-mortar place) and Kale Cafe in Daytona Beach (which started out as a smoothie stall at the farmers' market and now has multiple store fronts).

If you could do anything and still get paid, what would that be? What do you do willingly for many hours a day without getting paid? There's a way to turn that into a livelihood. In the "Creativity" section of the appendix, I list several books and other resources that have lit a fire under me to take more creative initiative. These books are not specifically about

green or low-footprint life; they're about creativity and initiative and courage. But my personal opinion is that those are essential ingredients in making a more ecologically balanced world. When I ask people what they'd really rather be doing for their occupation, the answer almost invariably winds up being something with a lower footprint (and greater handprint) than what they're doing. For example, a guy working a typical paper-pushing job wishes he could earn his living by teaching local kids how to garden. Everyone has talent and creativity, but too many of us are holding back in fear of whatever: rejection; failure; wasting time; not measuring up to our own standards.

The "Creative Champions" have given me a big shot in the arm. After reading a couple of Seth Godin's books, I organized my first art show, which included six other artists. After reading advice from Stella Orange and Jeff Goins and Sean Donovan on how to

stop procrastinating and start writing, I finally got off my butt and wrote my first book (this one). If all goes according to plan, this book won't be my last.

To sit on your talent is to hoard resources that the world needs! Right now the planet needs all the creativity it can get, in every field, from agriculture, to textiles, to architecture and construction, to education, to government, to urban planning, to sanitation, to finance, to transportation, just to name a few. And yes, of course that includes the arts too. The arts are a key vehicle for cultural transmission.

I hope that you, too will get inspired to deploy your unique blend of creativity, talent, and passion to make a difference in the world.

CHAPTER IV. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Here are some common questions about a low-footprint lifestyle.

- *Why should I reduce my footprint when corporations are the ones producing all this stuff and causing the pollution?*

Who do you think is creating the demand for corporations (or China, or whoever your villain of choice is) to produce all that stuff? Look in the mirror! Corporations (and Chinese industry) are a reflection of the U.S. public's wants and our lack of self-discipline. Also, more pollution is produced by nonpoint sources (lawns, cars) than by point sources (industry's tailpipes).

- *Humans just need to stop having kids, that'll solve everything!*

Take a look around you. Even if not one more child were born on earth, the resource-hogs currently living on earth are trashing the planet quite

successfully. Besides the fact that you're trying to fight a pretty strong biological urge here, which is bound to be a losing battle, zero population growth won't solve the problem. In fact, who's to say that the next child born, or the next, won't be someone who holds the key to saving the planet?

- *The government needs to impose green standards on industry, that'll solve everything.*

Do you want to be ruled by a totalitarian government? Do you believe the government is the highest authority on what's green, and knows what's best for industry and commerce? Remember how WalMart started carrying organic produce? That had nothing to do with the government. It was WalMart responding to millions of votes from consumer wallets.

- *Solar panels are getting better and cheaper. Can't we just switch to solar, and have a sustainable world*

without cutting back on our consumption?

Fossil fuels are an energy-dense resource, equivalent to what my renewable-energy teacher at EcoVersity, Mark Sardella, told us was equivalent to each person in the United States owning 80 slaves. If we were to try to just switch over to solar panels, we'd have solar panels covering every square inches of available space, including quite possibly all our agricultural land. And instead of mountaintops ravaged and streams polluted by coal mining, we'd have ... well, hmm, it still takes electricity to produce those solar panels and gasoline to transport them, so

The point is, if we don't handle our addiction at the source by radically reducing our own consumption, we'll chew up more and more land. We'll also create more pressure for building nuclear power plants.

• *And by the way, what about nuclear power? There's been a lot of development in nuclear technology over the years, but public sentiment is against it because of disasters like Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Fukushima. Those were either old or ill-designed systems, and the new systems (for example, thorium reactors) produce minimal waste, or even recycle the waste into something innocuous. Wouldn't clean nuclear solve the world's energy problems?*

This is an excellent question. The new technology for nuclear power does seem to be promising, and warrants investigation. We are right to be cautious about nuclear power, and we need to test this new "clean" version in a contained manner such that failure won't produce catastrophic consequences.

The existence of unlimited "clean" energy won't solve the fundamental problem of humans crowding out other species, or humans in rich countries

taking more than their share, or humans wrecking the forests and wetlands and aquifers. If our default way of doing things continues, the availability of unlimited clean energy will just allow us to build even bigger houses, pave over even more land, replace even more wilderness with buzzcut squares of turf. Hence, in an "unlimited clean energy" scenario, a low-footprint movement not only would still have value; it might become even more essential!

This question leads to another topic: techno-phobia. There's a faction of the eco movement that is anti-technology. But humans are fundamentally technological, innovative creatures. Living a low-footprint life doesn't mean going back to the Dark Ages. We need to be discerning about how we use technology, but we do need to keep innovating.

A key example of technology that's been a godsend to grassroots movements is, of course, the internet and social media! Two of the most beneficial vehicles for instantaneous mass information-sharing are Facebook and NextDoor.com . NextDoor is a service that allows neighbors to connect online. Thanks to NextDoor, I've gotten to know many more of my neighbors face to face as well as online, and we've greatly strengthened the cohesion of our neighborhood.

- *How do I maintain an appropriate sense of urgency, without falling into despair and getting burnt-out?*

I find that this is a matter of managing my attention so I stay in the happy medium zone between la-la land and catastrophic thinking. If I find myself getting too complacent, I read whatever is the current article about the scariest aspects of climate change. Or I look at pictures of the horrific environmental degradation caused by our everyday human

activities. If I find myself getting too anxious, I do mind-centering practices and then I go out and engage in actions to help make my community greener and more connected. Sometimes I just go to a movie, treat myself to an ice-cream cone, or more often, read a novel.

- *How do I know when I've reduced my footprint enough?*

Unfortunately, you don't for sure. None of us do, not even the scientists. But there are some people whose opinions I respect greatly, and they've made some pretty educated calculations based on scientific observation. And I'm choosing to follow their numbers for now. It could be we'll have to revise our targets later. But in any case, for now, you can't possibly go wrong by aiming for 10% of the average U.S. footprint!

- *That answer's not good enough! I need to find solid ground - I need the 100% reliable bedrock truth!*

I hear you, I really do.

Unfortunately, the bedrock solid truth of which you speak is not part of the deal that is human life on planet earth. My suggestions: Find community and take pleasure in simple things; reach out and help others. In the course of serving, you'll lose your need for bedrock. Actually, if you help others, you'll be a form of bedrock.

- *How do I persuade people to accept the facts about climate change?*

You don't! If someone doesn't believe as you do about climate (or the footprint of factory-farmed beef, or anything else for that matter), don't try to persuade them. No amount of what you consider to be facts, will persuade a person to stop believing what they already believe. If anything, by bombarding a person with your facts you run the risk of prompting them to dig in their heels even more. This is a documented phenomenon of human consciousness. And

no matter how reputable the source of your facts, a person who believes differently than you do will always be able to come up with a different set of facts, from a source they consider credible, to support that belief.

Rather, for maximum effectiveness, conversations with "non-believers" could go something like this:

Example #1:

Non-green neighbor: Your skin always looks so amazing - What do you use?

You: Rainwater.

NGN: Rainwater? Is that the new skin-care line the ladies on the Today Show were talking about the other day?

You: No - I mean rainwater, from the rainbarrel. I collect it off my roof. That's the only skin product I need anymore, except maybe a touch of coconut oil once in a while like in winter when the air is dry. And boy am I saving a lot of money! I used to spend about \$20 a month on skin products, and I've got other friends

who spend \$50. Now I spend pretty much zero, and my skin looks better than ever.

NGN: Hmm ... rainwater ... [walks away with thoughtful look on her face].

(Note the utter lack of mention of the eco-footprint of makeup and skin products and all the bottles they come in! Those things will take care of themselves.)

Example #2:

Non-green neighbor: [Pushes lawnmower out onto his lawn, glances over the fence at you with a pained look]:

Gonna be a hot one today! I'm not looking forward to this!

You: Yeah, I know what you mean!

That's why I phased out my lawn, and switched over to natives and succulents. I went from spending \$100 a month on water and fertilizer and maintenance, to maybe \$5 or \$10 a month, and from ten hours of work to less than two. Leaves me a lot more time for fishing! Speaking of which, I've gotta go pick up my grandson,

we're headed for the creek today. Nice chatting with you, try to stay cool in this hot weather! I hope you can come fishing with us sometime.

(Note the complete lack of mention of the greenhouse gases emitted by lawnmowers; the fact that lawns have an incredibly wasteful footprint accounting for 40 percent of total US agricultural land; the fact that you personally would prefer he plant wildflowers for the bees and butterflies.)

Example #3:

Neighbor: You survive the storm OK? Looks like our water is cut off along with the gas!

You: Oh, do you need some water for cooking or washing? Here, I've got extra. It's rainwater, the freshest water around. And if you need to cook something, you're welcome to use my solar oven; looks like the sun is coming back out. Better yet, you're

welcome to share some of this fish and veggies I'm about to cook.

The above were examples of how to talk with people who seem to have no interest in reducing their footprint. But if someone comes to you and says something like, "Wow, I just got my electric bill. It's \$300! I wish I could cut back but I'm not sure what are the best things to cut back on, and I'm not sure how I could live without any of what I'm using."

That person is receptive to new information about how to reduce his or her footprint. You could say, "Well, here's how we did it ..." Or "You're in luck, have I got a website for you ..."

- *The Riot is a great concept, but what do we do with the 90% who'd rather be planning their next trip to Disneyland than thinking about their carbon emissions? Ignore them? Just move forward without them?*

Yes. Just go about our business, and radiate excitement and enthusiasm that people will notice. Create a beneficial contagion! Also: The Disney parks are pretty committed to environmental stewardship and education; those families are bound to learn something green on their vacation trips!

- *How do I avoid being drawn into arguments with people who believe differently?*

Just do your best to stay calm, listen to their concerns, remember we all want the same things deep down. And remind yourself how ineffective it'll be if you try to persuade them to your way of thinking. If someone seems to be trying to goad you into an argument, change the subject or walk away.

- *Is it possible that there will be no civilization-ending crisis at all and that we are all worried for nothing?*

Yes, that is possible, but I'm a great believer in the precautionary principle—the old “do it just in case” approach. If the “just in case” actions involve only self-deprivation, it's harder to get on board (and get others on board), but in a case like this, where the “just in case” track includes immediate PERSONAL benefits, it becomes not only prudent but a no-brainer!

And then too, there's the very compelling argument that footprint reduction is something we should be doing in any case, regardless of climate change or Peak Oil or whatever. We should be reducing our footprint to stop chewing up the rainforest. We should be reducing our footprint to improve our health; to stop squeezing out other species; to make more resources available (including our own time, talent, and energy) to people less well-off than us. Sharon Astyk's article explaining her friend's “Theory of Anyway” is a

lovely expression of this line of thinking.(9)

- *I want to grow food and native plants but my homeowners' association won't allow me to have anything except turf-grass or ornamentals.*

First, check your state laws; many states nowadays have laws forbidding HOA's from disallowing waterwise or native vegetation. Second, it's pretty easy to plant veggies and herbs in such a manner that they blend right in with the ornamental vegetation. Third, if the HOA is really oppressive you might seriously want to consider moving! (Either than or try to get on the board yourself.)

- *Speaking of lawns, I like my lawn! Why should I get rid of it?*

You don't have to. If you find beauty in a nice, soft, tidy, cool green patch of turf, you are not alone. Just try to keep it at a size and type that doesn't require constant infusions of chemicals and an oppressive, fossil-

powered maintenance program. Mow less often, leave the grass clippings on the lawn, and if leaves fall onto your lawn, rake them into the mulched areas around the shrubbery rather than blowing them away or otherwise treating them as trash. Life is precious; don't waste your life on slave labor for a status symbol!

- *It's easy for you to do this—you're a single person living alone. But I've got kids.*

Actually that's all the more reason for you to do this. No one ever said raising kids was a cushy gig, right? Imparting morals and values is part of your responsibility as a parent. Fortunately you don't have to take it all on your shoulders and feel like a bad parent for not buying your kid every single toy their friends have, or choosing not to have a big fancy house. You tell them WHY you are doing this: because humans have an obligation to protect the plants and animals. Because it's wrong to use

more than our share. Because when we consume more than our share, kids in other parts of the world, kids just like them, suffer.

Adjust your responses to incorporate whatever your family's religious background is, or your favorite family pastimes, or family circumstances.

("We need to conserve resources so we can save the national parks for camping!" "We do without a lot of new stuff so we can have more time and money for those family trips to the beach that you love!" "We need to walk more instead of using the car because Dad's doctor told him he needs to get more exercise.")

Another advantage of having kids? Many hands make light work! Make work activities part of your togetherness as a family. The happiest kids I've ever met were the children of my friends Erin and Skip, the farmers of Green Gate Farm in Austin. When they weren't in school, those kids stayed

busy feeding chickens and exercising horses and cleaning the barn. Their contribution was essential to the family economy and they knew it from a young age. I know some storekeepers' kids who radiate that same sense of happy responsibility.

Kids need boundaries and limits. The Riot and concern for the earth provides you with a good way to set them.

Oh, and by the way, Riot founders Sharon Astyk and Miranda Edel are both Moms!

- *How do we know this will work?*
Frankly: We don't. Life can be tough; sometimes the only choice is between something that might not work, and something that *DEFINITELY* will not work. So it is with the low-footprint lifestyle. It might not work; might not be enough to save humanity even if all of us were to get on board right now. I tell you what definitely won't

work, though: Keeping on as we've been going. And I can tell you what definitely *will* work: pursuing this lifestyle for your own immediate personal benefit. Use it to save money; free up your time and energy; de-clutter your mental space; improve your sense of security and well-being; become a better friend and family member and citizen. And regardless, at the end of the day, if our civilization dies out, then you'll have the satisfaction of being able to say (from your spot somewhere out in the etheric stardust realms): "I loved my planet, I lived my life to the fullest, and I gave it my unreserved best shot."

Deep-green troops, mobilize!

CHAPTER V. GET YOUR MIND IN ORDER

Get Your Mind In Order

Before ending the main body of this book, I have one more topic. Last but not least: Get your mind in order. The phrase "It's all in your mind" gets a bad rap. Usually people use it to mean "You're making things up" or "You're imagining things." But I use it to mean that the mind is Ground Zero and Command Central of everything we do! "With our thoughts we make the world," said Buddha.

How you look at things, what you focus most of your attention on, what you believe about yourself and the world—these things are a bigger factor in your success or failure, your happiness or unhappiness than any external circumstance however large.

Anyone so committed to the planet as to even pick up a book called *DEEP GREEN*, let alone read this far, is a sensitive individual who may be

carrying a lot of pain and worry. Sometimes our emotional reactions from personal stuff in our lives get overlaid onto the present moment, distorting our present-time perception.

Also, sometimes our personal pain gets mixed up with our pain on behalf of humanity, intensifying our emotions and making it hard to speak clearly or act calmly. It's essential to clear our minds of distortion so we have maximum attention free for the tasks at hand. We need to be on point!

The best advice I can give anyone who's trying to make a better world (or do anything else for that matter) is, "Get your mind in order!" Sort through your feelings; work through your traumas; get support to put the past behind you; own up to things you've done wrong and make amends; rise above victim-consciousness.

I've had a long journey in getting my mind in order. I've done psychotherapy, which helped me sort and process my emotions. I've done a program for substance abuse, which helped me take responsibility for my life, stop feeling sorry for myself, own up to my wrongdoings, and make amends. I've read and reread mindfulness books; tried meditation and yoga. And I've taken many different kinds of workshops.

Every bit of time and money I've invested in working on my "inner landscape" has paid off in unimaginably rich dividends, and so I offer everyone, and especially you, my deep-green comrades who share my commitment to the planet, the same advice: If you want to be truly happy and successful, get your mind in order. In the appendix I list a select few of the resources that have helped me most.

In Closing: 'Bye For Now, But Hope To See You Soon!

For a long time I was impatient with my fellow green-minded people. Folks were always saying they admired my lifestyle so much. Well, why weren't more of them *doing* it? Then I woke up and realized what a golden opportunity I'd been missing: the opportunity to help people create their own version of this lifestyle! I hope the guidance in this book will be of use to you, and that together we'll spark a widespread and enduring craze for extreme-low-footprint living.

Thus concludes the body of this book. In the appendix you'll find pointers to the books, websites, social movements, and other riches without which this book would not exist. Your adventure is just beginning! May you enjoy a long, fruitful, deep-green life. (And, I look forward to meeting up with you in the Riot community online!)

APPENDIX

END-NOTES

(1) Scary article about climate change: Wallace-Wells, David. "The Uninhabitable Earth". New York Magazine, July 9, 2017: <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans.html>

(2) "We Might Lose Giant Sequoia National Monument This Week," article by Lena Moffitt, Aug 21, 2017: <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/energy-environment/347399-we-might-lose-giant-sequoia-national-monument-this-week>

(3) "After public outcry, the Interior Department won't eliminate national monuments," article by Ruairi Arrieta-Kenna, Aug 25, 2017: <https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2017/8/24/16199048/interior-department-national-monuments>

(4) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, book by Robert Putnam <http://bowlingalone.com>

(5) Various websites give data and graphs of each country's footprint, showing how many Earths we'd need if everyone on the planet had the footprint of people in the United States, as compared with other countries. According to one chart I've seen, we'd only need half of one Earth if everyone had the average footprint of people in India. But if everyone on Earth were living the footprint of people in the U.S., we'd need over four Earths! There are various ways of measuring this, but the U.S., Canada, and Australia invariably appear among the highest-footprint counties. Residents of other lands, such as oil-rich Middle Eastern countries, do have a higher footprint than ours because of their huge supply of petroleum which allows the citizens to have unlimited free electricity and free water. Free water in a desert land, what a testimonial to the power of petroleum! My favorite info-graphic is here: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33133712>

(6) Astyk, Sharon, "Revisiting the Riot for Austerity". <http://scienceblogs.com/casaubonsbook/2011/04/25/revisiting-the-riot-for-auster/>

(7) Jensen, Derrick. "Forget Shorter Showers" <http://www.derrickjensen.org/2009/07/forget-shorter-showers/>

(8) Brad Lancaster video: "Dryland Harvesting Home Hacks Sun, Rain, Food and Surroundings" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KcAMXm9zITg>

This is the video where Brad slides down a fireman's pole and chases off a would-be thief. "Hey! Hey" Get away from that car!" Priceless. I'm not telling you where that part of the video is because I want you to see the whole video.

(9) Climate catastrophe and Peak Oil aside, there are always reasons why a low-footprint life is the right choice—the thing we should be doing regardless. "The Theory of Anyway", article by Sharon Astyk <http://www.resilience.org/stories/2007-01-25/theory-anyway/>

BOOKS, WEBSITES, VIDEOS

In being able to live my low-footprint life and write this book, I stand on the shoulders of giants. The following list is not meant to be exhaustive. But I do feel particularly indebted to the people and works I mention below!

The Riot for Austerity

- The book that started it all! *HEAT: How To Stop the Planet from Burning*, by George Monbiot.
- Article by Lynn McDonald, summarizing and commenting on the main points of HEAT: <http://www.justearth.net/george-monbiot-heat-extract-and-comments>
- Riot for Austerity group on Facebook https://m.facebook.com/profile.php?id=250703711615466&ref=content_filter
- Riot for Austerity (90 Percent Reduction) Yahoo email list <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/90PercentReduction/info>
- Riot resource calculator <http://www.greenknowe.org/r4a/>

Sharon Astyk's Books

Sharon Astyk's books on food security and other topics merit an entire category by themselves. When I was worried that this book would not end up being worth the \$7 that I was asking people to pay for it, I realized that a person could get their money's worth from this book even if all it did for them was to introduce them to Sharon Astyk's work.

- Sharon Astyk's books: *Depletion and Abundance: Life on the New Home Front* (how families can adapt to climate change, financial crisis, and peak energy); *A Nation of Farmers: Defeating the Farm Crisis on American Soil* (written with Aaron Newton); *Independence Days* (focuses on food preservation and storage); *Making Home: Adapting Our Homes and Our Lives to Settle In Place*. <http://sharonastyk.com>

Electricity; Home Usage Calculators

For highly detailed information and suggestions on how to reduce your electricity usage and save a lot of money without sacrificing comfort: "Mr. Electricity," Michael Bluejay's website www.michaelbluejay.com

Transportation

"How Not To Get Hit by Cars" - bicycle safety tips michaelbluejay.com

Stuff; Consumerism

- "Story of Stuff" video online by Annie Leonard. You just have to watch this!
- *Junkyard Planet*, book by Adam Minter. An eye-opening tour of the recycling and scrapping industry, and its sometimes-staggering impact on land, economies, and people all over the world.
- *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, by Mari Kondo (my all-time favorite book on de-cluttering).
- Ray Jardine: Ultralight Hiking "If you need it and don't have it ... you don't need it!" This guy hikes the PCT

with an 8-pound pack, yet he's equipped for all weather.

- "100 Things" movement: people aspiring to own just 100 things or less. I don't personally aim to pare down to a certain number of things, but have found this concept thought-provoking.

Home Heating and Cooling

- Rocket Stove; Rocket Mass Heater - DIY stoves and heaters fueled by deadwood twigs! Yes you too can cook a meal or heat a home with a deceptively small pile of sticks. Aprovecho Sustainability Education Center, <http://www.aprovecho.net> and on YouTube

- Passive solar heating and cooling - "Passive solar design refers to the use of the sun's energy for the heating and cooling of living spaces." <http://passivesolar.sustainablesources.com>

- Solar cooking - Solar Cookers International, solarcookers.org "Solar Cookers International's mission is to

spread solar thermal cooking technology to benefit people and environments."

- "How to flood-proof a house? Look to colonial New Orleans architecture," article by Thom Smith. In addition to low-tech flood-proofing, the house also has passive-cooling and heating design features "known as 'passive' or 'bioclimatic,' and were the norm before modern, energy-intensive air conditioning and heating systems."

http://www.nola.com/homegarden/index.ssf/2017/08/how_to_flood-proof_a_house_loo.html

Water

- *Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands and Beyond*, book by Brad Lancaster

<https://www.harvestingrainwater.com>

- Brad Lancaster video: "Planting the Rain to Grow Abundance" (TEDx Tucson talk): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2xDZlpInik> Brad is a delightful speaker! You'll get a big smile on your face while getting informed. His

little butt-wiggling happy dance "a-BUN-dance" is priceless.

- Greywater recycling: *Create an Oasis with Greywater*, book by Art Ludwig
<http://oasisdesign.net>

Composting

The Humanure Handbook, by Joseph Jenkins. My favorite composting book even if you're not yet ready to compost humanure. I've lost count of how many copies of this book I've donated!

Food

Gardening

- Besides Sharon Astyk's books mentioned above, a couple of my favorite books are *Square Foot Gardening* - Mel Bartholomew; and *How To Grow More Vegetables Than You Ever Thought Possible on Less Land than You Can Imagine*, by Jon Jeavons. Totally dispelled my apprehensions about having not enough land to grow food to feed everyone by non-industrial methods. Personally, I don't follow

their plant-spacing systems and so on to the degree of precision they recommend, but I do find both of these to be excellent guides.

- Also download your local Master Gardeners planting guide; visit your local nursery; attend talks by your local Master Gardener group and Native Plant Society.

Foraging

Florida-based experts: Andy Firk, floridaforaging.com ; Greene Deane, eattheweeds.com

Google for experts in your region

Wizards of Prosperity and Thrift

- These two highly popular bloggers are financially well-off people who have radically reduced their overhead in order to enjoy economic and creative freedom:

- 1) *Mr. Money Mustache*: created wealth and financial independence for himself and his family by radically reducing their need for money and material

goods, while still maintaining a comfortable lifestyle. His goals: "To make you rich so you can retire early"; "To make you happy so you can properly enjoy your early retirement"; "To save the whole Human Race from destroying itself through overconsumption of its habitat."

Mr. Money Mustache - "early retirement through badassity"

<https://www.mrmoneymustache.com>

2) *Early Retirement Extreme*: "a combination of simple living, DIY ethics, self-reliance, and applied capitalism." He and his wife live on \$10-14K a year, combined.

<http://earlyretirementextreme.com/about>

- And a wizard of thrift on the other end of the income scale: Dolly Freed, *Possum Living* book. Minimalists living off other people's leavings, this young woman and her father created ample time for recreation and educational pursuits. *Possum Living - How to Live Well without a Job and*

With Almost No Money, by Dolly Freed
[https://www.pdf-archive.com/
2012/06/29/possum-living/](https://www.pdf-archive.com/2012/06/29/possum-living/)

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE CIVILIZATION

Permaculture Design movement

It's easy to mistake this for an organic-gardening or homesteading movement, and many people do, but that's a serious oversight.

Permaculture is a movement and a set of design principles for the functional design of human settlements, of every aspect of how we live. There's a need for more functional design in every industry and sector right now, and permaculture people have an important role to play.

• Books: *Introduction to Permaculture*, by Bill Mollison and Reny Slay;
Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability, by David Holmgren; *The Permaculture Way*, by Graham Bell. I treasure each of these books for different reasons.

Mollison's because he is considered the father of permaculture; Bell's because it is short and practical; Holmgren's for its focus on energy, which goes into everything we do and everything we make.

- Google permaculture guilds in your region. Austin Permaculture Guild in Austin, TX is one that's particularly active. They offer classes, as well as organizing land-restoration workdays and other community projects.
- Huge international permaculture email listserve, divided by subject (cooking, etc.): permies.com
- Search for permaculture on YouTube and you'll find enough to keep you busy for a lifetime.
- Take a permaculture design course. It really is life-changing!

Transition movement

Cities and towns proactively retooling themselves for a post-fossil-fuel age. The first Transition Town was Totnes, England. Now there are several hundred Transition Towns in countries

throughout the world. Transition groups organize skill-shares, work to create affordable low-footprint housing, and all sorts of other wonderful things.

- *The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Local Resilience*, by Rob Hopkins

- Website for U.S. Transition Towns:
<http://www.transitionus.org/transition-towns>

- Transition Town Totnes <https://www.transitiontowntotnes.org>

Bioregionalist movement

Bioregionalism emphasizes becoming a steward of your place, getting to know its natural characteristics (watershed, native plants and animals, geology and so on), rebuilding ecosystems, and establishing right relationship between humans and other species. The artist and poet in me feels a particular resonance with this movement.

- "What Is Bioregionalism?" excellent article by Peter Berg, Planet Drum

Foundation <https://www.cascadianow.org/about-cascadia/cascadia-bioregionalism/what-is-bioregionalism/>

- Attend a Bioregional Congress in your region, or attend the national or international ones.

CREATIVITY; RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

In the past few years, I've noticed the emergence of a chorus of what I've dubbed "Creative Cheerleaders" or "Creative Champions": writer-artist-entrepreneurs who are calling on all of us everyday people to step up and make our creative mark on the world. Some of the people and works that have inspired me most:

- Seth Godin is my #1 pick in this category. *Linchpin* and *Poke the Box* are my two favorite of his many fine books. Godin urges us all to "Go out and make something happen; don't wait to be picked," and "Ship! Ship!" His blog sethgodin.typepad.com is packed with wise advice and real-life

examples of people who have carved out unique niches for themselves.

- *Do the Work*, by Steven Pressfield.

"That's what we're all waiting for you to do—to do the work."

- *The Flinch*, by Julien Smith. Beware the lizard-brain. Resistance is your enemy.

- *Die Empty*, by Todd Henry. "The most valuable land in the world is the graveyard. In the graveyard are buried all the unwritten novels, never-launched businesses, unreconciled relationships, and all of the other things that people thought, 'I'll get around to that tomorrow'."

- I owe special thanks to several "writing cheerleaders" whose books, email newsletters, blogs, ebooks, etc., lit a fire under me to write this book: Stella Orange "Shut Up And Write"; Jeff Goins "Tribe Writer". And extra hearty thanks to Sean Donovan, author of *The Book Book*. My favorite quotes: "It's wrong not to write!" and "GOYA (Get Off Your Ass)".

I credit *The Book Book* for removing my last shred of excuse for not writing *DEEP GREEN*, which is my first book.

GETTING YOUR MIND IN ORDER

- *The Power of Now*, book by Eckhart Tolle. I read this back in 2000, and it was a turning point for me in learning to drop worry and regret, and just be in the present moment.

- *Nonviolent Communication, a Language of Life*, book by Marshall B.

Rosenberg. I read this in 2004 and got helpful tips for verbalizing my needs in non-combative language. But I also realized that even if I used nonviolent language, I would still end up transmitting violence energetically unless I also worked to heal my inner violence (unresolved emotions, etc.).

- The Avatar® books and The Avatar Course, by Harry Palmer. Awakening personal responsibility; rising above victim-consciousness; strengthening the "will muscle"; managing one's attention; freeing oneself of limiting beliefs. Setting and achieving goals

that are "Right For You." Cultivating compassion and expanding one's capacity to be in service to others. Navigating beyond familiar consciousness. The absolute best resources I know of for building these essential life-skills are the Avatar® books and The Avatar Course, by Harry Palmer. "As YOU learn to manage your mind's beliefs," Harry says, "more and more of the elements of life will come under your control." Also: "We are rarely, if ever, locked into a reality we cannot change simply by deciding to change our beliefs." I took the Avatar Course in 2005 and consider it the most life-changing work I've ever done (and I've done a lot of life-changing work!). The course impressed me so much that I went on to take the Master Course to become a licensed instructor of Avatar. The Avatar Course is attached to a social movement for the evolution of human consciousness and the realization of an enlightened civilization. I can honestly say that without the Avatar Course, I would

never have become a leader in the permaculture and green movements. And this *DEEP GREEN* book would not exist! To find out about Avatar, visit www.avatarepc.com (Avatar® is a registered trademark of Stars Edge, Inc. All rights reserved.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all my personal eco-heroes, too numerous to list them all but here are a few—these folks truly walk their talk! Starr Benton, Cedar Stevens, Rainy S. Day, James Campbell, Alan McGill, Ken McKenzie, Brandi Clark, the Green Gate Farmers (Erin Flynn, Skip Connett, Avery Connett, Ethan Connett), Nova Marie, Joseph Jenkins, Scott Pittman, Larry Santoyo, Chris Carson, Mark Sardella, Sun Ray Kelley, Kirby Fry, Dick Pierce, Selwyn Polit, Markus Ottmers, Andy Buckingham, Rick Wright, Jim O'Brien, Frank Meyer, HeatherJo Flores, Bill Oliver, Howie Richey & Linda Anderson, Norm Ballinger, Koreen Brennan, Erica Klopff, Jungle Jay, Andy Firk, Soo Se Cho, Laura Smith, my cousin the artist Jim Kay, Grandma and Grandpa West, Harry Palmer.

And last but not most, I dedicate *DEEP GREEN* to my father and mother, Robert Michael Nazak and Martha Louise Nazak, who raised me to care, and to do something about it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jenny Nazak is a freelance sustainability educator and artist based in Daytona Beach, USA. Over the past decade or so, she's become "micro-famous" among a few hundred or a thousand people for having a low-footprint, high-quality lifestyle. She's dedicated to preserving dense, walkable, low-footprint urban environments and wild nature.

This book *DEEP GREEN* is
(c) Jenny Nazak August 31, 2017.

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This coupon entitles the bearer to one DEEP-GREEN TECH SUPPORT session of up to two hours for \$25. This is 50% off my regular price. It's my thanks to you for reading this book.

To schedule your phone or Skype session,
email me jnazak@yahoo.com

CHAPTER 13¹/₂. OUT-TAKES (BONUS CHAPTER!)

This chapter is definitely from the "Having my cake and eating it too" department. Originally I had this material in the main body of the book, in a chapter titled "Tidbits" that came right after the Riot chapters. But I decided that some folks might feel overwhelmed with the extra content-dump.

And yet, I also thought some folks might enjoy this extra stuff! So I got the bright idea of making an out-take chapter. If you feel done reading, skip this chapter or save it for another time. If you feel like nibbling on some mini-rants, little insights, and other tidbits, read on!

Incidental Greenness

Some of my footprint reduction is a byproduct of another goal. For example, I wanted to reduce my

mindless internet usage. So I started doing "modified Internet intake" by having internet only at work. When I want to do things online I arrive early at the shop where I work part-time, and use the internet there. By not sitting on the internet for hours, I reduce my electricity consumption but more importantly I improve my efficiency of the time I do spend on the internet. Lately I've been taking aim at my "free wifi habit"—refraining from accessing wifi at free hotspots "just because I can"; by doing this I'm more present with the people in front of me or the task at hand.

Reduction Is More than the Sum of Its Parts

I doubt that the electricity reduction from my self-imposed internet reduction diet is much. The greater benefit comes from my being "unhooked" for several hours a day, mainly in the evening. This turns the evening into unbroken time for walks, writing,

introspection, reading paper books (or ebooks already stored on my device), and sitting with my cat. And connecting face-to-face with my neighbors!

Regarding connection vs. connectivity, here's one of my new favorite quotes. It's from my friend Paul Furlong's book, *Paul Furlong's Bohemian Road Trip*: "I swear, the more I accept the miracle of universal consciousness, the more I see electronic connectivity as a kind of booby prize."

Another reason why reductions are more than just the sum of their numbers is that we're not just reducing; we're helping to *NORMALIZE* a gentler and saner way of doing things. What are you normalizing with your choices today? There's a lot of power in asking yourself that question.

The Cost of Comfort

Did you ever wonder what the addiction to constant comfort is costing you

besides just money (and the time it takes to work to make that money)? What about your peace of mind; your sense of self-reliance and independence? What about the time you can never get back? How comfortable is our state of American comfort, really?

Transcending Politics

Greenness transcends all political and class boundaries. Someone following a low-footprint path might actually be a card-carrying member of the Green Party, but he or she could just as easily be Democrat, Republican, libertarian, communist, anarchist, independent, or apolitical. I've met deep-green people of all political stripes. Yes, ALL. No one party or affiliation has a monopoly on greenness (sorry to break the news to you, Democrats and Greens!).

Overtaken By Events, in a Good Way

Many environmentally minded people (including myself at times) have been feeling angry and frustrated and

hopeless for so long that our vision has become obscured. In many cases, our negative outlooks are literally being overtaken by positive developments happening all around us. All across the USA, mayors and cities are making their own climate-change policies, overriding the lack of conscience or political will at the national-government level. Convenience stores are setting up quite gorgeous recycling stations on their premises (Thanks, Wawa!). A tiny West Texas town, Spur, is billing itself as "the first tiny-house-friendly town in the USA" and setting about proactively recruiting the kind of residents who will make a truly livable community. Food-gardening and raising chickens are wildly popular in some places to the point of almost being mainstream, and this is something I've really noticed just in the last 10 years. The State of California is basically doing its own thing, with environmental regulations far more rigorous than anywhere else in the country—and

contrary to the predictions of naysayers, the state is watching its economy boom as a result. Like battle-hardened soldiers peering up from the trenches and seeing that the worst of the war is over, we environmentalists can take comfort in the fact that our sad Lone Ranger or "Chicken Little" attitude is obsolete in many ways, and we can abandon our lonely outposts and join the current.

Helpful Daily Habits

Following are some little daily habits and attitudes I've found helpful; adapt this to your needs.

- I try not to watch or listen to too much news. Not having a TV helps a lot. I control my news intake by reading selectively. And although I did not consciously set out to do so, I realized that nowadays I am more *creating* the news than *consuming* the news. By this I mean being out there engaged in civic activities: City Commission meetings; neighborhood

planning meetings; design charrettes;
reaching out to potential allies;
teaming up with neighbors to form a
steady presence in our neighborhood
park and discourage drug dealers and
prostitutes from roosting there.

(Aside: Just because I don't *have* a TV
doesn't mean I don't enjoy *watching* TV
on occasion. I got to see the 2016
Summer Olympics on wide-screen TV at
my favorite beachside pub, Jimmy
Hart's Hall of Fame at the Mayan Inn
in Daytona Beach.)

- I don't focus too much on the threat
of environmental disaster. I give
myself a "booster shot" of a reminder
maybe every month or two; that's all I
need to keep my edge.

- I strive to minimize my footprint
but I don't let the perfect be the
enemy of the good. When a friend took
me out to dinner many times over the
course of a few weeks, and I wound up
with styrofoam carry-out boxes for the
leftover food, I didn't beat myself

up. I did notice that styrofoam is getting a lot thinner and lighter these days!

- I try to put as much energy into cultivating compassion and kindness as I do to minimizing my eco footprint. One of my ongoing struggles is to keep myself from flipping the bird at drivers who abuse me for being on a bicycle. I try to see their viewpoint (they have trouble passing in a narrow lane; they're from the suburbs and they've never been around people who cycle for transportation and they expect a cyclist to ride on the sidewalk). I usually end up feeling at least somewhat more peaceful and understanding. An unkind word or a rude gesture ripples out into the world; it's a form of pollution.

- I strive to maximize my HANDPRINT by putting myself out there in the world and using my talents to create useful things for people. I go to City Commission meetings; I make art; I

have a Little Free Library in my front yard next to the sidewalk that gets a lot of foot traffic; I teach neighbors how to collect rainwater; I give demo's of my solar oven and share sun-cooked food.

Attention Management Is Key

The real name of the game is managing our attention. Attention management is what will determine our success or failure. While acknowledging the reality of the obstacles, we need to keep most of our attention on the desired outcome.

Oversteering and Horizons

When my father was teaching me to drive, he told me to direct my gaze some distance out in front of me rather than what was immediately in front of me. To keep my eyes on the road where I wanted to go, not keep my eyes on traffic cones, the side of the road and so on. By keeping our eyes on where we want to go, we avoid being

panicked and swayed by every little news item that hits our inboxes.

Conversely, sometimes we panic over something that's too far out to worry about. Some of my fellow permaculturists (and I share this tendency) have been known to worry every time we put a jar into recycling: I couldn't make a new mason jar if I needed one! This mentality results in a lot of cluttered cabinets and dusty garages. We don't have to know how to make a mason jar at the household level. We can trust that the glass-vessel-making industry will retool as appropriate; adapt to keep up with the prevailing energy mix. I don't have to worry about not being able to weave clothing. Truthfully, there is enough overstock to keep us all well-clothed well into the next century.

All of that said, learning weaving or glassblowing could be an enjoyable and useful way for you to entertain

yourself, educate yourself about history and energy, and connect with likeminded people. And it could give you a skill to teach, thus providing you with a right livelihood and a way to increase your handprint.

And along those same lines, why not be the first glassblowing artisan who becomes known for being powered by renewable energy? In fact, I imagine that artisan already exists! But you could become the first in your local area.

Ditto for a bakery; a handmade-clothing boutique; a leather-goods repair shop. Become known as the green, low-footprint one!

Things Are Not Always What They Seem

Recently as I was sitting down to write, the peaceful early-evening air was shattered by the ear-splitting snarl of a weed-whacker. As the sound went on and on, I found myself working up quite a lather. "When will people

get it?? Those things ought to be outlawed!! Who's doing that???"

I got up to look, and saw that it was my neighbor catty-corner across the street. A guy who hardly ever buys food from a supermarket because he catches in the river or grows in his yard most of what he eats. A guy who gets around by bicycle and hardly ever burns gasoline, except occasionally when he rides in the car with his father to help out with the family business, a commute of about five miles.

As long as buying my food is an option for me, I may never be as green as that neighbor. I took a deep breath and relaxed about the weed-whacker.

Lately I've been having more and more moments like this, and as you become more centered in your own pursuit of your version of a deep-green life, I bet you will be having more of them too.

Your Mission, Should You Choose To Accept It

Consider yourself mobilized! With the Riot for Austerity, there's no government making you do it. You determine your role and how far you want to go. It's the People's Green Mobilization! We could call it Green Mob or XLF Lifestyle Tribe for short. Plug into what you care about most; find your people; and go to town!

You know the saying "If you can't beat them, join them?" We complain at how much power and influence the corporations and advertisers have. Well, what if we use some of their methods to promote our *positive* activities. Who wants to help me make some World War II-style green mobilization posters?

Perception Is Everything

How we think of things ("credit-card debt" vs. "business investment debt"; "doing without airconditioning" vs.

"preferring an open-air environment") not only makes a difference in our own ability to "walk our talk", to translate our convictions into our daily personal practices. How we refer to things in our own minds also makes an enormous difference in how we talk about them to other people, which has an impact on how persuasive and attractive our lifestyle is. People adopt what's attractive and useful. Human beings are "Monkey see, monkey do." If you're doing something that's working, and you *recognize* that fact and radiate it to the world in your attitude—people will sense it and copy it.

When you choose to define something as "retro" rather than shabby and old-fashioned, it becomes cool. The little white folding step-ladder in my kitchen, which even a tall person like me needs in order to reach the high kitchen shelves (vertical space being an essential in the modest-sized kitchens of yore), might look shabby

to some. But to me it evokes nostalgia for the World War II-era look of my grandmothers' kitchens. (And in fact, the four-plex house in which I occupy one rental unit was built in the 1920s.) What are some examples from your own life? Can your "cramped" apartment actually be "minimalist urban chic"?

Getting Real Freedom

Witnessed recently: little boy crying in car. The Dad, exasperated, outside trying to get the little boy to come out of the car. Honey I'm sorry but when we went to the park there were no parking spaces and no one was leaving so that's why we had to come home instead of going to the park!

In a Riot world this would not happen. Dads and kids would walk or cycle to the park. Or if there were no park close by, they'd make the whole neighborhood their park. The much-touted "freedom" of the car so often turns out to be the opposite.

The Power of Purpose

A recent issue of TIME magazine reported on a study that found that people with a sense of purpose literally sleep better at night. Those who reported having a strong sense of purpose were 63% less likely to suffer from sleep apnea and 52% less likely to suffer from restless leg syndrome than those whose "purpose scale" score was lower.

A Minimalist Clutterbug

I get a lot of credit for being minimalist and having a small footprint. But, as much as I hate clutter, I am still a clutterbug in certain ways. My clutter takes the form of small bits of jewelry, art supplies, paper scraps "too good to throw away".

I consider this pattern a direct physical manifestation of my old pattern of hanging back and withholding effort. Recently I read a

book called *Die Empty* by Todd Henry. It's about putting out to the world all you've got every day, so you don't die with a single thing undone, a single bit of energy or talent unspent. I have several pads of unused fine paper for artwork. I have a set of paints. I have a set of colored inks - I did use them a lot a few years back when a lot of my livelihood was focused on visual art, so I do consider the inks to have paid for themselves not only monetarily but also energetically, so even if I were to get rid of them now I could do so without regrets. I don't feel done with art yet though.

This is not to make a point that you shouldn't ever keep anything around; just that you should be ever-mindful of your own "happy medium" zone that lies between having too much stuff moldering away unused, and having nothing to work with. I do enjoy going into my supplies shelf and finding something I had forgotten about!

How To Achieve a Zero Footprint

If you want to achieve a zero footprint and save the world, here's the 100% effective, surefire way: Don't move; don't breathe; don't consume anything; don't do anything ever. Including having kids -- Don't do that!

You may laugh (at least I HOPE you're laughing -- as opposed to, say, slowly nodding your head in a dawning glimmer of agreement, or jumping up out of your chair and shouting, "*EUREKA*, that's *IT*, the secret of a sustainable civilization -- kill off all the people!"). But laugh though we may, that's actually how some people feel: That the human race is so fundamentally flawed, and/or has taken such a wrong turn, that our species is not worth saving, and the best thing we humans can do for the planet is to die out.

Does that make sense to you? Do you believe that the best we humans can possibly hope to do is hunker down and sit still and try not to breathe, so we can be "less bad" for the environment? It doesn't make sense to me. What a cop-out! Fortunately it's not the case. At least I don't believe it is.

What I believe is that it's possible to restore ecological balance to the planet without sacrificing our own basic human needs. You can be deep-green and still live a full life! In fact, it'll be a much fuller life because you'll be cutting out waste and busywork and conflict, and using your freed-up time and energy to focus on the stuff that really makes your soul sing.

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