

## Giving Earth a Helping Hand

*You are not as powerless as you think.*

**By Merlin Francis**

We are witnessing the first signs of the climate crisis. While the word ‘crisis’ should jolt us awake, here’s another statistic: 75% of 10,000 youngsters reported that they thought the future is ‘frightening’. These are the [findings of a study](#), published by *The Lancet Planetary Health*, which included respondents from Australia, Brazil, Finland, France, India, Nigeria, Philippines, Portugal, the UK, and the USA. More than 50% of the respondents reported feeling sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and guilty.

Climate change will permanently alter life as we know it. Global warming is leading to a planet that is not suitable for human beings to live on. This is frightening and the anxiety it is causing is valid. The scale of the crisis can make us feel powerless. But we cannot let despair overpower our potential and willingness to act.

In 2018, the United Nations launched a campaign ‘[ActNow](#)’ to raise awareness, ambition, and action on climate change. The campaign was launched with the belief that while individuals can’t solve the climate crisis alone, small actions do add up and make a difference.

This year’s World Environment Day theme reminds us that we have *Only One Earth*. And our Earth needs all the help it can get.



### How can you help?

We have put together ten things you can do to lend Earth a helping hand. We hope this list aids in getting you started on a journey that makes Earth healthy, so it continues to be a liveable home for the human race.

**1. Reducing food waste and composting:** The need to reduce food waste doesn’t need explanation considering the millions living in hunger and dying of starvation even today. Segregating waste at the source and composting can prevent organic waste from going in to landfills, which are a source of methane emissions — a greenhouse gas that is responsible for global warming. Composting also helps

improve soil fertility without the use of harmful pesticides. There are many methods of composting but you could get started by checking out [Daily Dump](#).

2. **RRR — Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.** The logic behind the 3Rs is straightforward: it limits the amount of raw materials and energy needed to produce new items, and prevents waste from entering landfills.

3. **Say no to plastic:** Plastic is making a [mess](#) of the ocean and can now even be found in our bloodstream! Further, [studies](#) have estimated that the process of plastic production & incineration contributes emissions that are equivalent to 189 coal-fired power stations. Plastic is hard to break down and when it does, it usually takes us down with us, producing methane and ethylene that contribute to climate change. Avoid plastic as much as you can. Replace it with reusable cloth or jute bags or simple paper. As a child I remember practically every family had a basket that they carried with them when grocery shopping. Now this has been completely replaced by plastic. Simple measures like carrying your own water bottle or carrying reusable cutlery are doable steps to avoid plastic.

4. **Grow your own veggies:** [Terrace gardening](#) and green rooftops are becoming popular in many cities. A terrace garden, when done [right](#) (organically, and with judicious use of water) can help reduce urban heat islands and, in turn, reduce the amount of energy needed for cooling, while also providing fresh and healthy food produce. Food tastes so much better when they are grown by yourself, not to mention the immense satisfaction that comes from the process.

5. **Install a rooftop solar system:** Renewable energy will be the name of the game for tackling the climate crisis. The use of fossil fuel, especially for energy generation, is the single biggest reason for the current crisis. By installing rooftop solar systems you can reduce your consumption of fossil-fuel-based electricity.



6. **Harvest rainwater:** [Depleting ground water](#) is a serious concern and efficient water management is central to conversations on agriculture or whether cities will continue to be liveable in future. India has been facing severe water scarcity. Rainwater harvesting can not only help in conserving rainwater for use by households, but also prevent flooding during heavy rain spells. CSTEP's [analysis](#) projecting climate change in districts across India found that many states would witness a wetter future, while others would see drought-like situations. Harvesting rainwater can help us adapt to both these aspects of climate change.



7. **Walk or cycle:** We are back to the topic of [burning fossil fuels](#). Internal combustion engines use fossil fuel and [cause](#) massive pollution. Even if we shift to electric vehicles tomorrow, the fact that electricity continues to be generated from coal-based thermal power plants means that we would still be contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. So consider walking or [cycling](#). Many [cities](#), recognising the many benefits (environmental and physical) of walking/cycling are looking at building better infrastructure for non-motorised transport.

8. **Get [climate literate](#):** As mentioned earlier, thinking about climate change can be overwhelming — especially when words like ‘Net Zero’ or ‘Anthropocene’ are heard. However, since we live in the age of the internet, [learning](#) about climate change and understanding its implications is not very difficult. There are numerous resources to build your climate knowledge and scientists all over the world are looking at how climate science can be conveyed to non-scientists and lay persons. Take advantage of this opportunity. Check out CSTEP’s new campaign ‘Climate on Our Minds’ where we break down the common phrases used in climate change conversations.

9. **Talk about climate change:** [Talking](#) about climate change can help build momentum for positive action, help with climate anxiety and put forth ideas for solutions that are local and relevant.



**10. Make some noise:** Have you spoken about climate change with your family? Now take it to your resident welfare associations, ward committees, and local leaders. This is where you scale up and build momentum and enable solutions that can benefit a larger number of people.

*Every effort to heal the Earth counts, writes Garima Singh, Senior Editor at CSTEP on LinkedIn. Read the article [here](#).*