

I had an interesting conversation with my daughter a few days ago. It went something like this "Could you **PLEASE** turn off the light in your closet and your room?" To which she answered - sure. And I said "But you always say sure and then it doesn't get done. How is this time going to be any different?" "Fair enough" she said, "But why do you want me to turn off my light it seems like such a small thing." "Well," I said, if we turn off our lights that is one thing that can help the environment - you know the energy for that light has to come from somewhere and the making of that energy can create a lot of carbon emissions that are helping to make climate change worse. So the less energy we use the better for the environment?" "Really," she said. "Yes really," I said. "Oh I thought your were just being picky." I looked at her with that look - You know that look "They don't teach this in school - how am I supposed to know." she said to me.

That comment of hers made me think. What am I doing to help my children, what can any of us do to help our children learn about how to be got to go beyond that.

So the first thing I think we have to do is get our children, or our grandchildren out in nature. Part of that is so that children as they grow up know there is more to this world than sidewalks and video games. But it is much deeper than that.

I was lucky enough to grow up in the sixties when free range parenting was all the rage. My mom opened the back door in the morning and rang the bell for dinner in the evening. I spent a lot of time hiking in the hills of my town. I dug in dirt and discovered all sorts of critters and plants. I got to understand the wonder that is nature. Sunrises, sunsets those glorious color shows of nature. Spider webs in the house are creepy but outside with dew on them lit up by the sun they are miraculous. The Milky Way The Big Dipper, the Northern Star, a full moon - filled me with awe. Ant hills, birds nests, creepy crawly bugs, a deer as scared of me as I was of him all of these are part of the sacred moments in nature. And when someone knows in a deep experiential way that nature is sacred they are much more likely to care for it better. Give your kids - our kids that chance.

And we are lucky here in CNY. It does not take long to get to an area of nature unfettered by sidewalks, and roads. We have a lot of parks and lakes to be enjoyed here. Feeling the mud squish between your toes - priceless. When there is an oil slick on the water or a floating beer can it's a teachable moment. Maybe you cannot get to a park every weekend - but you could try putting up some bird feeders. Get the kids involved in keeping the bird feeder full. Start a chart and see how many birds you can see.

Model caring for the earth. Children listen to our words but also what we do. So you might talk to your children about eating food grown locally and why that is a good idea and then go ahead and do that. Take your kids to a pick your own farm and let them see how food is grown. We are close to farms here in Syracuse it is a resource for us who are helping children learn. Let your children see the ways in which you are thoughtful about how you treat this earth.

If your children are old enough to use a computer give them a project. Let them research different ways that each of us can use less, recycle more, have a smaller carbon footprint. Let them bring that research to you and then have a conversation with them about what your household can do. Let them have a voice over what seems fun and doable. Let them take some age appropriate responsibility in helping out.

And let your kids - our kids know that what we do is important. Because it really is. I read somewhere that our lifestyle choices are something like 75% of the emissions in the US. So it does make a difference if I dial down the heater in winter. It does make a difference if I try not to throw food away. It does make a difference if I plan out my meals so that I am making fewer trips to the grocery store. It makes a difference if I drive less. We need to teach our children and ourselves that we have the power to change this world and improve it.

We all cannot do everything. Some of us choose to not eat meat for environmental

reasons, but not all of us can do that. Some of us are able to drive hybrids or electric cars, but not all of can. Some of us compost, plant our own vegetables, or raise chickens or other animals but not all of us can. Whatever it is you do - organic food, local food, organic cleaning supplies, walking instead of driving, carpooling, turning off the lights, turning down the heat, or turning off the air conditioner - do it. And then talk to your kids about it, don't assume they know - as I learned too easily they simply may not. It isn't hard it just takes some intentionality.

In a world without end may it be so.