

Choices for Sustainable Living

AN EIGHT-SESSION DISCUSSION CIRCLE FOR THE HOME, FAITH CENTER OR WORKPLACE

Purpose

∞ To explore the meaning of sustainability.

∞ To consider the ties between lifestyle choices and their impact on the earth.

∞ To learn about steps that can be taken to move toward ecologically sustainable organizations, lifestyles, and communities.

“I find that I think about things more – things I buy, things I eat, things I throw out. I see a much larger picture now, and I realize more than ever that I am a very important part of that picture.”

- Choices for Sustainable Living participant



Session Descriptions

1. A Call to Sustainability: The goal of a sustainable society is popular, but difficult to define. How does the way our society functions affect the earth, and how can we be “a blessing to the planet”?

2. Ecological Principles: Some argue that the earth is the best teacher of sustainable practices. How can nature’s organizing principles be applied in design, production of goods, and everyday living?

3. Buying: Daily messages tell us to buy, buy, buy. How can we escape from these cultural pressures, and instead only purchase what we truly need, from the most sustainable sources available?

4. Food: According to one author, our food travels an average of 1,300 miles before reaching our plates. How can we lessen our impact on the earth through choices about the way we eat?

5. Communities: Change does not come without people coming together and taking action. In what ways can your community work towards sustainability? How can you make your community a sustainable one?

6. Business and Economy: Is a *growing* economy equivalent to a *healthy* economy? What are other ways of measuring success, and how can we encourage businesses to adopt sustainable practices and perspectives?

7. Visions of Sustainability: Choices we make today are shaping the world of tomorrow. What are the possible outcomes, and how can we create the most sustainable society for ourselves and our children?

8. Call to Action—Wrap-Up

For information on how to join or start a Choices for Sustainable Living discussion circle in MD or DC, please visit www.simplicity-matters.org/info



Simplicity Matters Earth Institute
Simple living for a sustainable future

www.simplicity-matters.org | contact@simplicity-matters.org | 301-432-8721

Choices for Sustainable Living

Readings and Excerpts

1. A Call to Sustainability. “Definitions of Sustainability” ♦ “Easter’s End” by Jared Diamond ♦ “Making Other Arrangements” by Howard Kunstler ♦ “Why Bother?” by Michael Pollan ♦ You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train by Howard Zinn.

2. Ecological Principles. “Footprints to Sustainability” by Professor William E. Rees ♦ “The Technology Factor” by Paul R. and Anne H. Ehrlich ♦ “The Personal Impact of No Impact” by Colin Beaven ♦ “Mother Nature’s School of Design” by Janine Benyus ♦ Case Study: “Bear River’s ‘Living Machine’” by Dave Redwood and Sean Kelly

3. Buying. “A Spending Wake-Up Call” by Stacey Burling and Carolyn Davis ♦ “Saving the Earth on the Cheap” by Paul Rauber ♦ “Buy Now, Pay Later” by Jess Worth ♦ “Plastic Bags are Killing Us” by Katharine Mieszkowski ♦ “What Does ‘Not Buying’ Really Look Like?” by Anna White ♦ “Get What You Need Without Money” by Andrew Korfhage

4. Food. “What’s Eating America” by Michael Pollan ♦ “The Carbon Hoofprint” by Austin Gelder and Lauren Wilcox ♦ “Stalking the Vegetannual” by Barbara Kingsolver ♦ “Organic Farming May Be the Best Route to Global Food Security” by the Rodale Institute

♦ “The Dirty Dozen List” ♦ “Five Reasons Not to Drink Bottled Water” by Chris Baskind

5. Communities. “The City After Oil” by Richard Register ♦ “If You Build It, Will They Change?” by Bill McKibben ♦ “Building Green Community on a Budget” by Liz Walker ♦ “Cook One Meal, Eat for a Week” by Joelle Novey ♦ “The Common Life” by Scott Russell Sanders ♦ “Forging Friendlier Neighborhoods”

6. Business and Economy. “Detroit Speech” by Robert F. Kennedy ♦ Eco-Economy by Lester R. Brown ♦ “It’s Folly to Save Jobs by Risking a Resource” by Donella Meadows ♦ “Feeding the Beast” by John Ehrenfeld ♦ “The Extravagant Gesture” by William McDonough and Michael Braungart ♦ “Bridging the Green Divide” by David Kupfer ♦ “Breaking Down Buildings, Building Up a Neighborhood” by Holly Dressel

7. Visions of Sustainability. “Tools for the Transition to Sustainability” by Donella Meadows, Jørgen Randers and Dennis Meadows ♦ “Las Gaviotas” by Richard E. White and Gloria Eugenia González Mariño ♦ “Understanding the Social Transformation Process” by Christopher Uhl ♦ “The Great Turning” by Joanna Macy

8. Wrap-Up. Evaluation and Next Steps

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