

SEPTEMBER 2023

Less is More

Here's an idea for what you can do to help the planet: nothing at all! I know that sounds negative, but actually it's the opposite.

We spend so much of our lives rushing around, slaves to the idea that our time on earth is all about productivity. Doing more, doing it faster, better, scaling up... it's exactly this kind of thinking that has got us into the crisis that we are currently facing. Exploiting resources with greater and greater efficiency, streamlining production, making things more and more easily available and smoothly efficient has resulted in the kind of hyper acceleration which the poor old planet simply cannot cope with.

Earth overshoot day is marked when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year. Each year it's getting earlier: this year, we went into 'ecological overspend' on August 2nd. To say we're living beyond our means is putting it mildly.

We're also facing a crisis in mental and physical health, with stress- and diet-related illnesses from depression to cardio-vascular disease, on the rise.

It's easy to blame it all on 'modern life' and try to do something about it. Yoga! Mindfulness! Jogging! But sometimes this can seem like adding yet more to the endless list of Things To Do.

How about the radical idea, that we do – simply – nothing. Just for a bit, every day. That we give up the idea that multi-tasking and responding instantly to every message, post, email and request, is the only way we can cope. There's the possibility that being alive should not only be about 'coping' – just – with the demands that we have, but about enjoying the very fact that we are: alive, on this beautiful planet.

Slowing down is a wonderful chance to savour the many pleasures that life offers. Eating more slowly and taking time to notice the flavours and textures of the food not only enhances your enjoyment, but also allows you to

appreciate where the food has come from. An ordinary apple suddenly reveals itself as a miracle made of sunlight and earth and rain.

Walking to your destination will take longer than driving in the car, but if you change the story in your head – that this is not time ‘wasted’ but a wonderful opportunity to look at the world – the trees, birds, buildings, to meet people, say hello, listen to the sounds of the living world that you are part of – it will make a world of difference. And as your carbon footprint shrinks, so your life expands.