



THIS EARTH DAY: ADOPT A NEW PARADIGM: Three Things That You Can Do to Transform the Planet and Your Life

*The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but seeing with
new eyes.*

-Marcel Proust

In this age of scientific triumph, our daily connection with the Earth has diminished alarmingly. We are cut off from nature, separate from the animals and plants that surround us, making us strangers in our own home. We miss the subtle changes in the wind, the calls of birds, the smell of the fragrant Earth beneath our feet, the wonder of seeing the brilliant stars in the night sky, and the peace that pervades from a deep tranquil pool of water. We spend more time indoors or commuting, leaving little time for deep inner journeys or quiet walks in the woods even though who we are and what we are—the very root of our identity—is best defined in relation to nature and other living things.

It is vital that we understand not only how important our role is in nature's sphere, but also how crucial nature's role is in our lives. We are suffering from a lack of contact with nature, a nature-deficit that not only leads to ill health, but also gives us a sense that something is missing in our lives.

A recent study found that Americans spend less than one hour a week outside and asserts that this is leading to all kinds of physical, emotional and spiritual ailments including:

- _ Increased levels of stress and illness;
- _ Obesity and sedentary lifestyle;
- _ ADHD and apathy (especially for children spending too much time on Nintendo, etc);
- _ Sleep disorders and fatigue; and
- _ Lack of creativity and sense of purpose.

Our disconnection from nature is, of course, also leading to all kinds of environmental harm. Usually, when we speak about protecting the environment, we speak about habitat protection, reducing carbon emissions, and banning toxins. These external acts are absolutely essential, but without a vision for ethical goodness toward all life, the “environmental cause” is unlikely to succeed in the long run.

We do not need to try to solve these global problems on our own; Nature can be our partner in the truest sense of the word. Partnering with Nature means opening up to an ongoing conversation with nature, to listen and learn from the smallest living being to the Earth herself. For example, the Living Machine, copies how nature cleans and purifies water by using all natural elements and processes including: sunlight, bacteria, green plants, and animals like fish and snails. The Living Machine® system recently installed at the Port of Portland will reduce the facility’s water consumption by treating up to 5,000 gallons per day of wastewater. In addition, the beautiful system will educate people about the amazing ability and cost effectiveness of all natural water purification techniques.

For thousands of years, people have connected with nature to gain greater knowledge about the world and how to best live their lives. We will be

able to solve problems, such as global warming, when we gain greater awareness about who and what we are in relation to the Earth and other living creatures. By learning from and working with the wisdom of trees for example, we can heal and transform our ailing atmosphere. An innovative and profound new program to clone the world's most ecologically valuable tree species and plant millions of copies is underway by a group called Archangel Ancient Tree Archive. The trees will store carbon while creating healthful oxygen, preserve ecosystem diversity, and be used for medicines.

Nature also offers us an opportunity to connect with the sacred. Nature is a portal to an infinite and timeless realm where we can gain insights into a larger reality that is beyond our day-to-day comprehension. Great spiritual leaders like Buddha, Moses, and Jesus all experienced divinity directly by spending time in nature. Buddha gained enlightenment under a fig tree. The tree became known as the Bo tree (short for Bodhi or enlightenment) and the site was later named the Immovable Spot. Jesus spent 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness. Moses had direct communication with God through a burning bush. For thousands of years, people went on pilgrimages that took them through some of the most beautiful natural places in the world. Today people are experiencing life transforming benefits from going on spiritual nature retreats and Vision Quests.

Are we here to continue to dominate and abuse the “lower” animals, or destroy our beautiful home – the Earth? I do not think so. Rather, we have been uniquely endowed by the Creator to care for the great diversity of life, and even the Earth herself. I believe that we are here to bring greater life, joy, and wisdom to the Planet. Our role on Earth is to love, appreciate, and serve the great diversity of life as if it were our own life—because it is. By adopting a new paradigm that holds that all living things are sacred, we can save the Earth, and ourselves.

I invite you to see the possibilities for yourself and to view nature with new eyes. My hope is that by gaining a greater awareness of your own connection to nature, you will join me in fostering a new ethic—one that reveres all life on Earth. ¹

Three Steps You Can Take to Transform the Planet & Better Your Life This Year:

- 1) Spend More Time in Nature; eat lunch outside, ride or walk to work, take a camping vacation, and/or go on a Vision Quest;
- 2) Take Action to Protect & Restore nature; plant trees, restore wetlands, protect wild life, Do this yourself AND support environmental organizations that specialize in these fields;
- 3) Live Sustainably (install solar power panels, buy a car that has high mpg, cut back on energy use in your home (i.e. lower air conditioner temperature) AND insist that your tax dollars and political representatives support sustainable and healthy technologies and processes; (i.e. let your congressional representative know that you do not support the tax credits and loopholes that are provided to polluting industries like oil and gas, and demand that your tax dollars be used only to support renewable & safe energy!)

ABOUT Catriona MacGregor: Catriona is a Vision Quest leader, nature guide and author. Her book “*Partnering with Nature: The Wild Path to Reconnecting with the Earth*” won “Best Social Change Book 2010”. Catriona is the co-author of *Healing the Heart of the World: Harnessing the Power of Intention to Change Your Life and the Planet*, along with Carolyn Myss, Thich Nhat Hanh, et al. She weaves together her knowledge of natural history and sacred traditions to benefit all life on Earth. Catriona’s Vision Quests and nature outings combine visits to sacred sites and wilderness areas. To Learn More Go To www.naturalpathfinder.com

¹ Some sentences of this article were excerpted from author’s book “Partnering with Nature” which can be ordered at <http://tinyurl.com/yh4pkam>.