ISK CLIMATE CHANGE & HEALTH SERIES

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Recap

In Part One we covered the importance of climate activism and touched on a few ways activism can look (like protesting, reading, or advocating at ISK) Read on for more ways you can be a climate activist!

Activism: your way (continued)

Make personal changes

Activism doesn't have to involve anyone else if you don't want it to. Changing your own ways can make a huge difference. Our Climate Change & Health Series — including our Shopping for a Smaller Footprint and Sustainable Holidays 101 guides — has covered numerous ways to take action on different climate change issues, and a quick google search will offer a plethora of options for environmentally friendly personal choices, many focusing on how we consume everything from energy to food to clothes. Here's one such article from the UN, and another from Earth Watch. This article from Circular does a great job of putting numbers on a couple otherwise abstract ideas, such as limiting purchases of new clothing to three items per year. A couple crucial but commonly overlooked actions are **voting with the environment in mind** (government officials with climate/environment plans are a must going forward) and **divesting from fossil fuels** (what does your retirement portfolio include? If you haven't asked for it to be otherwise, chances are fossil fuel companies and/or their investors are on the list!). Do some exploring to see what kinds of changes are feasible for you.

Get involved in community climate action

There are lots of good ways to get involved in climate action around Kalamazoo. This article has some good general suggestions around community involvement. Kalamazoo has a chapter of the Citizens Climate Lobby, and volunteering can be as simple as making a weekly phone call to local government. The Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition and the Michigan Climate Action Network are amazing organizations with opportunities for people of all ages to get involved.

But it doesn't have to have 'climate' in the name to be climate action — what

organizations exist around other topics we've covered in our series, like health equity, climate change & health resilience, and food? For example, Zoo City Farm & Food Network uses a food sovereignty approach to developing a sustainable and just food system for all, right here in Kalamazoo (they do ask a membership fee for some forms of participation, but supporting by donating or spreading the word is also impactful!). KVCC is also doing great work in helping transform our local food system, and Kalamazoolocal.org provides a wonderful list of environment-related groups and organizations to get involved in, including everything from vegan to beekeeping to birdwatching to biodiversity groups!

Wishing there was a community group covering a different area? Create your own! Start a climate cafe and meet for coffee (or drinks!) to chat about solutions. Create a repair club that connects people with different repairing skills so that we can repair our items instead of purchasing new ones. Or whatever strikes your fancy — make it as formal or informal as you like.

Be creative, have fun, and rest!

There is not set way to be an activist, and articles and newsletters can only instruct us so far. If your way to activism is through gardening, or other restorative practices, do that. If you love to write or paint and want to start a climate change blog or visual project, do that. Just be creative, lean into what you love doing, and make sure you rest enough.

You are a part of it

When we don't work directly in a climate-related field, or if environmental or climate change activities aren't currently a big part of our identity, it can be difficult to churn up the interest and the time/energy to invest in climate activism. It can also make us feel out of place around people who do. And that's perfectly reasonable — however, I'd also like to challenge it a little with this thought: environmental and climate change-related issues impact and will continue to impact all of us. So, with this last issue of the Climate Change & Health Series, I'd like to challenge everyone to consider themselves inside the circle of environmental issues, with much to lose as well as much to gain — as well as power — as well as community.

Consider dipping a toe into climate action, perhaps by changing some personal habits. Consider bringing it up with the people closest to you and seeing what they think. If you're already participating in climate action, consider inviting in those who aren't, and consider whether you like how you're doing it, or whether there's a path to it you might enjoy more — because enjoyment is important. Considering ourselves a part of it might just be what we need to set the fire beneath us.

Let's talk

This month, talk to your colleagues about climate activism:

- Do they consider themselves a climate activist?
- Have they made any personal changes as climate action?
- Are they involved in any cool community groups around climate and/or the environment and/or wildlife?
- If they answered yes to any of these questions, do they enjoy the activism they do?