

Tips to Keep Kids Thinking Green

When I was growing up, the health of the environment was far from top of mind. The world I knew and played in every day was taken for granted. When I had my own children, I became a little more environmentally astute. I started with recycling, hoping that engaging my children in that practice, might have an impact. As my awareness evolved, I realized the important role parents play in educating their children on ways to preserve their future and their world.



Environmental educator David Sobel said, “One transcendent experience in nature is worth a thousand nature facts.” Studies have shown that when children are connected to nature between the ages of 5 and 10, they’re more likely to develop more compassion about their environment, a compassion they’ll likely carry throughout their lives. So what can you do to help your child develop an interest in environmental preservation? The following steps show how easy it can be!

Create a Nature Trip

Go for a nature walk, picking up cans, bottles, paper along

the way, all of which can be recycled. This exercise will raise awareness about the damage from littering and encourage personal responsibility for keeping the earth clean. A nature field trip is also a great way to motivate children to ask questions about flowers, birds, trees, and more. The more children know about the life cycle, the more interested they will become in preserving it.

Start a Garden



Getting kids involved in the food that comes into the house naturally improves their food choices, thus reducing the risk of obesity. Further, teaching kids to garden and allowing them to choose what vegetables they would like to grow, encourages healthy eating habits and a dedication to locally grown, seasonal foods.

Visit a Recycling Plant

Try taking your children to a recycling plant where they can witness the recycling process from garbage to product. Many plants offer tours, so check your local community. Kids will find it fascinating, and they will better understand the importance of recycling.

Create a Compost Bin

Composting is an ideal way to instill a sense of environmental advocacy in children. No matter where you live, you can compost. Plus, kids love it! Composting is such a great exercise for kids because they can witness the entire cycle of the food off their plate (that would normally go into a landfill) into useful soil that is garden ready. By

composting, children will learn to value organic wastes as a resource instead of thinking it is useless garbage. Composting is a great way to empower your children by helping them understand how their actions can have a positive effect on the environment.

Turn Off Lights and Preserve Water

Kids are notorious for leaving lights on, and as they advance into the junior high years, showers go on forever. The best way to teach children the value of saving resources is to make a game of it. For example, every time a light is left on or a shower goes beyond a certain limit, they have to put 5 cents in a jar for each slip-up. Conversely, if they haven't left any lights on and have honored the water limitation, 5 cents goes in to the family jar. At the end of the month, the family can select a fun way to spend the money, maybe even donate it to an environmental effort.

Remember, children want to help. And if they can do something that grownups do, they're in. Not only will you be teaching by example, you'll be allowing them to get involved and connected to Mother Earth. They're never too young or too old to for you to teach them about the value of preserving their planet for their future.