

Becoming active

I feel very strongly but I don't know what to do. I don't know where to start. I'm so small and the problems are so big. What can I do? My life's so busy, I just can't find the time.

We all have doubts and worries and feel powerless about the huge problems we face today. The tasks that need doing to make the world a peaceful, just and environmentally sustainable place are enormous! But there are things we can do to overcome paralysis and start acting effectively for change.

Analysis

Be realistic. Don't try to solve the world's problems by yourself. Remember, the deeper the change the longer it takes. Some problems are unlikely to be solved in the short-term. The transatlantic slave trade took 100 years to abolish. Early campaigners, such as the Quaker John Woolman, died before any visible change had occurred, but the eventual abolition of the slave trade couldn't have happened without their work.

Analyse how big a change is required. Is the aim to relieve the problem or solve it? Some campaigns, such as those against poverty, may concentrate on aid to those who are suffering. Others, say on climate change, will take a massive shift of hearts, minds and lifestyles to resolve the problem. Some campaigns are for limited changes, for example for supermarkets to stock more fair-trade chocolate. All of these are necessary and valuable contributions towards change.

Analyse what needs to happen to bring the change about that you wish to see. What small steps can you take towards it?

Follow your enjoyment and doors will open!

Don't worry about finding a special, unique contribution. Lots of things need doing by lots of people. But do avoid doing things that are not your strength. Use things you are good at, things you enjoy doing – it'll make you more effective.

Take some time to identify your talents. Some of them may be hidden. Are there things you haven't tried yet? Your campaigning work could at the same time be a process for self-development.

You may feel there are many issues you'd like to be active on – they are all inter-related. What makes you feel so strongly that you are moved to action? Is there someone you know who shares your views? We can be more effective working with others than on our own. Is there an existing group you could work with? We often join groups because we know someone already involved, or we agree to do something small and get sucked in, or they only meet just round the corner so it's convenient. These are all valid reasons for getting involved. And, no you don't have to be an expert, very few people are.

Prioritise

All too often we spread ourselves too thin. We receive leaflets and information from a multitude of organisations; we dip our toes into a range of campaigns. It's more effective to do only those things that we have time for and really want to do. Maybe it's time to weed out and focus. What should I concentrate on? What area can I make more of a difference in?

Overcome blocks and get support

Take some time to identify where you are now:

What is stopping you becoming active?

Identify the blocks and see if there are ways around them.

Do you need to try a different task?

Where is your support?

If you don't have enough support can you find some more?

It can be hugely empowering and liberating to act on something we feel concerned about. A simple act like signing a petition can make us feel more positive – and often that's where our campaigning work starts. Go with your feeling. You *can* make a difference!

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