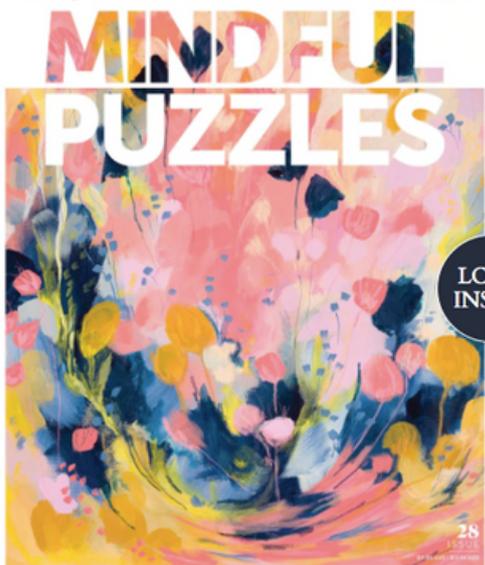


Em's Writing Samples



Income streams
Client work
Freelance work

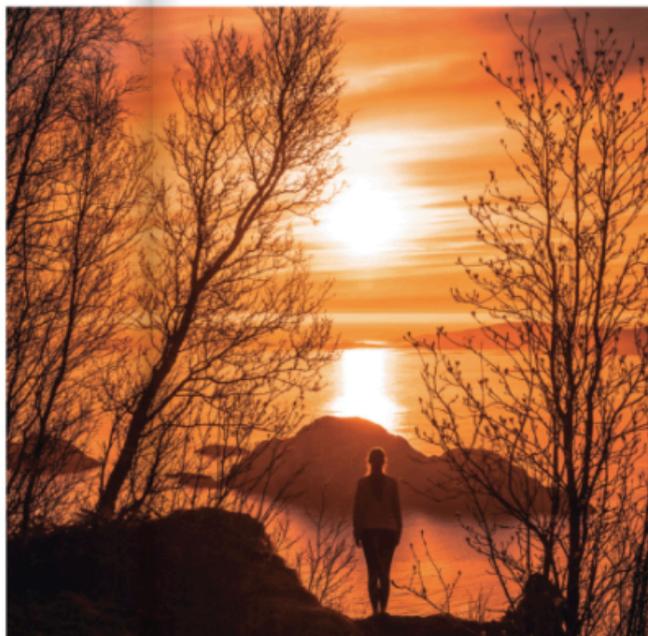


Uncomfortably Numb

Choosing hope in the face of eco-anxiety is a powerful way to deal with overwhelm - and makes it more likely that we'll feel up for the challenges of changing, too.

While I'm typically against assumptions, I think it's fairly safe to assume that you care - deeply - about our planet. Me too. Which is why I can also confidently guess that you have experienced eco-anxiety before. Me too. Correction: all of us, too. A 2018 Yale University report found that 21 percent of people in the US were "very worried" about climate change. Anecdotally, I see it etched on the faces of friends, acquaintances, and skeptical in-laws that once fobbed off my concerns as hyperbolic worry. Greta will attest that it's worse for our younger generations: a study from that same year found that 87 percent of tweens were "extremely concerned" about the planetary conditions they're set to inherit. Setting aside the indisputable implications of anxiety on health, all this eco-anxiety holds another risk: the apathy it breeds. Because if there's no hope, then there's no need to try. But, dear reader, there is hope for our planet. It'll be a nail-biting sprint to the finish, but, as any athlete worth their salt will tell you, mindset is the most important asset for winning the race. So, let's get our mindsets right.

DON'T TURN THE PAIN INTO SUFFERING
Buddha once said that pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional. Confronting the truth of our circumstances is painful (we're in a pickle), and humans tend not to like pain. We're pleasure-seeking creatures, biologically programmed to avoid discomfort, and we're really, rather fond of this whole survival gig! So, the existential threat of the climate emergency triggers a natural impulse to numb the pain, which manifests in many ways (distraction, leaning on crutches, feigning disinterest, etc.). This brings superficial relief; however, our powerful subconscious minds refuse to let us truly relax. It niggles. The path that promises to bypass pain, instead leads to suffering. The solution to this quandary is paradoxical: the secret to alleviating your pain is to welcome it in. Your feelings are not only valid but they last, on average, 90 seconds (*shocked face emoji*). To prevent pain congealing into suffering, commit to simply feeling it. It's healthier, it's harder, and it makes you way more helpful in the long-term... if you can just get through the next 90 seconds of pain.



Uncomfortably Numb

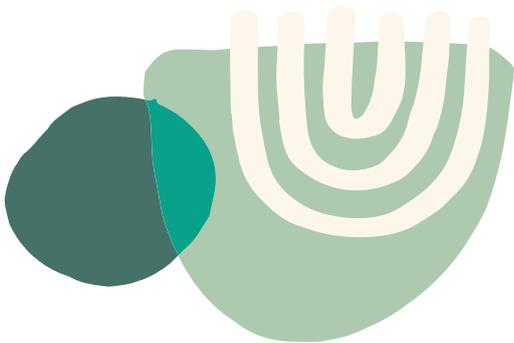
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DO THE VERY SMALL THING, CONSISTENTLY

Like every dating profile and/or canine, I love walks along the beach. However, back in 2012, I found myself finishing my daily dawdles in a profound state of despair. Why? Plastic. Thanks to a few startling documentaries, plastic pollution was firmly in my consciousness; what I hadn't noticed before, I now saw **everywhere**. The ostrich in me wanted to stick my head in the sand and ignore it, but there was so much bloody microplastic that my ignorance wasn't even blissful! So I did the only other option available: something. I started walking with a duffle bag and picking up the plastic as I went. Instantly, my anxiety evolved. I wasn't solving the entire, nebulous problem, but I was still in the ring. My daily efforts accumulated into more resilience, more impact, more hope. When the problem is too big; start small. Tiny seeds always sprout into something bigger.



*Look for the
helpers. You will
always find
people who are
helping.*

FRED ROGERS

CURATE YOUR MEDIA CONSUMPTION

When I was younger, checking the time went like this: wonder what the time is, look at my watch, done! I know the time. Nowadays, it's different: I wonder what the time is, check my phone, check the news while I'm there, read a terrifying headline, spin off into an unstoppable orbit of panic and break a cold sweat, forget to check the time. While smartphones are incredible, they do come with perils, like platforms and apps vying for our precious (lucrative) attention, often by preying on our fears. The knowledge that we are the pawns in this game is powerful. Safeguard yourself by scaffolding clear rules around what news you consume and for how long; a specific time and (importantly) a duration for scrolling. Choose credible sources that communicate facts rather than ideology. When it comes to identifying impartial sources, the first rule of thumb is that the news should be a little boring to read/watch. Second? If the commentator is yelling at the camera, proceed with caution.

STAY SOLUTIONS FOCUSED

After the assassination of Robert Kennedy, children's host Mister Fred Rogers told his young audience that "when I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."". The advice stands the test of time. Whenever I find myself floored by an issue (like overfishing, deforestation, environmental racism) I look for the helpers. Instead of a knee jerk, socially-conditioned response to "save the world", I choose to find the people already doing the work, on the ground - and I always do; how wonderful.



rewilding the world

Nature's ability to restore its precious ecosystems, if we humans allow it, is the basis of a hopeful conservation theory, writes Emily Enlens.

WORDS EMILY ENLENS

If you had told me at the beginning of 2020 that, within a few short months, people would disappear from our streets and be replaced by wild animals, I'd have been intrigued by the concept but ultimately concerned for your sanity. I'd have been the fool, because here we are. As our global community isolates to stop the spread of COVID-19, we're indeed seeing urban settings looking a little wilder, with animals slowly edging back to areas previously only claimed by humans.

While these incongruous appearances of our wildlife are heartwarming, locking down all of humankind is unrealistic and undesirable. However, it has displayed that when given space to breathe, the natural world can recover - and that's the bedrock of a hopeful conservation theory, fast growing in popularity around the world: rewilding. A term popularised by conservation biologists Michael Soule and Reed Noss in 1998, it's just plain good manners - a concerted effort to repair natural spaces that have been damaged by human development. As author George Monbiot states in his *Manifesto for Rewilding the World*, "It's about abandoning the Biblical doctrine of dominion which has governed our relationship with the natural world." Rewilding is not simply a nature-lover's pipe dream - there's plenty of evidence from around the world that shows how reintroducing species is transforming the face, and future, of conservation.

WOLVES IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING

one of the most famous rewilding examples comes from Yellowstone National Park. Back in the 1920s, the last grey wolf in the ecosystem removed, with the sole predator of wild animal species that had previously been hunted upon by humans. This was not the case. Apex predators play a key role in the balance of ecosystems. Without the wolves, the elk population boomed and so did their appetite. They devoured moose, on which eliminated the food and shelter of other forest species dependent upon the forest. With the wolves gone, the forest was dying.

TIGERS IN BHUTAN

Bhutan is a tiny country nestled between the bottom of two giants (India and China), boasting one of the most intact sustainability records in the world. The Buddhist nation has a deep reverence for the natural world. That being said, human development cannot completely avoid some environmental impact, which the expanding nation discovered in the 1990s. As a way of mitigating the impact, enabling humans and nature to flourish beside each other, the Royal Government of Bhutan introduced a network of biological corridors in 1993. These eight corridors connected every national park establishment of the corridors. The 2014-15 tiger surveys previously been seen - with photographic evidence of tigers using the corridors to move between the parks. One tagged tiger was even pinged at the southernmost border of Bhutan (70 metres above sea level) and later tracked up in the Himalayas (over 4000 metres above sea level). The World Wildlife Fund reported that in 2015 only 390 tigers remained in the wild, however this is expected to change, with Bhutan joining other countries in a bid to double the population by 2022.

BEAVERS IN SCOTLAND

when I think of Scotland, beavers don't come to mind. I see tarts, I see haggis, I see golf. I do not see a buck-toothed, semi-aquatic rodent sitting atop a log pile. However, surprisingly, they're as native to Scotland as Billy Connolly (though they swear far less, I'm told). Sadly, the Eurasian

When given the space to breathe, the natural world can recover.

beaver, which is native to the United Kingdom, was hunted to extinction for fur and glandular oil and disappeared from Scotland some 300 years ago. Then, in 2003 a ground-breaking conservation project, the Scottish Beaver Trial, released 18 beavers back into the Knapdale forest for the monitored five years. While a poll saw that five percent of local residents opposed the reintroduction of beavers (due to their potential impact on local ecosystems), the vast majority of respondents supported the beavers. In the final report, researchers found that the beavers through the landscape, their reintroduction regulated problematic flooding and lodged, and new wetlands extending wildlife such as voles, otters and waterfowl back to the woodland. The trial was such a success that in 2018 the Scottish Government declared the beaver a protected species.

TROUT IN SOUTH LONDON

The River Wandse winds through Croydon in South London before joining the Thames and was once a bustling highway for a plethora of factories and some 90 mills, many of which returned the river's favour by dumping their waste of toxic chemicals into it. The National Rivers Authority also streamlined the river, using earthmovers, removing any natural features from the river, and scarring the delicate aquatic ecosystem. The damage was evident in 1934 when the last brown trout was fished from the water.

However, hope drifted upstream when The Wandse Trust was founded in 2000 - driven by local anglers saddened by the impact of human activity on the river's flow. A major part of the river's rejuvenation included a reintroduction of trout, by targeting invasive species, educating the local community and reconstructing the riverbed with gravel. The Wandse Trust Environmental Agency conducted a survey that saw no trout species present in the river, however, by 2005 they found 870 trout in the same survey location. In a trophic cascade similar to that of the grey wolves of Yellowstone, the reintroduction of a predator also increased populations of freshwater shrimp, insects and other smaller fish species. The River Wandse, now a vibrant ecosystem attraction, is a modern miracle of a river renewed and rewilded.

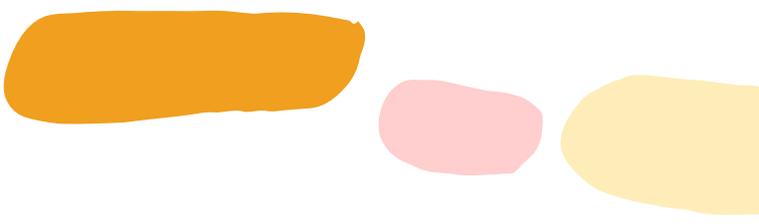
Rewilding the World

Issue 46

If you had told me at the beginning of 2020 that, within a few months, people would have disappeared from our streets and had been replaced by wild animals, I would have been intrigued by the concept but ultimately concerned for your sanity. I would have been the fool, because here we are. As our global community separates, together, to stop the spread of Covid-19, we are indeed seeing modern settings looking a little wilder. Herds of Great Orme Kashmiri goats were seen perched in garden hedges in Llandundo, Wales. Prides of lions are lounging around on the warm bitumen of South Africa. A kangaroo comically bounding down the main streets of the Adelaide CBD.

While these wacky appearances of our wildlife are heartwarming, of course, locking down all of humankind is unrealistic and undesirable. However it has displayed that, when given space to breathe, the natural world can recover - and that is the bedrock of a hopeful new conservation theory, fast-growing

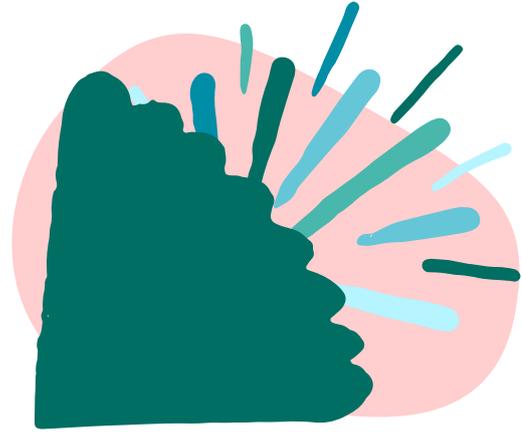
in popularity around the world: rewilding. A term coined by Conservation Biologists Michael Soule and Reed Noss in 1998, rewilding is the mass restoration of ecosystems. In my opinion it's just plain good manners - a concerted effort to repair natural spaces that have been damaged by human development. As Guardian Columnist George Monbiot states in his *Manifesto for Rewilding the World*, "It's about abandoning the Biblical doctrine of dominion which has governed our relationship with the natural world". Rewilding is not simply a nature-lovers pipedream, there is plenty of evidence from around the world which shows how reintroducing species is transforming the face and future of conservation.



WOLVES IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, WYOMING.

One of the most famous rewilding examples comes from Yellowstone National Park. Back in the 1920's the last Gray Wolf pack were hunted to extinction. With the apex predator of the ecosystem removed, many expected the forest to flourish with animal species that had previously been preyed upon by the wolves. This was not the case. Apex predators play a key role in the balance of ecosystems. Without the wolves, the elk population boomed and so did their appetite. They devoured any flower, grass, berry and sapling they could get their mouths on which eliminated the food and shelter of other species dependant upon the forest. With the wolves gone, the forest was dying.

Then in 1995 US and Canadian wildlife officials reintroduced 21 wolves back into the park. What followed was astonishing. The wolves quickly reduced the elk population which saw a direct increase in the growth of bushes and trees. Scavengers such as bears, ravens, coyotes and eagles, returned to feed on the elk carcasses. In reports from Tufts University trees grew 5 times higher in their previous years due to the elk not feasting on the nutritious saplings. Wildlife surveys even saw that with the elk easing the consumption of waterside vegetation like cottonwood, beavers increased jumping from one colony in 2001 to at least nine in 2017. The rewilding of Yellowstone National Park is one of hope and healing.



TIGERS IN BHUTAN

Bhutan is a tiny country nestled between the bosom of two giants (India and China), boasting one of the most stellar sustainability records in the world. The Buddhist nation has a deep reverence for the natural world as shown in Article 8 in their Constitution where it's stated that a fundamental duty of every citizen is to care for the natural world. That being said, human development cannot completely avoid some environmental impact, which the expanding nation discovered in the 1990's. As a way of mitigating the impact, enabling humans and nature to flourish beside each other, the Royal Government of Bhutan introduced a network of Biological Corridors in 1999. These eight corridors connected every National Park in Bhutan creating natural routes between them. Since the establishment of these corridors, the 2014-15 tiger surveys found tigers present in areas of Bhutan that they had never previously been seen, with photographic evidence of them using the corridors to move between the parks. One tagged tiger was even pinged at the southernmost border of Bhutan (70 metres above sea level) and later tracked up in the Himalayas (over 4000 metres above sea level)! The World Wildlife Fund reported that in 2018 only 3,890 tigers remained in the wild however this is expected to change with Bhutan joining 12 other countries in a bid to double this population by 2022.



BEAVERS IN SCOTLAND

Maybe it's just me but, when I think of Scotland, beavers don't come to mind. I see tartan, I see haggis, I see golf. I do not see a buck-toothed, semi-aquatic rodent sitting atop a log pile. However, surprisingly, they are as native to Scotland as Billy Connolly (though they swear far less, I'm told). Sadly the Eurasian Beaver, which is native to the United Kingdom, was hunted to extinction for their fur and glandular oil and disappeared from Scotland some 300 years ago... until recently that is. In 2009 a groundbreaking conservation project, The Scottish Beaver Trial, released 16 beavers back into the Knapdale Forest to be monitored for 5 years. While a YouGov poll saw that 5% of local residents opposed the reintroduction of beavers (due to their pesky habit of felling trees) they eventually were proven to positively impact the local ecosystem. In the final report, researchers found that the beavers transformed the landscape through the construction of dams, canals and lodges. Their reintroduction regulated problematic flooding, created new wetlands which attracted wildlife such as voles, otters and dragonflies back to the woodland. The trial was such a success that in 2016 the Scottish Government announced that the beaver were now a protected species of Scotland.

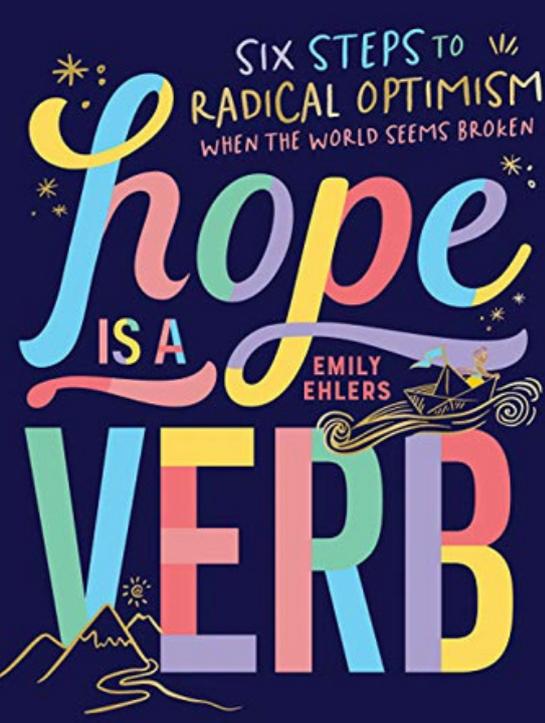
When given the space to breathe, the natural world can recover.

TROUT IN SOUTH LONDON

The River Wandle which winds through Croydon, South London, before joining the Thames was once a bustling highway for trout. However by 1801, it became the support system for a plethora of factories and some 90 mills, many of which returned the rivers favour by dumping their waste (made up of toxic chemicals and bleach) into it. The National Rivers Authority also "streamlined" the river and, with earthmovers, removed any natural features from the river, scarring the delicate aquatic ecosystem. The damage done was made evident in 1934 when the last Brown Trout was fished from the water.

However hope drifted upstream when The Wandle Trust was founded in 2000, driven by local anglers who were saddened by the pollution they were retrieving from their riverbed and due to noticing the way human activity impeded the rivers flow. A major part of the rivers rejuvenation included a reintroduction of trout. By targeting invasive species, educating the local community and reconstructing the riverbed with gravel the Wandle Trust started to see the positive impact of their efforts. In 2006 the Environmental Agency conducted a survey which saw no trout species present in the river, however by 2015 they found over 670 trout in the same survey location. In a similar trophic cascade that was described with the Gray wolves of Yellowstone, the reintroduction of a predator also increased populations of freshwater shrimp, insects and other smaller fish species.

The River Wandle, now a vibrant ecotourism attraction, is a modern miracle of a river renewed and rewilded.



Hope is a Verb: *extract*

When I was a little girl, every year I would hope that Santa would bring me one thing: A dolphin. Despite my extremely clear demands, Mr Claus never fulfilled his part of the deal, though to be fair, he did compensate with dolphin-themed gifts.

Clearly I didn't have the greatest grip on what hope actually was (nor on the basic needs of my favourite aquatic animals - namely, an ocean). I though hope was a letter addressed to the North Pole, a wish that i could simple cast out to the universe. All I had to do was wait until what I wanted was delivered to me with impeccable wrapping and free postage!

My definition of hope was wonky.

WHAT IS HOPE?

In the broadest of terms, hope is a deep desire for something to happen. A quick scan of the official definitions explains that hope also comes with a side serving of expectation; while nothing is guaranteed, the core of hope is the simple belief that whatever we hope for *could* happen.

Studies indicate that when people have hope they are better able to manage stress, cope with setbacks, think creatively and achieve their goals. It is also an essential component for learning, motivation and improvement of skills. Hopeful people are often happier and more resilient, and even recover more quickly from physical ailments (possibly because they are highly motivated to participate in their healing).

Hope is essential for us to live our lives to their fullest potential.

But let's be honest, a quick glance around our planet can be enough to quickly dampen any warm, fuzzy feelings of hope. Climate change, pandemics, racism, poverty, extreme weather, economic uncertainty - the list goes on.

No wonder so many people are struggling with a sense that the sky is falling. No wonder so many of us are experiencing anxiety and even panic about the future. When times are hard, it's a hell of a lot easier to lost hope than it is to hold on to it. How can we feel hopeful when the world seems so... hopeless?

HOPE IS A VERB

Expecting to simply 'have' hope is a type of magical thinking that puts you at the mercy of your circumstances, as well as a million other precarious factors (such as: which headline did you happen to scroll past five minutes ago?). Waiting for hope is like waiting for a portly gentleman to drop a dolphin down your chimney; it's a wish, unlikely to come true.

But what if instead of waiting for hope to arrive, and in the meantime letting apathy and anxiety overwhelm us, we actively chose to be hopeful? What if we nurtured hope like a tiny flame, feeding it with new visions and inspiring possibilities, daily acts of kindness and courage, stronger communities and a deeper sense of purpose, until that flame started to glow on its own?

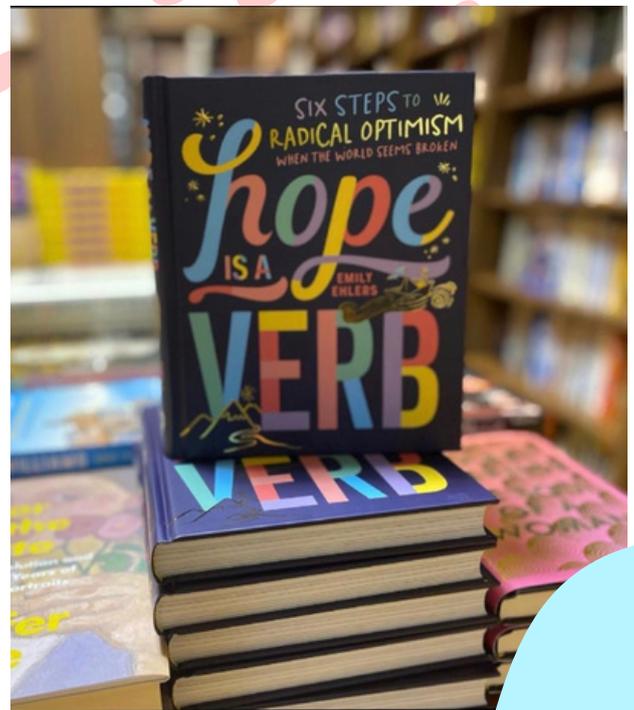
For hope to be meaningful, effective and empowering, it requires your participation. Hope isn't just something you have, it's something you do. Now, more than ever, we need individuals and communities to not only wish for change, but also to use it to light the way into the future.

This is active hope. This is hope as a verb.

I have experienced hopelessness before (and likely will again) and have learned to follow certain steps whenever the world feels dark. These steps always help me keep the flame lit, even if it's only a flicker. And as I feel stronger, that flicker rekindles back into a flame.

This book provides a framework to help you find and nurture your own flame of hope and, in turn, a sense of radical optimism for the future. Crazy? Maybe. Worth trying? You'd better believe it. Because we're all in this together. And our future depends on our ability to not only hope for a better world, but also to make it possible.

We are all that we have, but my gosh we have a lot. Let's go!



teen Breathe



It's a mood • Body positive • Friends forever • Gentle joy • PLUS inspirational prompt cards Jack of all trades • Cheers to you • Green thumbs up • Lighten your load • #DearTeenie

Change the story

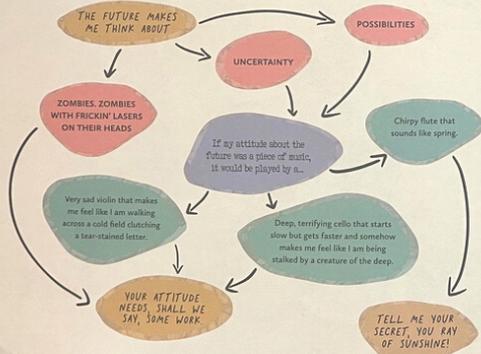
Issue 25

CHANGE THE STORY

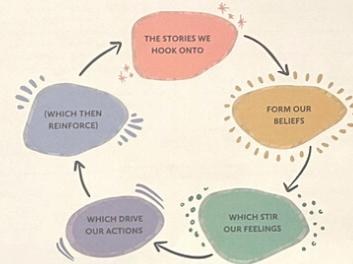
Our current collective attitude about the future is not one that makes us feel excited about heading there. But – unless we invent a time machine – we are moving forward whether we want to or not. For individuals and our global community to feel energised, we need a new narrative about

the possibilities of our planet and the people we share it with. Let's imagine this journey to the future like a road trip. We all know the power of the person in control of the music. Your attitude is the soundtrack of your life. Choose well.

DOES YOUR ATTITUDE ABOUT THE FUTURE NEED TO CHANGE?



THE ATTITUDE CYCLE



NEVER DOUBT THE POWER OF STORIES

Every culture (in the world and in history) is based on story. Stories are written, sung, lived, told, performed, and learned. They teach us about places we've never been, and inspire us to go on our own adventures. Stories shape our perspectives of the world. They can start wars, or end them. They can terrify, or inspire. If we believe the wrong story, it can keep us stuck. If we believe the right story, it can move us forward.

THE DANGER OF THE SINGLE STORY

When we hear ONE story on repeat, we start to believe it. But what if we are listening to the wrong story? Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie spoke of 'the danger of the single story' in her sensational TED Talk of the same name. Now a bestselling author, she remembered growing up as an avid reader in Nigeria. All the books she read were British or American and featured people with white skin and blue eyes who ate apples and drank ginger beer. Entranced by storytelling, she started to write her own stories. Her stories featured people with white skin and blue eyes who ate apples and drank ginger beer. This, despite the

fact that she was a girl with skin the colour of chocolate who ate mangoes and didn't even know what ginger beer was. The point is that she didn't know people like her could exist in literature. Single stories rob us of possibilities. They narrow our world view. When we intentionally choose to create new stories (in our lives and the world), we open ourselves up to new possibilities and maybe new endings. We are the plot twists the world has been waiting for.

HUMANS NEED STORIES

They give us meaning, and meaning is what keeps us moving forward. It is not a 'bad attitude' that leads to apathy, it is simply the lack of a good story to keep us engaged. That's what keeps us going, even when we're tired. If we want to change our attitudes, we need better stories – about the future, about ourselves, about each other. What story have you been telling yourself about the future? What narrative have you absorbed? Does that story serve you?

PLOT YOURSELF ALONG THE SCALES BELOW

DESPAIR ————— **HOPE**
EXHAUSTED ————— **ENERGISED**

If you're leaning to the left, it's likely you have a negative prognosis of the future. This is where you need to reframe your story: look at it in a different way. (This is not to say feelings of exhaustion or despair aren't valid, but if that's the only track your mind is playing, it will burn you out. We don't need martyrs, we need you.)

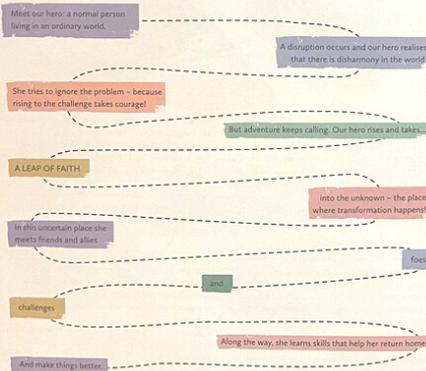
GIVE YOUR NARRATOR A PEP TALK

Your inner voice is the narrator of your life story. If it keeps pointing out everything that's wrong with the world, that's all you will see. But what if your narrator took a different approach? Here are a few questions to help you reframe your story about the future:

- Could this be a new beginning?
- What could the future look like (the future you want)?
- List three people you see doing good in the world.
- List three things that give you hope.
- List three positive things that you could do to help.

YOUR HERO'S JOURNEY

In 1949, Joseph Campbell saw that there was one story structure that showed up over and over: the hero's journey.



RETHINK YOUR GENRE

Philosophers have long said that one of the most important decisions each of us makes is whether we believe we live in a hostile or friendly universe. Are you narrating your life as a comedy or a tragedy? If you could pick a new genre for your story, what would it be?

- HORROR
- FEEL GOOD
- COMEDY
- TRAGEDY
- ADVENTURE
- ACTION

EMBRACE PLOT TWISTS

As the hero's journey reminds us, life is not linear. When challenges arise (as they do in every good story), they might feel unsurmountable. But if we stay focused on the bigger picture, we can accept that challenges are just part of the journey. When we face a barrier, we can choose to stay stuck, or we can look for the light and do whatever we can to keep moving towards it.

REFRAME YOUR LANGUAGE

The words we use are important. We can carefully select our language to ignite fear or inspire hope, to divide or unite. Often, changemakers and motivators use military or sporting terms. You know, the strong beats the weak, the winners beat the losers, good conquers evil. This thinking relies on polarity: black versus white.

But the truth is grey. If we use language that reinforces that there are winners and losers, there will always be conflict. When our language is about destruction, we focus on what we'll destroy. But when our language is about creation, we focus on what we'll build. Not only is this more inspiring, it is also more instructive.

INSTEAD OF THIS

SAY THAT

LET'S FIGHT THAT	LET'S CHANGE THIS
DESTROY THE OLD	BUILD THE NEW
WE SHOULD ABOLISH THAT	LET'S REIMAGINE THIS
I CAN'T DO THAT	I CAN'T DO THIS YET
WE'RE DOOMED	WE'RE LEARNING
EVERYTHING IS BROKEN	WHAT IS THIS HERE TO TEACH ME?

Change your story and you change your life. Change your life and you change the world



This is an edited extract from *Hope is a Verb: Six Steps to Radical Optimism When the World Seems Broken* by Emily Ekens. Published by Murdoch Books, RRP \$29.99



Plant-based for beginners

Issue 45

Last year, the United Nations released a document from 107 scientists that urged the world to curb our consumption of animal products due to their profound impact on the environment. We all know that commercial farming contributes to planet-warming emissions and is one of the key drivers of deforestation - indeed, the devastating Amazon rainforest fires of 2019 were directly linked to large-scale cattle farming. But for many, the thought of eating less meat and dairy is overwhelming. Where do you even start?

Luckily, I've got you covered - here are some simple ways to start transitioning to a diet of fewer animal products and more environmental gold stars.

CROWD IT OUT

When people think of a vegetarian diet their mind typically goes straight to the once-favourite foods you're not allowed to eat - and that list of ingredients to avoid can be very daunting. However, there's another way to look at the diet that removes the deprivation factor: crowding out. Crowding out is a revolutionary theory where instead of focusing on taking meat out, focus on adding more vegetables in. So when you're building a meal or filling your plate, start with the plant-based options. The more you add, the less room you literally have for the options you're trying to avoid. It's a ridiculously simple way to reframe the way you look at your meals. For a crowd-pleaser (even when it's a crowd of men and children) boil some red lentils and add them to any meal that you use mince for - it boosts both the taste and the fibre.

Plant-based for beginners

WHETHER YOU'RE AIMING TO GO VEGAN OR SIMPLY REDUCE YOUR MEAT AND DAIRY INTAKE, WRITER EMILY EHLERS HAS SOME INNOVATIVE IDEAS FOR GETTING MORE PLANTS ONTO YOUR PLATE.

WRITTEN BY EMILY EHLERS

122 PEPPERMINT MAGAZINE

Last year, the United Nations released a document from 107 scientists that urged the world to curb our consumption of animal products due to their profound impact on the environment. We all know that commercial farming contributes to planet-warming emissions and is one of the world's key drivers of deforestation - indeed, the devastating Amazon rainforest fires of 2019 were directly linked to large-scale cattle farming. But for many, the thought of eating less meat and dairy is overwhelming. Where do you even start?

Luckily, I've got you covered - here are some simple ways to start transitioning to a diet of fewer animal products and more environmental gold stars!

Crowd it out

When people think of a vegetarian diet, their mind typically goes straight to the once-favourite foods they're not allowed to eat - and that list of ingredients to avoid can be daunting. However, there's another way to look at it that removes the deprivation factor: crowding out. Crowding out is a revolutionary theory where, instead of focusing on taking meat out, you focus on adding more vegetables in. So when you're building a meal or filling your plate, start with the plant-based options. The more you add, the less room you have for the options you're trying to avoid. It's a ridiculously simple way to reframe how you look at your meals. For a crowd-pleaser (even when it's a crowd of men and children), boil some red lentils and add them to any meal that you use mince for - it boosts both the taste and the fibre.

Vegan until six

If you're not ready to go the whole hog (ha) and completely eliminate meat and dairy, try reducing it to one meal a day. During the day, whether you're working in an office or wrangling kids, pick some standard recipes to veganise. There are plenty of plant-based breakfast options for muffins, toast toppings and smoothies - whip up some coffee and avocado in a pea protein shake, and you can even make scrambled 'egg' using silken tofu. Lunch can be made in advance with veggie-packed soups, pasta, fritters or casseroles. That said, is there anything more sublime than a simple salad sandwich bursting with all the colours of the rainbow, a swipe of mustard, and avocado instead of butter? By simply going vegan until 6pm, you're reducing your meat and dairy consumption by two thirds, which is an amazing start.

For many, the thought of eating less meat and dairy is overwhelming. Where do you even start?

It can be thoroughly depressing to cook your regular meals without your once-favourite ingredients - whether it's baking all day, daily, while some leafy greens and chives can take the craving, it can be hard to find truly healthy substitution options that aren't wrapped in plastic. I found the easiest solution was to explore new cuisines that were so busy they didn't leave me wishing for the animal-derived ingredients I once loved. Asian cuisines are typically dairy-free and are easy to adapt to a vegan diet, especially Indonesian, Vietnamese and Thai. For Indian dishes that call for cubed paneer cheese, substitute with a firm tofu without compromising the flavour. Lebanese, Turkish and Mexican food are also great options.

Go cold turkey (without the turkey)

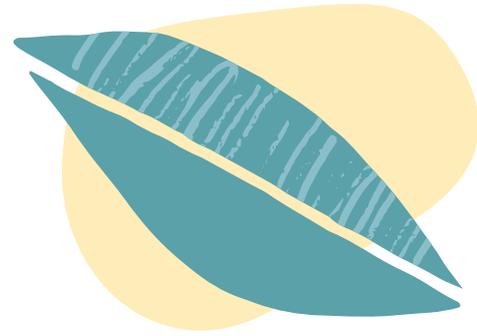
As the saying goes, going cold turkey is easy - and I've definitely found this to be true when it comes to the consumption of animal products. If you're trying to go completely vegan, throwing yourself in the deep end and there you go! The thing about going cold turkey is that you're pushed to try new recipes or mix up old ones. And if the thought of never having chocolate (or meat) or other delicious food ever again feels too big, think smaller. Set yourself a time limit (say 30 days) and consider this an adventure in wellbeing. You can always reassess later. Good luck!

VEGAN UNTIL SIX

If you're not ready to go the full hog (ha!) and completely eliminate meat, try reducing it to one meal a day. During the day, whether you are working in an office or wrangling kids, pick some standard recipes to vegan-ise. There are plenty of plant-based breakfast options for mueslis, toast toppers and smoothies - I whizz up some coffee and avocado in my pea protein shake, and you can even make scrambled "egg" using silken tofu. Lunch can be made in advance with veggie-packed soups, pasta, fritters or casseroles. That said, is there anything more sublime than a simple salad sandwich bursting all the colours of the rainbow, a swipe of mustard & avocado instead of butter? Simply going vegan until 6 you are reducing your meat consumption by two thirds which is an amazing start!

CULTURE YOUR CUISINE

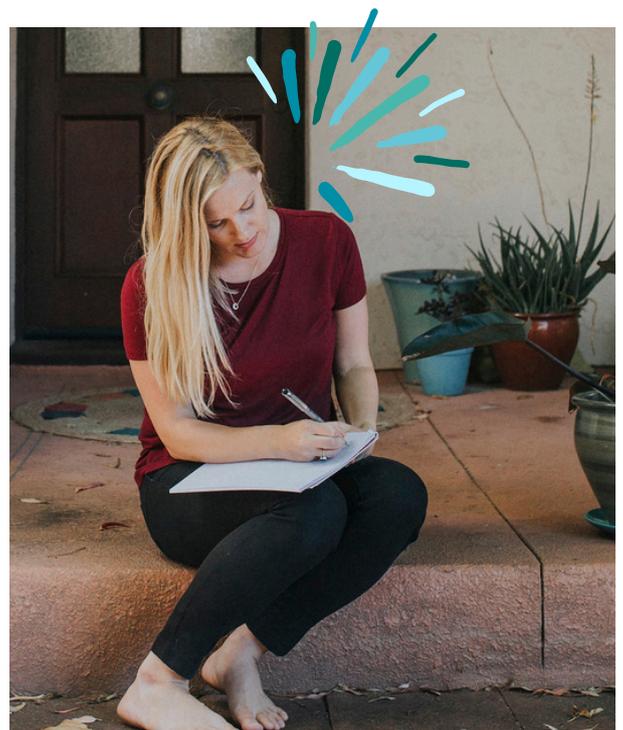
It can be thoroughly depressing to cook your regular meals without your once-favourite ingredients - cheddar, I'm looking at you, baby. While some faux meats and cheeses can sate the craving, it can be hard to find truly healthy substitutes or options that aren't wrapped in plastic. I found that the easiest solution was to explore new cuisines which were so tasty that they didn't leave me wishing for the animal-derived ingredients I once loved. Asian cuisines are typically dairy-free and are easy to adapt to a vegan diet, especially Indonesian, Vietnamese and Bhutanese. For Indian dishes that call for cubed paneer cheese, substitute with a firm tofu without compromising the flavour. Lebanese, Turkish and Mexican food are also great options.



GO COLD TURKEY (WITHOUT THE TURKEY)

The saying goes, 99% is hell but 100% is easy - and I've definitely found this to be true when it comes to the consumption of animal products. If you're trying to go completely vegan, throwing yourself in the deep end frees up the wasted energy of indecision and also prevents the old "i'll just have one square of chocolate" charade before you gorge on the entire block. Sometimes, out of sight really does mean out of mind. The thing about going cold turkey is that you're pushed to try new recipes or to mix up old ones.

And if the thought of never having chorizo/camembert/insert other delicious food ever again feels too big, think smaller. Set yourself a time limit (say, 30 days) and consider this an adventure in wellbeing. You can always reassess later. Good luck!





So you want to be a climatarian

Issue 49

When it comes to reducing our impact on the planet, there is one thing that we are all clear on: what we eat matters. Where it gets contentious, though, is defining what the most planet-friendly diet *actually* is. Dinner party conversation around this topic can quickly devolve into fierce debate which, in my experience at least, becomes less about discussion and more about winning the argument. Conversations that could have opened minds, end up snapping them shut. This is not surprising because food is more than the sum of its parts - it is complex and deeply personal. Food is ritual, tradition, religion, culture, diet culture, allergies and intolerances. Our dietary choices are also significantly impacted by education, the political systems we live in, food security and the economic means we have to acquire it. Which means that if making better food choice something we all need to do (and it is) we need to create inclusive models to scaffold ourselves upon.

This is exactly why I turned climatarian. The Cambridge Dictionary defines a climatarian as “a person who chooses what to eat according to what is least harmful to the environment”. Unlike most diets, this isn’t a puritanical list of rules that you can hinge your self-worth or self-flagellation on. It’s a flexible, circumstantial and aspirational framework. It is a salve for anyone confused about what to eat - an invitation to try do *everything*, while acknowledging that this is not always possible. To my mind, it’s the dietary representation of Theodore Roosevelt’s famous quote that instructed us to “do what we can, with what we have, where we are”.

Let’s have a look at it, shall we?



EAT LESS MEAT

This is both the most controversial statement and the least. Scientifically and logically, the science is in. Emotionally and culturally, it can be hard for some to grapple with. Regardless, in 2019 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a report in which they identified plant-based diets as a key opportunity in mitigating climate change and recommended a reduction in meat consumption. As of 2013, Australia was on par with the United States for highest consumption of meat per capita. This is very much in keeping with findings that more developed countries (MDC's) lead to higher individual meat-consumption. Put another way – more wealth, more meat. Therefore, those of us with the agency and opportunity need to exercise restraint.

There are many ways to drastically reduce your meat consumption without going the whole hog, so to speak. Meat-free Monday was a campaign launched in 2009 by the McCartney family (helmed by Sir Paul of The Beatles) inviting people make one meal a week meat-free. Without minimizing the tremendous impact this campaign has had it is only a starting point and we must start extending its reach beyond Monday. The “Vegan ‘til 6” movement is another diet growing in popularity aiming to eliminate consumption of all animal products until dinnertime. Yet another technique that looks at meat consumption is called “crowding out”, a term borrowed from economic theory where you gradually reduce habitual meat consumption by adding more vegetables – not dissimilar to the way parents try to sneak as many vegetables into their children’s foods as possible.

If you don't want to forgo meat completely, then choosing 'better' meat is also important. Not all meat is created equal, so choosing a more sustainable option can certainly help lessen the environmental hit. Whether it's farmed more sustainably, locally or regeneratively, by choosing a type of meat that doesn't have quite the carbon 'hoofprint' of something like beef, or an alternate meat that isn't mass-farmed, you can still have your steak and eat it too.

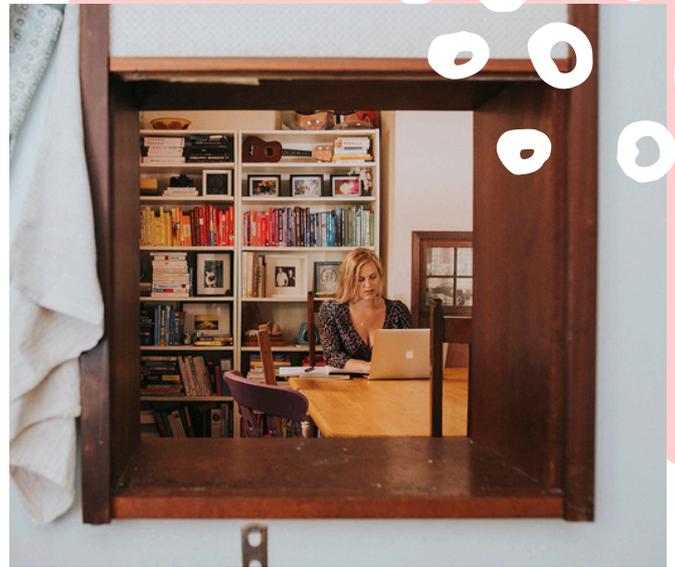


WASTE LESS

At a 2019 documentary screening, Sir David Attenborough was asked by a nervous five year old boy what he could do to save the world. His answer was simple: “Live the way you want to live, just don’t waste”. The topic of waste has thankfully been gaining a lot of publicity over the last few years as the evidence of this human habit becomes harder to ignore in our oceans and forests. Less obvious to the naked-eye is the significant effect of food waste (though, this too is changing), and its reduction now makes up part of the UN's official Sustainable Development Goals. The IPCC report stated that about one third of food produced is lost or wasted.

The Australian Government regularly cites the fact that the average Australian throws out the equivalent of one in five bags of shopping. But the Climatarian Diet asks us to open up our scope of thinking to understand that it is not just the food that is being wasted. When you toss a squidgy zucchini that was hiding in the back of your fridge, you're also tossing all the resources that are embedded within it. That zucchini represents farmland, lost habitat, water, energy, time, packaging and transportation. While it sounds corny, maybe if we looked at the humble zucchini with a bit more reverence for the journey it's taken to get to us, maybe we would be less hasty to waste-y.

To also must buy less and learn to store and preserve our produce better. Start to develop an understanding of what spoils quickest and either eat them first or store them better. The environmental benefits of embracing leftovers cannot be understated, either. A little bit of creativity goes a long way when it comes to reimagining and saving meals that would otherwise go to waste.



BECOME A LOCAVORE

It is a sign of the times that the age-old concept of “eating local” needs a trendy name, however that doesn’t change the fact that it’s catchy as hell. “Locavore” was coined in 2007 by a female-led environmental group in San Fransisco who pledged to only eat food produced within a 100-mile radius of their home. It was also popularized throughout history and marketed simply as #CommonSense.

It’s easy to assume that the food we eat comes from the closest possible source, however that is often not the case. Start to notice the place of origin labels at the supermarket. Where I live, a seemingly innocuous basket of kiwifruit, pomegranate and grapes has a better-stamped passport than I do and has travelled from California, Peru and New Zealand to get to me. By shopping locally you can not only reduce these food miles, but also strengthen your local economy and receive food that is nutritionally superior. Shopping locally requires the age-old art of being patient with time itself and choosing to cook your local seasonal foods. The easiest way to ensure that you are eating locally and seasonally is by shopping at farmers markets or co-ops and collectives.

SUPPORTING REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

When we think of “farms” it’s hard not to default to our kindergarten conditioning and imagine barnyards, hay and a literate spider in a maternal relationship with a piglet. However, modern farming is no longer a romantic partnership of human and nature and instead an economic matrix where everything is measured with an economic metric. Let me be clear, this is not to pass judgement on individual farmers who supply us with food in exchange for back-breaking work, with little economic gain. This is to say that the system is wrong and we are trapped in it alongside the farmer. In this watershed moment we find ourselves in, we need to enthusiastically support regenerative agriculture.

One of the key tenets of regenerative farming is the resolve to disturb nature as little as possible. Nature is not considered a trust fund with which we can constantly withdraw, but instead a partnership (and nature is the co-worker with the most experience!). It goes without saying that indigenous cultures have known and practiced this gentle agriculture for millennia. This is why so many are turning back to the wisdom of the First Nations people – a wisdom that has been passively ignored or actively damaged for far too long.

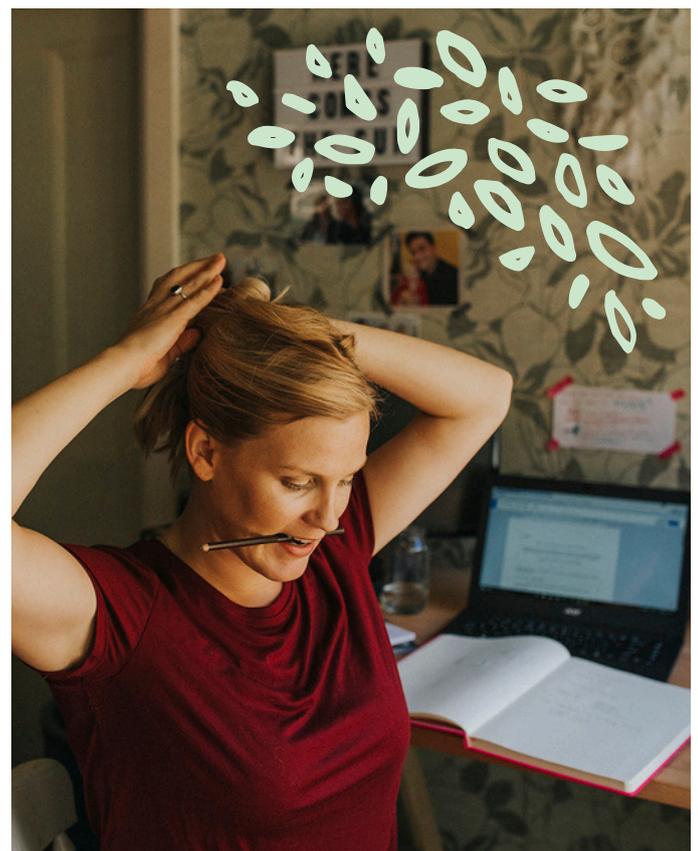
EMILY EHLERS

Writer

Both Jane Goodall and Sylvia Earle for the same reasons – they’re whip-smart women who educate on terrifying issues but still manage to leave you feeling empowered. With humour, wisdom and masterful storytelling, they inspire a deep reverence for the planet and our role on it.

Finding the regenerative farm in your area will take some leg-work, but I promise that it will be fruitful work (sometimes literally). When searching for these farms the following terms are good clues that you are on the right track: no till, permaculture, organic, biodynamic, agroforestry and indigenous land management. Some fantastic resources, if you are wanting to deepen your understanding, would be *Gather*, a film about Native Americans searching for food sovereignty, Damon Gameau's *2040* and the recent Netflix doco *Kiss the Ground* (though as much as we love the bonus Woody Harrelson narration, we must acknowledge the problematic way this film, by-and-large omits many First Nations voices in the quest for a solution).

Remember, researching the local producers in you area allows you to make connections with the people that produce your food and is away to immerse yourself into the food system that you are part of.





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