



INTRODUCTION

Global warming is changing our world. Severe hurricanes, tornadoes, heat waves, and flooding are becoming commonplace. The consequences, including loss of life, economic disruption, and population dislocation are growing each year. As individuals living on the planet at this moment in time, we face a challenge no generation has ever had to face. We need to dramatically change the manner in which we use the Earth's natural resources. And we need to do this soon or we will significantly increase the severity of climate-induced natural disasters.

The primary cause of global warming is carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels—gasoline, coal, oil, and natural gas—which we use to power our cars and homes and to produce the goods we consume. The typical American household generates 55,000 pounds of carbon dioxide annually. Taken collectively, US households directly produce about 8% of the planet's carbon dioxide emissions, and through our purchases we are indirectly responsible for another 17%. By contrast, the typical German household contributes 27,000 pounds and the average Swedish household's contribution is only 15,000 pounds. Clearly, we have much room for improvement.

If the bad news is that individual Americans are a major part of the problem, the good news is that we can also be a major part of the solution. By making specific, targeted changes to actions we already take every day, we can significantly reduce our CO₂ emissions.

If you're among those who understand the seriousness of our plight, you probably feel called to do something about it. And like a lot of us, you're now asking: Where do I begin? Which are the important actions to take? How do I take them? And if I do take them, will it really make a difference given the magnitude of the problem?

This book answers those questions. It will show you how, in just a single month, you can make enough simple adjustments to your lifestyle to reduce your annual CO₂ output by at least 5,000 pounds. And how, if you're interested, you can even reduce your CO₂ footprint to zero.

The program described in this book is based on a tried and true methodology grounded in extensive research. Over the past two decades, I have developed environmental behavior change programs that have helped several hundred thousand people demonstrably lessen their toll on the planet. American households using this simple methodology have reduced their environmental footprint by over 25% *and* sustained these changes over time.

Participants in these programs represent a cross-section of political and religious ideologies. They range from people who view themselves as environmentalists to those who just think it makes good sense to use resources more efficiently. What they all have in common is that they need help translating their good intentions into action.

An encouraging pattern emerged when I began working with social networks, faith communities, neighborhoods, civic groups, and workplaces. I observed that once the initial group of people took up the program, it would often achieve a tipping point and, through word-of-mouth, rapidly spread throughout that community. It often reached as many as 85% of the people in a particular sub-culture. Because most people want to do the right thing for the environment, there was no inherent resistance to participation. Once I discovered this desire among participants to share the program with others, I furthered the process along by providing simple tools for spreading it.





I believe that the issue of global warming is extraordinarily primed for this type of grassroots empowerment process. The daily effects of climate change combined with the continually rising costs of energy have gotten everyone's attention. People want to move out of helplessness and fear. They want to take matters into their own hands and become part of the solution.

When I asked participants in my environmental programs why they took time out of their busy lives to make these changes, the most common response was "to create a better future for my children and future generations." This aspiration is even more relevant for the issue of global warming.

If we ordinary Americans reduce our carbon dioxide footprint, we can have a disproportionate influence in turning the tide on global warming. When we, the consumers and voters, become part of the global warming solution, businesses and politicians will not be far behind. As the saying goes, when the people lead, the leaders will follow. And as America—the planet's greatest contributor to climate change—takes responsibility for reducing its carbon footprint, the impact will inevitably ripple out.

An extraordinary moment for change has arrived. Feedback from the Earth is telling us it is time to act. Al Gore's profound movie "An Inconvenient Truth" has created a groundswell of interest among ordinary citizens who want to do their part. The stars are in perfect alignment for change. This is a heroic time calling for heroic action.

You can lead the way and this book will show you how. It builds on my two decades of learning and a highly successful pilot of this program where participants achieved a 22% (6,700 pound) annual CO₂ reduction. The actions in this book are easy to take and are accompanied by lighthearted illustrations that make it fun. Each has a CO₂ reduction value so you can set and achieve your reduction goal. The program can be done as an individual household or as a small group of friends, neighbors, or co-workers—what I call an EcoTeam. Experience has shown that doing it as a team can provide extra motivation to follow through. But either approach works.

The program is divided into three sections. First, you work on adopting climate-friendly lifestyle practices. You learn how to change habit patterns established over the course of your life that you rarely think about but that are easy to change once you know how to do it. Then you move to your household systems. These are the mechanical parts of your life. Taking action here will have a long-term impact and will not require much thinking about it again. Once you have reduced your own CO₂ footprint, the last section shows you how to help others do the same. You learn how to invite people in your social network, workplace, community, or children's school to become part of the global warming solution.

I am in awe of the potential for this moment to be truly catalytic. I know we can make the needed changes happen, and I am hopeful this book can play a significant role. I wish you well in this journey and thank you for doing your part. Godspeed . . .





HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

1. Select from the menu of actions in this workbook those that help you reduce your carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by a minimum of 5,000 pounds.
2. You can do the program either with your household family members or as part of a peer support group of friends, neighbors, co-workers, or members of your faith community or civic organization—an EcoTeam. A good size for an EcoTeam is 5 to 8 households.
3. In either format, the program is designed to be completed in 4 meetings that take place every 10 to 14 days. A team initiator runs the meetings using scripts located in the support section of this workbook. Meetings last 1.5 to 2 hours, with several hours needed between meetings to take the actions selected. If you do the program as an individual household and live with others, turn your household members into a team and adapt the meeting scripts accordingly. If you live alone and choose to do this on your own, use the program's suggested time sequence as a structure to keep you motivated.
4. In the team program, the first meeting—the Team Building Meeting—is used to create your support system, learn how to calculate your CO₂ footprint, (www.empowermentinstitute.net/lcd) and create an action plan to reduce it (pages 47–50). During meetings 2 to 4, team participants report on actions taken and describe their action plans for the next section. The team provides support and inspiration for everyone to carry out their plans.
5. Each program action in this workbook indicates the pounds of CO₂ your household can save. Whatever your emissions are at the start of the program, you are encouraged to select actions to help you achieve a 5,000 pound reduction or greater. If you have already taken many CO₂ reduction actions, you will start at a higher level of achievement. The typical American household is Level 4.

	Annual Household CO ₂ Emissions (pounds)
Level 1	80,000 and above
Level 2	70,000 - 79,999
Level 3	60,000 - 69,999
Level 4	50,000 - 59,999
Level 5	40,000 - 49,999
Level 6	30,000 - 39,999
Level 7	20,000 - 29,999
Level 8	10,000 - 19,999
Level 9	1,000 - 9,999
Level 10	Carbon Neutral (less than 1000)

That's it! Enjoy making your contribution to the quality of life of future generations.