



Personal and Interpersonal Actions: Overview

What we eat, what we wear, and how we deal with each other: all of these are areas in which our habits can cause us to contribute to climate change—and areas in which we have the power to make a difference.

What we eat can add to the 12% of US greenhouse gas emissions that come from agriculture—or it can be grown and transported in more energy-efficient ways that better connect us to the ecosystem and the seasons where we live. What we wear can be responsive to the seasons, too, and we can get, keep, and pass along our clothes in ways that don't require as much fuel-intensive manufacturing or transportation. We can get our exercise in ways that bring us into contact with the land, air, water, and other members of our ecosystems. And we can find ways to do these things that are consistent with our income, our health, and our needs.

Humans rely on our relationships with each other, with other living beings, and with the natural systems of land, air and water. We often think of ourselves as isolated individuals—an idea that the dominant culture encourages—but none of us can survive without the presences and actions of many others. Our wealth of open spaces and ecosystems cares for us, and we can do a lot to care for them.

The small choices we make each day help us see how much we can accomplish in our households and our communities. The more we do them along with others, the more of a difference they make. They remind us of our connection to a culture and an ecosystem. The strength of those relationships enables us to get things done.



Food: Our Planet Is What We Eat

Six steps toward eating for a healthy planet



- Choose foods grown and produced locally
- Have meat during special occasions instead of every day, or a no-meat meal once a week
- Grow your own
- Donate to programs that provide or incentivize fresh local food for low-income RI residents
- Ask your school or workplace cafeteria to provide vegetarian or vegan meals
- Join or start a food co-op

We can not only reduce the greenhouse gas burden of our own diet, but help our neighbors do the same, by supporting access to healthy, low-impact food.

Household action: If you eat red meat, instead of having it every day, save it for special occasions and savor it fully: red meat creates the highest amount of greenhouse gases of any food.

Long supply chains, like the one for a pear that comes from New Zealand to Rhode Island, require lots of fossil-fueled energy. Some of your family's dishes may require imported ingredients in order to taste right, but use local or at least US-grown/US-made versions when they're available.

The many farmers' markets and roadside farm stands in Rhode Island are great sources of local, seasonal fruits and vegetables: buying there boosts our economy and increases our food independence. All the markets listed at [Farm Fresh RI](#) allow you to pay with SNAP or EBT. (For more information on growing your own food—near your home or in a community garden—see the “Yard, Garden and Public Green Space” section.)

Community action: Donate to [Farm Fresh RI's Fresh for All fund](#). These funds go to low-income families to make fresh fruits and vegetables more affordable, and to farmers to grow for and sell to underserved communities. Donating to land trusts that support Rhode Island agriculture, like the [South Side Community Land Trust](#), the [West Bay Land Trust](#), and others, also supports the careful use of land for growing food locally.



Clothing: Dressing for the Climate

Four ways to keep down clothing costs, heating/cooling bills and greenhouse gases



- Use your clothing, not your thermostat, to reach a comfortable temperature
- Learn to mend your clothes rather than buying new ones
- Organize a clothing swap and donate what's left over
- Offer hand-me-downs to other families—or ask for them

Clothing can be a source of power and pleasure: a way to decide how we present ourselves to the world, a way to control how people see us and treat us. Because we can buy inexpensive clothing in Rhode Island's consumer economy, and because our indoor environments are often heated or cooled, how we want or need to look is often our main concern about the clothing we buy. But dressing for the weather reduces the amount of energy needed to heat or cool the buildings where we live, learn and work.

Household action: Use your clothes rather than your heating/cooling system to regulate your temperature and comfort—turn to your dresser or closet before you turn to your thermostat. We heat and cool large spaces to keep ourselves comfortable when we could be saving energy and money by insulating or aerating just our bodies. (For more about ways to keep a comfortable temperature with fewer fossil fuels, see “Heating and Cooling Systems.”)

The costs of inexpensive clothing are passed on to the environment and to the people who make and sell it. Buying new clothes less often reduces the fossil fuels used to make and transport them.

Community action: Organize a clothing swap with your similarly-sized friends. The clothes you’re bored with may look great on them; the pants that don’t quite button may fit you. Everyone gets the pleasure of clothes that are new to them without any fossil fuel burden at all! If they’re in good condition, donate any leftover clothes to an organization like the [Dorcas Place Clothing Collaborative](#) or the [Career Closet](#), which supply professional and family clothing to people in need.



Exercise and Exploration: Identifying With Our World

Six ways to be active in our ecosystem



- Walk, bike, or hike—within and outside cities and towns—if your body permits
- Leave the gym and exercise with people you know
- Ask for public exercise equipment and open-air exercise classes in city and town parks
- Share knowledge about and interest in Rhode Island ecosystems across generations
- Attend events with local conservation organizations, or volunteer with them
- Follow and support your own city or town council’s efforts to preserve and maintain places where people can be outdoors
- Wherever we live, getting to know the rest of the natural world helps us to take care of it—and with it, ourselves and each other.

Household action: Choose a hike, walk, or even a place to sit that suits your abilities, and go. Rhode Island has many bike paths and trails that will take you through woods and fields. For more about how to get into less built-up parts of the state if you live in a city, see the “Transportation” and “Walking and Biking” subsections; for places to go in Rhode Island, see the “Further Resources” list online.

Doctors and psychologists agree that being active outside can relax our minds and bodies and lower our stress. It lowers our fossil fuel consumption, too, if we're not in/on a gas-powered vehicle and not using energy-powered devices. Exercising outdoors, including walking or biking for our commutes, is also a way to claim public space as our space—a place where we can move, meet and gather. Public exercise equipment and open-air exercise classes can be especially useful for elderly people to connect with each other as well as with the surrounding world.

Community action: Pay attention to your own city or town council's efforts to preserve and maintain places where people can be outdoors—or to threaten them. Committees on Development and Planning, City Property, and Public Works; Conservation Commissions, Land Trusts, and Recreation Committees; and the Zoning Board of Review are all good ones to watch.