

## SARAH HARMER SINGS TO SAVE NIAGARA AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

RADIANT  
**BEAUTY**  
HEAD TO  
TOE

**FASHION**  
GETS A  
MAKEOVER

YOUR  
BABY  
DESERVES  
THE BEST...  
**NATURALLY**

**HOT &  
HEARTY  
SOUPS**

**6** **ECO  
SPAS:**  
SPOIL  
YOURSELF

**HOP ON  
THE BUS, GUS**  
TORONTO  
NEEDS A NEW  
TRANSIT PLAN





## an environmentalist's dilemma

gillian deacon wonders how to tell it like it is

Washing up after dinner at a friend's house the other day, I found myself removing more from her dishwasher than I was loading into it. Perplexed, and quite possibly annoyed, she asked why I was scrubbing half her plates and cups by hand. "It's just the plastic ones," I explained. "Oh, and the Tupperware, yogurt containers—that stuff should never go in the dishwasher."

By then, she had her arms crossed. I couldn't tell if she was intrigued or just wanted me out of her kitchen, so I moved on to the science. "There are chemicals called phthalates in the plastic that leach out when they're heated. Studies have shown links between exposure to phthalates and increased cancer rates—you shouldn't really serve hot food on plastic plates at all. Some toxicologists even recommend not letting the plastic wrap on your leftovers make contact with the food."

So, did I just do her—and you—a big favour by sharing that information? Or did I make your life miserable, tacking an additional five minutes of washing by hand and careful wrapping on to your busy day? Countless friends—heck, even people I've just met—have heard that rant from me as I put their plastic ware into the sink. I have even been known to reach over and turn off the ignition in friends' cars as we chat at the curbside. I mean to be helpful, but I'm always a little afraid of losing my audience.

When it comes to matters environmental, it's the delivery that counts. Nobody likes to be made to feel guilty. A friend tells a sad tale of approaching her neighbour after he sat in his

idling car for five minutes. She mentioned how much pollution idling causes, and how all that exhaust was lingering in his own neighbourhood. Before she could get to the part about how turning off a car's engine is better for the car, because the engine is designed to operate at peak performance at high speeds, he cut her off. Previously friendly, he called her a nasty name and vowed to idle even longer from now on just to spite her bossy intrusiveness.

If you care about the earth, you have a lot of work to do. "Sustainability within a generation," as David Boyd so eloquently advocates in his document of the same name, will only be possible if more people realize how easily they can save the earth without unreasonable discomfort to themselves. But how do you beat the environmental drum without being annoying? How do you convert someone to more conscientious living and not have them dig in their heels more firmly against everything you stand for?

I ask myself this almost every day as I pass countless cars and trucks in idle. I often glance through the window with a smile and make a "turn off your ignition" gesture, trying to conjure a friendly, helpful look. It works—some of the time. But I wish I knew a silver-bullet approach for idlers or SUV drivers or anyone else dragging their environmental heels.

Maybe you can help. Only cold on plastic, no idling if you'll be longer than 20 seconds, turn off the lights when you leave the room—choose your eco tip. If you tell two friends, then they'll tell two friends.... Let the change begin. ●