

YOUR CLEAN GREEN HOME • YOUR COFFEE WAKE UP CALL

Spring/Summer 2005

greenliving

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Kennedy
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Inside: the first ever
Green Toronto
Awards

saving the planet

Gillian Deacon considers her 'to do' list

It occurred to me the other day how much easier my life would be if I gave up my environmental principles. I was buying just a few groceries with my son, and when we reached the checkout, I realized I had left my fabulous, reusable shopping bins in the car across the street.

After briefly weighing those flimsy plastic bags against the prospect of looking mighty foolish, I loaded us up, my three-year-old and me, with the butternut squash, the yogurt, the lettuce, the oatmeal...and darn if we didn't carry our dozen or so items to the car without using any plastic bags.

My existence is complicated enough with three children, a job and what I try to call a life. Why, I ask myself mid-way across the street, trailing lettuce leaves, do I have to add saving the planet to my 'to do' list every day? Because, I remind myself once I get through the moment, this is the only way to live right now. It's better for me and way better for my kids' future, so how could I not?

No question, even if you don't strap yourself to the old-growth trees in Temagami, being environmentally minded is a challenge. How often have I had to make a last-minute menu change when I find the produce I need at the store is wrapped in cellophane on a Styrofoam platter? It's only zucchini, for goodness' sake, not fine porcelain—it just doesn't need that much protection! Certainly not at the expense of all the petroleum used to make the plastic, and the waste it creates immediately after hitting my countertop.

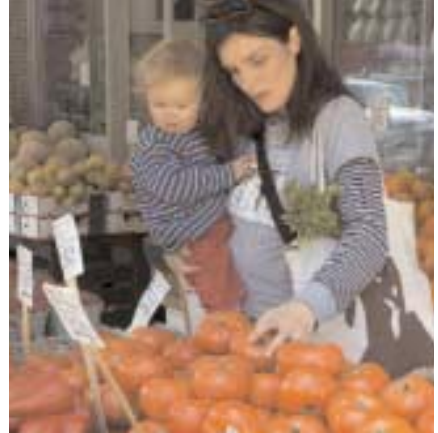


PHOTO: ANKA CZUDEK

Gillian Deacon and her son, Miles, make some easier choices.

I know, it would be so much easier to say, "Aw, just this once...", or, "What difference does it make?" But I believe my actions do count, and I feel a certain power surge when I tell the store manager I'm choosing not to buy their produce because it is wrapped. This is the future, baby. Get thinking about how to incorporate the earth's well-being into your own. It's not just smart, it's really invigorating. My money, my power.

So whenever I grumble my way up the hill to my son's school, in a full sweat from pushing the two younger kids in a stroller through the snow, I remind myself how much better my butt looks than the other mums who drive to school. Leave the SUV in the driveway (or better yet, on the sales lot!) and walk your way to better health, for you, your kids and your neighbourhood.

I'm no saint. We all do what we have to do to get through the crazy times. But I am more late, more busy and my life is generally more complicated because I choose, as often as I can, not to take the convenient short cut. The satisfaction of sacrificing convenience for the sake of a greater good is comforting. It keeps my spirits high, even when statistics and government policies and news stories paint a grim picture for the planet. And if you see my toddlers carrying heavy groceries down the street without a bag, that's the future you're looking at.

Gillian Deacon is a freelance writer/broadcaster based in Toronto.