



low-impact living



what is it?

It's living in a way that has a low impact on ecology. The world's ecologists and biologists are telling us that we are in a mass extinction event - the current extinction rate is thousands of times the natural rate, and if it continues, we are going to lose around 50% of all species of plants and animals this century. And of course it won't stop there. When will it stop? 80%? 99%? When all that's left is bacteria? There have been 5 previous mass extinctions. The last one was due to an asteroid collision, and did for the dinosaurs. This one's due to our activity.

high-impact living: faced with this extinction rate, what's the point of consumerism, credit card debt, big house, new car, flights, fashion, the latest gadgets - especially as these are the very things that are causing the extinctions? The typical Western lifestyle is very high-impact – acquiring status by working for large corporations, consuming from large corporations, getting into debt with large banks, working more, earning more, consuming more, getting further into debt etc, ad nauseam.

low-impact living: imagine instead being able to walk to a local market, filled with locally-produced, organic vegetables, eggs, meat, honey, fruit, cheese, beer, fish, cakes, breads, jams, pickles, nuts and loads more. Imagine being able to walk or cycle to a local job – towns and villages full of family businesses, self-employed people, independent shops and restaurants; and people making things; small, independent companies, selling their products and services locally. Imagine a strong, diverse, uncontaminated, environment that provides for us, keeps us healthy and nourishes us with its beauty. Imagine being able to get your energy and heating from small-scale, local renewables, with no need for coal and nuclear power plants, and pylons snaking all over the countryside. Low-impact living is about smallholdings, allotments, local organic food, home cooking, self-employment, family firms, small independent shops, co-ops, credit unions, open



fancy a gorgeous home made from local, natural materials, instead of a bricks & mortar box? Low-impact living is all about making sacrifices? I don't think so

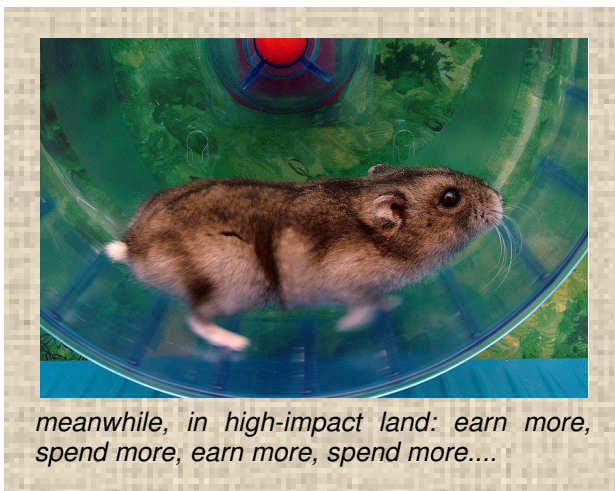
source, craft skills, self-built homes, renewable energy, wood stoves, sharing, enjoying nature, enjoying life. It's also about authenticity - real friends, real food, useful work, It's an antidote to the power of corporations and banks, supermarkets, pesticides, McFood, monotonous shopping centres, housing and industrial estates, credit card debt and stress. The global economy is out of control, but it's only a blip – we will either choose to live in harmony with nature, or nature will do it for us. But if we wait for nature to do it for us, it won't be pretty.

the bigger picture: and yet all governments want more and more human activity – more and more economic growth. Low-impact living and economic growth don't go together. But we can't really change things via government, because governments aren't where the power is; the power is with money, and no government can risk upsetting the money masters. So we need to start at grassroots. Yes, of course it's about changing the world - but starting with you. It's a waste of time complaining about environmental damage, bankers' bonuses, and the super-rich having too much power when your lifestyle is contributing to it. A very common question is: 'yes, but what can I do?' And the answer is: 'everything' – starting straight away.

what are the benefits?

Modern society funnels people into a rat race with a pecking order. If you'd rather not be a rat or a chicken, low-impact living provides a way out. It provides benefits in terms of:

- ecology: it will help to slow down the current extinction rate, and make it more likely that humans survive
- health: wholesome food, a less polluted environment, more exercise and less stress
- happiness: more time to enjoy life, and better ways to spend it



meanwhile, in high-impact land: earn more, spend more, earn more, spend more....



- community & children: you need a village to raise a child, but everywhere community is being destroyed; but there are lots and lots of like-minded people out there
- satisfaction: new skills, more self-reliance, closeness to nature
- spirituality: a tricky one, but notwithstanding the absence of an agreed definition, how can living by the values of materialism and competition be anything but spiritually damaging to us?
- social justice: because it spreads wealth – do we really want so much wealth (and land) to be in the hands of such a tiny minority
- democracy: if wealth is spread, so is power
- nature: for its own sake – as a source of peace and beauty

what can I do?

First, you have to understand what's happening, and to care. If you're reading this, you probably do. Second, you need to have a desire and a commitment to do something about it (which is up to you), and then you have to know what to do (which is where we can help). There's more information and lots and lots of ideas on LILI's website - whether you're a complete beginner or already living in a sustainable way.

low (beginners): join your local Transition group, to meet like-minded people and be inspired • change to a green electricity supplier • downshift, and cut up your credit card • compost your organic waste • have a go at growing some fruit and veg in your garden • change from toxic to natural paints • make sure your home is well-insulated • use natural soaps, bodycare & cleaning products • shop in small, independent shops as much as possible • learn about energy-saving • cut down on processed food and fizzy drinks, and eat more organic, locally-produced food • holiday in the UK • learn DIY and plumbing skills • enjoy time in nature instead of shopping malls • read more about ecology, sustainable economics, democracy and land

lower (bit of training/kit/commitment?): cycle or walk to work (may involve moving, or a new job) • change job / become self-employed / get out of the corporate rat-race • get your money out of banks and into credit unions or mutuals • install renewables • learn craft skills / get rid of your telly • change to open source • switch from cement to lime • get an allotment or turn your garden over to food production • keep chickens or bees • get into food preservation, home-brewing, wild food foraging and other foodie



how about fresh organic food straight from your garden or allotment? Hair-shirt living? Not really

topics • get a wood stove • make your own biodiesel or get a veg oil conversion • make your own herbal remedies or essential oils • go WWOOFing

lowest (really committed): join or start a community-owned renewables scheme • get a smallholding or join a community • get into keeping livestock, planting trees, forest gardening and other land-based topics • build / live in an eco-home • get off-grid • install a compost loo and rainwater harvesting

Low-impact living isn't about dogma – everything is up for rational discussion. Allowing so many species to become extinct; promoting constant economic growth; allowing power to be concentrated in the super-rich; and forbidding people to live in a low-impact way on their own land – are irrational courses of action. You can do something about it. Good luck!

resources

- lowimpact.org: see LILI's website for factsheets, books, magazines, courses, products, services and links on over 160 low-impact topics, plus more information on extinctions, sustainable economics, democracy and land
- abcul.org: Association of British Credit Unions
- diggersanddreamers.org.uk: directory of UK intentional communities
- lammas.org.uk: new style of low-impact, self-build land project
- shareenergy.coop: UK community-owned renewable energy projects
- sustainweb.org: local food networks
- transitionnetwork.org: Transition Network
- wwoof.org.uk: volunteer on organic farms

Contact us or visit our website to find out more about our factsheets, books, courses, online shop, links, forum, events and volunteering on organic farms. You can also become a 'Friend of LILI', and receive our e-newsletter, discounts on our courses, and help us to make a difference.

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