

Making Ripples

by Amanda Bancroft

This column has often mentioned what we can do to help people and our planet. But we should also celebrate what we're currently doing right. As long as we don't allow ourselves to become complacent and lazy because of something good we did, there will always be time to do more. Focus for a moment on what you have already accomplished.

Have you been kind to others? Do you recycle? Is your backyard a haven for birds? Does your family ride bicycles to school or work? Do you accept as equals those who are different from you? Or maybe you started your own business to do something good for the world, went off-grid, or became a vegan. Whatever you consider a success, remember it.

If you forget, then the guilt monkey might get you. That's the little critter in our minds which climbs around shrieking that we have no business raising money for charity because we took an expensive vacation. Or it may chatter incessantly about how snobbish that person with the reusable water bottle must be, since you yourself don't own one (and feel badly about it). Sometimes the guilt monkey prevents us from doing easy things because we feel bad about not doing difficult things. Honestly, the turtle you rescue on the road will not care that you drive a hummer! (Remember to carry turtles across roads in the direction they're traveling.)

The world needs all kinds of people to care, so send that guilt monkey packing and start celebrating your successes. Buy yourself a treat, spend an hour in the park, take a day off work, look at pictures of your accomplishments, or wallow in happiness instead of misery for awhile. We often take for granted celebrating a promotion at work, but when we help a stranger or pick up litter, it may seem like nothing special.

In truth, doing the right thing should not be something special. It should be mundane, ordinary, and second nature to most people. The wonderful truth is that it already is! News often looks bad because the extraordinary is considered newsworthy, and most of the time, in most places, most people are going about their lives trying to do good. It's not extraordinary, and we never hear about it. That doesn't make it not worth celebrating. Even the changing of the seasons and the coming of the dawn are worth some words of praise, given the fragility of life.

You, too, are worth celebrating for the difference you have tried to make, whether you're "finished" with a project, or working on something that will never be finished. Take a minute, a moment, or even a day and be happy that you can care and are doing something right. Then start planning the next thing you want to do to make the world a better place, and the celebration you can have after you make progress.

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist building an off-grid cottage for land conservation on Kessler Mountain. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer a solar-hosted online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: www.RipplesBlog.org.