

A Note from Mother....

(If Mother Earth could speak, this is what she might say....)

I know that you're worried about me. I'm old – really old – as in around 4.54 billion years old. Your activities have taken a toll on my health. You have probably read that the polar bears are drowning because the ice caps are melting. You might remember seeing pictures of the pelicans covered in oil in the Gulf of Mexico following the BP spill. You might be worried about the risk of nuclear annihilation either because of last year's disaster in Japan or because Iran seems to be gearing up to play in the nuclear arms race. You might have even seen footage showing patches of the rain forest in flames as greedy businesses clear out the forest for the wood and/or to use the land for business. And you've probably noticed that the old gray mare ain't what she used to be. In fact, she's not even a horse, she's a car/truck/SUV/van and she's thirsty. She works for gas and without it, she won't take you anywhere. When her tank is sufficiently full, she's pretty fast – at least faster than walking – but her speed comes with a price. The carbon emissions she sputters out are polluting the air and helping to turn the North and South Poles into next years' sauna of choice.

And I know that some of you have been taking me for granted. Perhaps it hurts too much to think about your mother dying. Denial doesn't make the problem go away. You've got to know about my health if you want to survive. Here are a few of my new favorite documentaries about my health. You can watch Mike Markham ignite his tap water in *Gasland* (the flammable water is a "bonus" the gas companies don't tell you about when they advocate fracking). You might cheer on community members in Appalachia as they fight the power of Big Coal in *The Last Mountain*. Of course, it's hard not to lament for all the other mountaintops Big Coal has already bulldozed away. *Tapped* points out that only 20% of water bottles are recycled and that most of the rest end up in landfills or worse, are swirling around in that *Great Pacific Garbage Patch. (Look this up – it's not pretty, but even though it's a long way away, it still affects you. You know what they say, "If Mama ain't healthy, ain't nobody healthy.") Unless you are trying to transition from male to female, you might be concerned about the fact that the BPA in those plastic bottles acts like estrogen and in large doses actually blocks male sex hormones. It's pretty scary seeing all those

fish with gonads that contain both ovarian and testicular tissue. Of course it probably won't help your mood to learn that 40% of bottled water is actually just dressed up tap water.

I hate to scare you, but some of you just need to wake up and smell the sewage. I'm not trying to be overly dramatic, but you've got to take care of me because you can't live without me. There aren't any other planets out there that can love and support you like I can. I hear you complaining about the weather – it's always too hot or too cold or too cloudy or too dry or too something – but where are you going to find a planet that sports the oxygen and water you need to survive? Awareness is the first step. You have to know what's going on to be able to take care of me.

Now that I've pulled your heads out of the sand and shaken up your denial, stop with the spinning. This mess you've made is what it is. Accept it. Stop dreaming about the good old days when there weren't problems. That's just magical thinking. The generations before you may not have had the same ability to destroy me, but there were always people who raped my lands and poisoned my water. Besides, longing for yesterday doesn't do much to solve problems today. Likewise, making yourselves sick with worry about what might happen in the future isn't slowing the destruction either. The same with your guilt. Stop it.

Some of the damage may be irrevocable, but there are lots of things you can do to take care of me and make sure that I survive. The first thing I want you to do is reach out and touch me. I'm serious, I may be old and have a lot of scabs and scars and oozing pockets of pollution, but I am still vibrant and alive. Connecting with me will not only help you get present, it will also give you the strength you need to wage the battle you are about to take. Go outside. Ride your bike. Take a hike. Swim in a lake. Work in your garden. Sit beside the ocean and watch the waves crash on the shore. Hug a tree. Really feel me. Feel my majesty. Feel my strength. Imagine letting your roots sink down into my soil and breathe my vibrancy up through the souls of your feet.

The next thing I want you to do, just in case it didn't occur to you to do this when you were connecting with me, is breathe. You have to breathe. There's simply no way around this. If you want to save me, you have to be

present and in order to be present you have to get out of your heads and come back into your bodies. The easiest way to do that is to consciously breathe. There are lots of ways to use your breath to ground you, but one of the easiest is to simply breathe in and feel your breath as it comes in your nostrils, notice what it's like as it passes near your sinus cavities, down your pharynx (throat), down your trachea (windpipe), and into your lungs and then notice the return trip of the used up air as it leaves your body. Or, you can focus on what it feels like as you breathe into your lungs, noticing how your belly expands as your lungs push your diaphragm down and how your chest rises as you breathe into the top corners of your lungs. Give yourself time to do this every day – at least five minutes (half an hour or an hour a day would be ideal but it's better to start small and work up). If you need help, there are lots of books and cd's and videos on meditation that can help. One of my favorite easy guides can be found on Chopra.com where you can sign up for a 21 Day Meditation Challenge or for single standing meditations, surf over to the Chopra Center University page and click on Guided Meditations (in the "About Us" frame).

Once you get yourself a bit more present, you can start doing something. Start small. Maybe you ride your bike or take the bus to work a few days a week. Maybe you replace your toxic cleaning products with "green cleaners." Maybe you start composting. Maybe you unplug your appliances when you aren't using them. Maybe when you trade your next car in, you replace it with a hybrid. Maybe you stop buying bottled water. Maybe you stop buying products from corporations that pollute or make weapons. Maybe you donate money to an environmental group like the Natural Resources Defense Counsel or join a local group like C-bus's own ***Simply Living*. Maybe you send e-mails to your state and federal representatives encouraging them to pass laws that will help the environment. Maybe you take up organic gardening and lawn care. Maybe you read up on sustainable life styles so that you can live simply so that others can simply live. Choose something doable and do it. I want to see your children's children thriving.

* Information about the Great Pacific Garbage Patch can be found at: <http://discovermagazine.com/2008/jul/10-the-worlds-largest-dump> if you want less science, it can also be found on Wikipedia.

**More information about Simply Living can be found at:
<http://www.simplyliving.org/>

This Column originally appeared in Outlook Columbus