

# the 5 R's:

Re-use, Recycle, Reduce, Respect, Responsibility



By Michelle Sachs

## Winter is the time for R & R!

The winter this year has been very cold, and with the latest freeze and snow, all we want to do is curl up in bed with the heater on. Hot drink and good book at the ready! All this talk of hibernating and burning fossil fuels to stay warm has led me to think about our responsibility to the environment and what we can do to help. Basically if you can remember 5 R's, then you're on your way to becoming the ultimate eco-warrior. With the state of the planet at the moment, she needs all the help we can give her.

### Re-use

It is as it sounds, re-use your plastic bags and don't just buy new ones at the store because you forgot to bring your old ones. Re-use glass bottles and containers and find uses for old tyres and things you want to just dump and forget about. Plastic bags look like jellyfish to seals and dolphins and when they swallow them they get stuck in their throats causing them to die of hunger which is an awfully slow and painful death. Be creative and use that old chipped mug as a pot plant holder or repaint it and turn it into a penholder. Use and re-use.

### Recycle

Why not get a few bins at home, call Mondi and Consol and find out where to get your paper and glass recycled. Call the plastic companies and find out where the drop off points are for plastic recycling. It's sheer laziness and the consumer lifestyle we lead that has left us believing that our waste is another person's problem. It's not; it's your problem! By recycling we cut down on the amount of raw material required to create new products, as they can be recreated from old products. We can save forests from destruction simply by recycling. Buy recycled products and do your best to be kind to the environment.

### Reduce

We create a stack of waste everyday. How many garbage bags do you get rid of a week? By recycling and reusing items you reduce the amount of trash going into landfills and into the oceans, contaminating rivers and polluting the environment. Take your own bags to the store, reduce your need to buy and buy.

### Respect

Respect the planet you live on. Pick up litter when you go the beach or park. Even if it's not yours, take a bag with you and fill it, you may inspire someone else to help you and so you teach by example. Get your car serviced regularly; oil leaks manage to get into the ground water, which flows to the rivers which head to the oceans. Your oil could be polluting a river somewhere. Use eco-friendly cleaning products in your home, they'll be better for you and for the environment. Detergents and harsh cleaners have chemicals in them that damage plant and animal life once they get into the ground water. Respect wild animals, don't harass them or try to get them to do what you want. Leave them alone. Respect their need for privacy. If you do go on any animal programmes like dolphin swims or elephant back safaris only go with professional organisations that support and protect wildlife. Look up their mission statements beforehand and find out what they offer, and what work they do to promote the protection of wildlife. If you are in the ocean and a pod of dolphins comes near don't go blundering after them, don't put yourself in danger, remain calm, assess the situation and then interact with them. They'll let you know very clearly if they want to play or not. Show them the respect you would want.

### Responsibility

Believe it or not, you are as responsible for this planet as the next person. Everything you do has an impact no matter how big or small on the environment. As intelligent beings use your discernment and find out about things before you use them or take part in them. It is your responsibility to be informed, ignorance in today's modern age is no excuse. Go on-line and sign petitions to prevent over fishing, by catch and bottom fishing. Information is power, learn what you can and then protect the environment where you can.

Ultimately we need to stand together and get our governments to support eco-friendly bills and solutions instead of energy wastage and damage to the environment. Do your best to help out. So take advantage of the last few weeks of winter to really get your R and R up to date. Before we know it summer will be here and we will be braaing and enjoying hot lazy days. Get R savvy now and help our planet, our gorgeous mother to survive us for another season. **R**