

Eight Things You Can Do To Get Active

CrimethInc.

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1.

Pay attention to where and how you spend your money. Is your money going to support companies that don't care about you? Are they destroying the environment, killing animals, treating your friends who work for them like shit? Are they trying as hard as they can to sell you a product that gives you cancer? Are their advertisements designed to manipulate you, to make you feel insecure or make their product seem like more than it really is? You don't need to give those motherfuckers your money! For that matter—do you buy many things that you don't need? Soft drinks and junk food at convenience stores, for example? Do you end up spending a lot of money whenever you want to relax and have a good time? There are a thousand things you and your friends can do that are fun, creative, and don't cost anything (having intense discussions, exploring hidden parts of your town, making music—instead of drinking at bars or going to movies and restaurants) just as there a thousand ways you can eat and live more cheaply (Food Not Bombs, building furniture instead of buying it, living in big houses with a bunch of friends). Once you experiment a bit, you'll probably find that you enjoy life a lot more when you're not always shelling out cash for it.

2.

Now that you spend less, you can work less, too! Think about how much more time that gives you to do other things. Not only will it be easier to do things that help you spend less, like volunteering at Food Not Bombs (the less you work, the more time you have to make sure you don't need to), you'll also be able to do all the things you never had time for before: you can travel, exercise, spend more time with your friends and lovers. When it's sunny and beautiful outside, you can go out and enjoy it!

3.

And you'll have time to do the other things you need to do to take back control of your life and your world. First, start reading. It doesn't really matter what, so long as it makes you think about things and gives you new ideas of your own. Read novels about human beings struggling against their society, like J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* or George Orwell's *1984* or Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*; read the beautiful, dreamers' prose of Jeanette Winterson or Henry Miller. Read history: learn about the Spanish revolution in the 1930's, where whole cities were run by the people who lived in them, rather than by governments; learn about the labor union struggle in the USA, or the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley in the 1960's. Read philosophy, read about environmental issues, read vegan cookbooks and underground 'zines and comics and everything you can get your hands on. Here's a hint: if there's a university in your town, you can probably get a membership for about \$10 a year—and most libraries include videos, too!

4.

Reading isn't the only way you can expand your horizons and clarify your ideas. Talk to people about the things that interest you, arguing when you don't agree, so you'll get to know your own

beliefs better. Write to the people who are doing the ‘zines you like, discuss and debate things with them, ask them for directions to find out more about your interests. Try writing about your own ideas, and sharing that with people, until you feel confident doing this. Travel to different places, try to learn about other cultures and communities, so you’ll have more than one perspective on the world and you can start to imagine what the world is like through other people’s eyes.

5.

Now you’ll know what you want, and you can go about getting it. Seek out other people and groups with similar goals, and figure out how to support them or participate in what they’re doing. Maybe you can copy fliers and give them out at shows; maybe you can organize benefit shows for organizations you want to support (women’s shelters, radical bookshops, local groups protesting against the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal or lobbying for protection of the environment). Maybe there are public protests and demonstrations going on that you want to be part of. Try to help find ways to make these more challenging and fun than just a bunch of people holding signs; everyone’s so bored with doing that that there must be a more effective and exciting way to go about it.

6.

You can start your own projects, as well, you know. If there’s no Food Not Bombs in your area, get a group of people together and find some local businesses that will donate their leftover food. If there’s something fucked up at your high school or college or workplace, try organizing a walkout to force the “authorities” to do something about it... and to show everyone that those “authorities” only have as much power as we let them have. If the main street of your town lacks life and excitement, try organizing an unexpected festival to take place in the middle of it one weekend. Shake up everyone’s lives and expectations, shake them out of their apathy and boredom so they’ll start thinking about things. Establish networks with other people who are also interested in having an effect on the world around them, so you can help each other do this.

7.

Through all of this, don’t stop questioning yourself and your assumptions. Try to see through all the social programming you’ve received throughout your life: consider how gender roles constrain the way you act, how your own relationships with people reproduce the same hierarchical order that your fighting in mainstream society. We’re not going to really change anything unless we can create new ways of living and interacting, new values that show themselves in the way we treat each other. Show your friends how much you care about them. Consider doing things you never thought you should or could do: dancing, singing, admitting things that you’ve been taught to be ashamed of.

8.

Now look to the future. How can you stay involved with these things as you get older? How can you construct your life so you will always be free to do what you want to? Talk to people older than you who haven't given up and gone back to the daily grind of eat-work-sleep-watch TV. With a little input from them and a lot of resolve on your part, you can maintain your activities and your lifestyle as long as you want to. Idealism, adventure, and resistance don't have to be reserved for youth alone. History is filled with men and women who refused to compromise or calm down, who went all out from the cradle to the grave. They are the artists, the leaders, the heroes and heroines even people from the mainstream respect. We can all have lives like theirs, if we're brave and idealistic enough.

If all of us demand control over what we do and what goes on around us, if all of us do what we can to make life exciting and fair for everyone, things are bound to change. A lot of people know that we don't live in the best of all possible worlds, but persuade themselves that it's hopeless to try to improve things because they're afraid to commit themselves, to take any risks. But it's that lack of ambition that is the biggest risk of all—for what if you do nothing, and nothing happens, and we lose our chance to make this world the paradise it should be? Don't be shy or timid—there's nothing more exciting than taking an active role in the world around you, and there's nothing more worthwhile!

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