



Igniting ♦ Connecting ♦ Enriching
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*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. -Margaret Mead*

HOW TO BE AN “EVERYDAY ACTIVIST” by Sarah Gish

- **Pick a cause that is close to your heart so that it will nourish and sustain you.**
- Research your cause: what's been done already, who is involved, what laws are in place, similar causes and their fate.
- Visualize how you want the change to be. Create a goal statement that everyone you are working with knows.
- Understand your “sphere of influence” and start looking at how you can be an activist springing from that.
- See if you can find a partner in your cause, as it's stronger and easier that way.
- Often when you are targeting one company, there are many others doing the same thing. At some point, your actions will become more about a general philosophy than about a particular organization, so broaden your focus as the situation demands.
- Consider what skills you have and how they might be used for your cause: give of your TIME, your TREASURE, and/or your TALENT.
- Form a group to effect change – or join an existing one. Check out the credibility of organizations through Charity Finder or the Better Business Bureau.
- Raise awareness of your cause by talking to friends and families about it. Use ALL connections you have to their fullest. Talk about the change you desire at your place of worship, at birthday parties, over dinner – as necessary and as appropriate.
- Be prepared for differences of opinion and listen to them to see if you can find a solution better than either side imagined.
- Create a buzz in the community at large however you can, including letter-writing campaigns (hand-written are best!), media coverage, protests, special events, email campaigns, social media campaigns (create FB groups and other online gathering spots), webinars or workshops, and marketing materials like yard signs, buttons, bumper stickers. Clever campaigns work really well, such as wearing one shirt color.
- Create a contact list that includes citizens and the media. Use an excel spreadsheet, Outlook, or online databases to capture information. Services such as MailChimp or Constant Contact are easy and effective ways to communicate.
- Create “talking points” for interviews and when talking anytime about your cause.
- Make sure all communication is clear and complete and includes contact information, websites, etc. Follow “who, what, when, where, why.”

- Input important phone numbers into your cell phone (media, other activists, government reps, etc.) so that you can spring into action at a moments' notice.
- Work closely with the media: always get to know them and have the phone numbers of all news stations assignments desks handy (newspapers, TV, internet, and radio stations). Pitch stories to them often and keep them posted with updates.
- Know your city's phone number and put it in your cell phone if it's not easy to remember (Houston's is 311, which is the phone number in most large cities). You can use this general number to gather all kinds of information, including how the city operates and contact numbers for officials.
- When sending emails or other correspondence of a sensitive or private nature, be aware that these can be aired publicly due to the Federal Freedom of Information Act. Various state laws, such as the Texas Public Information Act, state that the people "do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for the people to know and what is not good for them to know." This gives people the right to know what their government is doing – but don't let that knowledge happen at your expense, especially when working with governmental entities.
- Beware of opening yourself up to libel and slander – know your legal rights and get legal assistance as needed, keeping in mind that all lawyers must bill a set number of pro bono hours each year which you can take advantage of.
- Start a petition – www.ipetitions.com and www.change.org let you create ones easily. Online ones are great but hand-written ones are powerful too.
- Make requests, not demands, of those you are trying to sway.
- The argument that "we are doing what is best for our stockholders" is not completely true – every company is part of our global community.
- Replicate yourself by sharing your knowledge so that there are others that can carry on the cause. You can do this via webinars, workshops, blogs, etc.
- Personalize the issues – use parents, children (they can stage kid-sized protests that will "trickle up"), and educators to bring your points home (literally).
- Find a positive way to raise awareness of your cause – such as community events like rock concerts, bus tours, and festivals.
- Educate the public thoroughly on your topic and keep them updated as needed.
- Show each individual that they have the power to take part in shaping their world and that corporations are not in charge, consumers are. Also: elected officials work for us, not us for them.
- Create change using the 6 P's: personal, pens, polls, participation, purchases, and protest (courtesy Brené Brown, PhD.)
- Look for organizations that offer activism training and educational materials such as MoveOn and Indivisible.
- Work within the political system: one of the best ways for change to occur is to legislate it, so contact those public servants who represent you or people in power in the neighborhood in which you are working.

- Get to the decision-makers and those that can really affect a change, usually financially (i.e. stockholders, company presidents, etc.) and sometimes emotionally (i.e. the owner of a small family business). Set up meetings with them in a non-threatening setting.
- Recruit individuals that speak the "language" of those with whom you are trying to effect change, such as a businessperson to deal with business types.
- Do not publicize allies without their permission.
- ALWAYS have good manners. Anger and rudeness shut down your message. Short-term change WILL occur if you are angry – however, long-term change will stick if you are not.
- Find funding sources (including soliciting donations) so that you can continue to do your work. You can work for free for only so long.
- Meet regularly with like-minded individuals to set goals, discuss ideas, find support, and get work done.
- Don't be afraid to take credit for the action you take and let others, especially the media, know about it! This spreads the word about your cause.
- Dress for your audience. If you are going to City Hall, dress in business attire, not in shorts or casual clothing. If you are going to a bar-b-que fundraiser, dress casual.
- Thank your helpers, early and often.
- When both sides are afraid, it's hard to make a change. "Keep your enemies close" and try to uncover their fears and strategies.
- Stick to the facts; they will always be on your side. The "truth" is up for debate.
- Exchange names with everyone you meet, which causes an instant connection and ignition. This is how we change the world!
- Leave your world better than you arrived by doing simple things such as picking up trash.
- Always carve out sacred time to take care of yourself and to be with your family and friends!
- Don't forget to LAUGH and SMILE and HUG. This changes the world on a cellular level.
- Take care of yourself physically (especially drink LOTS of water!), mentally, spiritually, emotionally.
- Don't give up – there is always hope for change!
- ANYONE can be an "everyday activist" at any time in any way. Remember that no one can legislate, buy, or steal your soul without your permission! Activism doesn't have to swallow up all your time – you just have to give to your cause as much as you can. And with technology to assist you with spreading the word about your actions, activism has never been so easy!

LIVE LIFE FULLY.INSPIRE OTHERS.BE THE CHANGE.