

HAPPY GO LOCAL

The Smart Mom's Guide to Living the Good (and Sustainable) Life!

Community Swaps, Cooking Co-ops, Freecycling,
Farmers' Markets, Carpooling, CSAs, Composting,
Upcycling, Fundraising, Staycations, and much more!

LINSLEY DONNELLY

HAPPY GO LOCAL

The Smart Mom's Guide to Living the Good
(and Sustainable) Life!

LINSLY DONNELLY

 **Adams**media
Avon, Massachusetts

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Published by

Adams Media, a division of F+W Media, Inc.
57 Littlefield Street, Avon, MA 02322. U.S.A.

www.adamsmedia.com

ISBN 10: 1-4405-0008-8

ISBN 13: 978-1-4405-0008-4

Printed in the United States of America.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

is available from the publisher.

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*To our children, Cole and Tess.
You are the reason for tomorrow,
And the catalyst to play,
Today.*

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This page is the most fun to write. Thank you for the indulgence of reading it.

Happy-Go-Local made it into your hands thanks to your interest in making the world a better place. Also, my heartfelt thanks for:

- The love, inspiration, and raw cheerleading sung daily to me by the original Happy-Go-Local Mom, my mom, Ann Fisher Hunt. She is simply The Best. Thank you for seeing all things good in the world and in me.
- The living example of making a creative life work, and the one who got all the talent in the family, my brother, Wide Studio's very own Andrew Fisher Hunt.
- The shining example of quality, eco-friendly, *and* economy—well-packed with a grin—who is my mother-in-law, Mary Ellen Donnelly. And the creative thinker, rational planner, and sparkling storyteller who is my father-in-law, Thomas F. Donnelly.
- The yee-haw-hurrahs, soul-dance-gee, and oh-yes-you-cans woven across years and time zones from those known as The Girls—Didi “Shines” Engel, Crista Gordon Bailey, Sweet Stephanie Bowers, Lisa Kochie Ott, Ann-Marie Helling, Jan Swartz, Julie “Junk” Duryea, Jocelyn “Pants” Mangan, Eleanor “Cup” Carnes, Coco Lovely Jones, Leisle “Point Break” Bartley, Leslie “Smiles” Langford, Jill “Jalepeno” John, Brook BT Kremer,

Sums Starling, Schuyler Sly Rideout, Jean Bean Warren, Maria Mia Lile, and Kelly Belle Coberson.

- The ones who taught me how to dance on paper—The Writers’ Group: Critita, Steph, E, and Joc as well as The Poet Jules.
- The enthusiasm, patience, and interest to read (and gently correct) early book iterations of Eagle Eye Liz Overson.
- The avid expert volunteering to first pressure test all assertions, Tom Donnelly.
- The faith of an avid risk taker and kindness of a fellow author who is most graciously my agent, Maryann Karinch.
- The generous champion, powerful word weaver, patient coach, and marvelous gift of an editor, Meredith O’Hayre. This book most certainly would never have been without her.
- The creative energy and graphic delights, compliments of Colleen Cunningham and Frank Rivera, as well as the fine-tooth combing patiently tuned by Kate Petrella.
- The daily joy and purpose for local roots alongside healthy longevity, our children, Cole and Tess.
- And, the unwavering hero who is my husband—Chris—the instigator . . . and that made all the difference.

INTRODUCTION

“If you think you’re too small to have an impact,
try going to bed with a mosquito in the room.”

—Anita Roddick

As is true of most new babies, my son’s birth brought a world of change. Playdates replaced double dates. Sleepless nights became the norm instead of a work project or big celebration event. My husband and I gave up hot-spot hopping for Netflix expertise. And, my perspective shifted from “It’s Mostly about Me” to “It’s All about Him.”

As I saw life through my son’s eyes, the world began to shrink from wherever my globetrotting friends and family had landed to only where we would be raising our family. The cacophony of “local living” and “sustainability” messages hit a newfound personal chord. A hypersensitivity to neighborly awareness replaced our jet-setter sense of global anonymity.

Now two children into the family game, I’ve realized that regardless of where we’ve traveled or where we may one day venture, where we live *right now* is the place where my family is going to be raised. If I want to impact our children’s quality of life, I’d better get intimate with what is working and what isn’t in our own backyard. If

we like what is working, it is up to us to support it—financially or otherwise—to ensure it continues. And if it isn't working? Well—you can guess who needs to get involved and change it, yes?

“Going local” or “being sustainable” is about more than saving our planet. Yes, consuming goods produced closer to your home reduces the pollution released due to mass manufacturing and polluting tire treads. True, choosing organic products refuels your body and the earth much, much better than does buying overly engineered shampoos, tomatoes, and T-shirts. However, shifting your mindset to engage in your local community is about so much more than greenhouse gases and clean living (and, by the way, those things are pretty darn big). Going local is about—in a very real, day-to-day, smile at the person you pass on the street kind of way—saving ourselves.

We live in a world where we text message across the country while sitting with our family at dinner; where we know hundreds of virtual “friends” but can't name our next-door neighbors; where we buy closets full of clothes manufactured in towns we can't pronounce, but we couldn't pick our dry cleaner out of a lineup; and where we fervently debate foreign policy, but haven't met (or can't even identify) one city council person.

Going local and thinking sustainably require us to recalibrate the scale away from casual global citizenship to committed local residency. As you pay more attention to where your daily goods originate, how your neighbors live, and what businesses fuel your local economy, you can't help but engage in how to make your own backyard a better place. And, by caring more about our own backyards, collectively, we build a better assortment of them to patchwork together as “our world.”

Transferring your family focus to living with more of a local, sustainable approach touches everything from becoming more eco-friendly and value conscious to gearing down your family's pace and amping

up your do-it-yourself mentality. You'll begin to pay attention to who and what makes up your community—perhaps even starting with how you define your community. You may find you “get personal” for the first time and learn your grocer's name, map local farmers' markets, and meet the school board. You may aggressively pare down and buy less in order to soften your impact on your local environment. Or, you may just find that your family decides to simplify life in order to free up time for exploring your neck of the world's woods.

→ **Mom to Mom:** ←
Field Trip to the Landfill

Speaking of backyards, as you bring your family into your quest to stay local and reduce consumption, a field trip to your neighborhood landfill can be a powerful motivator. It's one thing to hear that the tallest thing—natural or manmade—in North America is a landfill. It's quite another to stand amidst your local trash and understand the endless toxicity we create every day. On our visit, I was amazed at how much beautiful, wide open space surrounded the landfill. Still, it looked as if the landfill area was getting tightly packed. When I asked about the seemingly “full” landfill, our guide shrugged his shoulders and said not to worry. He pointed to the vast, oceanside space and identified that as the next area for the site's “growth plan.” What a heart-wrenching way to put our neighborhood green space to use.

You may want to follow up the landfill tour with a trip to your local recycling center. The speed, efficiency, and grace with which these facilities and people work to resuscitate our throwaways into new materials inspires even the youngest in families to separate trash. Go to www.therecyclingcenter.info to find your local recycling center and set up a tour. You can also find your local landfill through your trash pickup service or in the yellow pages.

As our world grows more crowded, complicated and polluted each day, it seems the question is not, “Should we go local or get sustainable?” but “How do we put a viable, family-friendly plan in place?”

Happy-Go-Local will not make the scientific case for why you should want to shop within a 15-mile radius, nor will it argue the efficacy of local living reducing global warming (Al Gore is so much more compelling). Instead, *Happy-Go-Local* offers a how-to guide for the mom full of intention, but pressed for time. The handbook answers “how to go local” in the context of an already too busy day-to-day life. Flip through the guide to find tips organized around routine tasks such as:

- How to buy food
- What cosmetics to use and what clothes to wear
- How to work out
- How to invest to build your local economy
- How to celebrate holidays

Each section sorts recommendations based on level of ease and eco-impact. I’ve road-tested all products and confirmed recommended sources at time of printing.

Staying local or being sustainable does not mean being perfect or being deprived. It means opting for a better way to go about our daily lives. As you peruse tips, remember: *trying just one or two is enough to make a change.* Sift through what’s here and decide what’s realistic in your lifestyle. You’ll likely surprise yourself by how much you can do with relatively little impact on your routine or budget. If you’re inspired to learn more, go straight to the appendix for resources that help sort through the fact and fiction of being a better local citizen.

Last, keep in mind that I am not a scientist. There are plenty of people smarter than I who can explain the science, technology, regulations, and statistics behind many of the tips and recommendations (again, flip straight to the appendix for a complete resource list). I am a Mom and a well-meaning consumer. Overwhelmed by the avalanche of localvore articles and sometimes conflicting advice, I've sifted through recommendations to map them against daily activities. The outline and suggestions here result from a hectic Mom trying small steps in the hope there will be a thriving and pleasant community—local and global—for her children and grandchildren to enjoy. I hope the tips here make digging in to the backyard easier for you too.

→ **Mom to Mom:** ←

Bringing the Whole Home Along with You

It's tough to move the house ahead on a local path without buy-in from both Mom and Dad. Often the bank account offers the fastest path to convert a lukewarm advocate into a rabid zealot. Many actions that are good for our communities are even better for our wallets. Saving power, saving water, and saving gas all help save money, and many "sustainable" products come in value-oriented flavors. Look for the value sign tag (🏷️) on cost-saving tips and recommendations throughout the book.

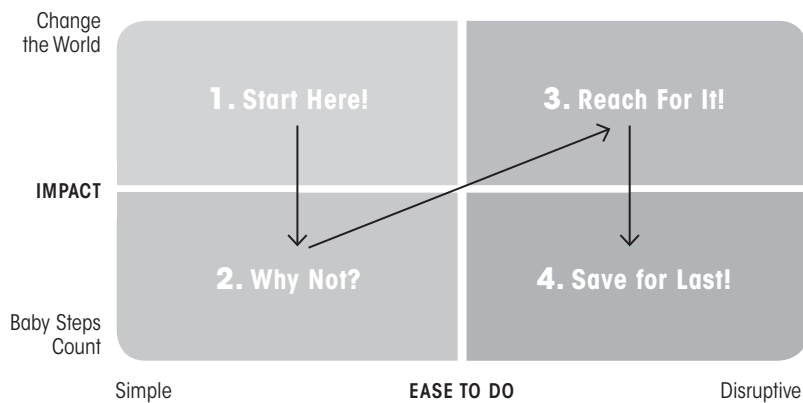
How to Use Your *Happy-Go-Local* Guide

Spend time on Chapters 1 and 2 to overview global themes such as recycling and understanding why your family's carbon footprint matters. In those chapters you'll also find a summary of all guidelines and tips, which you can then translate into daily actions by reading the more detailed chapters, 3 through 14. Each of these chapters categorizes tips and information by day-to-day activities such as choosing

food and drink, caring for pets, and celebrating holidays, and then sorts them by effort and effectiveness. Read and digest what you can. Rip out the sections that help you the most, pass along others to friends, and then compost (see page 16 for the easiest, least messy ways to compost) what remains of the book.

At the start of each chapter, you'll see tools to help you focus on tips most relevant to your life routine and relative local living interest. Look for the Sustainability Screen and start with the tips in Box One. These are the easiest to do and deliver the highest impact. Move to Box Two (still easy, but slightly less impact) to add in a few more easy tips, realizing if we all took baby steps, we'd make great leaps. Box Three (high impact, but a bit more challenging to do) highlights the tougher tips worth reaching for; implementing one or two of these makes a big difference. In a perfect world, we'd do everything. But, in reality, some tips may get put on hold. You'll find those suggestions, which are tough to do and have lower impact, in Box Four.

Example Sustainability Screen



Scan beneath the Sustainability Screen for Eye Openers. These statistics offer motivation you can share at the dinner table, explaining why it's worth your family's time and energy to revise a particular chapter's area of your family's life.

Next, you'll see Local Life Guidelines. If you just want the cheat sheet for each chapter, start here with the laundry list of your local and sustainable to-do's. Tackle an area each week (or even one per month), and post the Local Life Guidelines on the refrigerator to corral everyone down the week's sustainability path.

If you want more detail on the why and how behind each of the Local Life Guidelines, go to the last section, The Nitty Gritty, which gives more in-depth explanation for each Guideline as well as the backstory on many of the tips and product recommendations.

To make life easier for the uber-busy woman in all of us, start with the first chapter, Happy-Go-Local: The Abbreviated Version. There you'll find the Top Ten Local Lifelines. Then skip to page 5 for Your Happy-Go-Local Plan. Use the checklist there to see what you'd like to implement, and flip to the chapter detail as needed. Your complete organization and resource list are in the back of the book in a section you can rip out and keep in your bag.

EYE OPENERS

We consume a lot of stuff:

- Homes throughout the world contain an average of 127 items; homes in the United States have more than 10,000.
- U.S. homes use twice the water as homes in other *developed* nations.
- America's average per-person CO₂ emission is five times the worldwide average.

- We generate 1,600 pounds of trash per person per year.
- Shifting just 1 percent of spending to purchasing local food products could increase local farmers' income by as much as 5 percent.

"We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee."

—Marian Wright Edelman



HAPPY-GO-LOCAL: THE ABBREVIATED VERSION

“Because we don’t think about future generations,
they will never forget us.”

—Henrik Tikkanen

With so many tips, changes, and products to evaluate, how do you know where to start? As you embark on your family’s long-live-the-earth journey, focus on the Top Ten Local Life Lifelines. These guidelines act as signposts to help clarify where to get the biggest sustainability impact for your efforts.

1. Get to know your local scene.

Set up a “local” radius definition and get acquainted with stores, business, causes, and people close to home.

2. All politics are local.

Begin to dig in, learn the issues, the names and faces—and then, perhaps, make the leap to lead.

3. Set family targets.

Know and atone for your family’s carbon footprint. First set a macro family baseline; see page 104 for options. Next do a sustainability

audit of your family's lifestyle and home to set micro family targets. Start at www.lowimpactliving.com/projects/graph.

4. Live the mantra: Buy none, buy less, buy used, buy local.

Warning: Digesting *Happy-Go-Local* may inspire an urge to revamp your home, work, and play gear. Resist the temptation. The most sustainable strategy you can put into place is to buy less. Buying less is a bonus for your home finances and the first step in your efforts. Think of these tips as your best replacement options, perhaps years down the line. If you start each day with the thought "I will buy less," you'll *build a more sustainable lifestyle—and bank account*. See Chapter 11 for tips on how to transfer that thinking to your children as well.

Try motivating older kids to spend less by adding a 10 percent "savings credit" to allowances. Since the number one thing you can do to be more sustainable is to bypass purchases, ask kids to present their case for purchases they skipped. You decide whether or not to "certify" them, and reward valid ones with an allowance bonus of 10 percent of the items' purchase price. See page 27 for other ideas for chores and allowance plans to motivate living with a long-term view.

5. Start from your backyard and buy from there.

Staying close to home enables you to know the source of your goods and invest in your community growth. Buy local, organic, or don't buy at all. When it comes to things you put in and on yourself, local, sustainable, organic goods take *much* better care of you and Mama Earth. Flip to Chapters 3, 4, and 5 for product recommendations and certification.

6. Recycle, and reinforce recycling.

When you buy recycled and reused goods, you keep things closer to home and build a bigger market for those goods. A bigger market

means better products and pricing. Flip to page 14 for a summary of recycling how-to's, or check out www.zerowaste.org for tips. Recycled materials now show up in everything from cars and office supplies to clothes and home décor. Try www.ciwmb.ca.gov/rfp, www.ecomall.com, or www.recycledproducts.com to find items made from recycled materials.

7. Save your local resources.

Start with water: Take shorter showers; reduce faucet water pressure; install WaterSense appliances; cut the amount of water used in your toilet by placing bricks or filled milk gallon jugs in the tank; use shorter cycles on the dishwasher and washing machine. Find details in Chapter 6. Next, save power and shift to local sources (wind and solar!). Remember the basics: use less by turning off more. Consider Energy Star appliances, and swap your light bulbs for CFLs (compact fluorescent lights). Remember: in terms of pollution, one CFL bulb in your home = 1 million cars off the road. Use at-the-source power strips; tune up your heating and air conditioning systems; use more cold water than hot. Also consider an in-home energy audit—see page 104 for details.

8. Shed packaging.

First, choose products with no packaging whenever possible. Then choose materials made from more sustainable processes. Opt first for glass, then paper, and last—if at all—plastic. Try refillable pumps and compacts. Buy bigger sizes to spread the package impact across more of the product part.

9. Get really local and fuel-efficient.

Staying local translates into driving less—or not at all. When possible, tighten up your daily errands, activities, and events to a five- or

even three-mile radius. When you do get behind the wheel, drive more efficiently. Amp up carpool efficiency. Motivate yourself to walk and bike just a few errands a week. Avoid the drive-through and try some method of your town's public transportation. (Don't like it? Change it. See Chapter 7 for ideas.) Drive a well-maintained car at lower speeds with less stops and starts. Consider alternate energy vehicles when it's time for the next purchase, or higher MPG models of wheels powered by fossil fuels. Big impact? Stay home a bit more often—drop one or more plane trips a year. See Chapter 7 for specific how-to's with kids' carriers, family activities gear, and carpool logistics.

10. Slowwwww down.

Downshift, dig in, and savor the path. Rework your mindset away from multitasking and uber-efficiency to relishing the ordinary and bothering to sweat the small—local—stuff. Carve out time to volunteer for local causes. Pause to notice the change in seasons with your children as you walk from to-do to to-do. Release the constant state of anxiety created by checking e-mail, texts, and voice mails. Delight in talking to your neighbors—and inhaling the local life surrounding you.

As you pick up tips and add product recommendations, share your expertise with your Mom network. Send on nuggets to your book club, Mommy & Me class, and family networks to help make everyone's sustainable journey a bit easier to put in place.

YOUR HAPPY-GO-LOCAL PLAN

FAMILY CHECKLIST

Chapters 1 & 2

Your Current State of Local Life, pages 1 and 11

- Hit “pause” and slow down
- Do a family and home energy audit
- Know your carbon footprint
- Revise your home recycling process
- Assign everyone in the house an area to oversee (including the car, garage, and yard)
- Do quarterly home sweeps to collect special-handling recyclables, donations, and hazardous waste disposal

Chapter 3

Keeping Your Family’s Food and Drink Local, Sustainable, and Healthy, page 32

- Define “Our Local”
- Build the local food sources: CSAs, farmers’ markets, co-ops, local grocers
- Increase our share of local, organic, and fair trade goods
- Sign up for a CSA share
- “Adopt” a farmer
- Start or join a dinner co-op
- Experiment with a patch of homegrown produce
- Reduce how much meat and poultry we eat
- Stick with wild, nontoxic fish

- Experiment with local food recipes
- Stash and bring my own bags
- Install water filter and use reusable bottles—no more bottled water
- Choose items with less packaging
- Skip the drive-through and go inside
- Cut power use in cooking
- Try canning and freezing surplus local, organic food
- Cut water use when cleaning
- Extra credit: Brave composting!

Chapter 4

Sustaining Your Beauty and Mama Earth, page 61

- Screen products for the “Ugly Fifteen”—use www.cosmeticsdatabase.com
- Discover and choose local, organic products
- Consider mixing some of your own glamour potions
- Choose animal-kind products

Chapter 5

Looking Good While Living Local, page 86

- Push both reuse and recycling across your closets
- Set up Mama swaps for your family’s duds
- Cut back new purchases. Look for reused goods or recycled materials for all buys.
- Screen for local, organic, and fair trade manufacturers
- Do the wash a little less often

- Wash in cold water with full loads
- Line dry or consistently clean the dryer's lint screen and use heat sensors.
- Find my local clean dry cleaner
- Donate/recycle nonswapped threads, shoes, and gear
- Rip throwaway clothing items into cleaning rags

Chapter 6

Your Sustainable Home, page 101

- Set up a varsity recycling plan
- Organize the neighborhood rummage sale/swap

Save water:

- Shower: install low-flow shower heads
- Sinks: install low-flow faucet filters
- Toilets: place a gallon jug in each tank
- Washing machine and dishwasher: shorter wash cycles
- Sprinklers: set up timers and use water sensor sprinklers

Save energy:

- Appliances: shift to Energy Star when I need new ones
- CFL lights: swap out the lights as they burn out with CFLs
- Trap heating/cooling: seal doors and windows, shut chimney flue when not in use
- Power strips: install at-source to turn off electronics not in use
- Heat and AC: set temperature at 68 in winter and 74 in summer

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