

Carbon Footprint Activity

You have now completed your carbon/ecological footprint calculation! How do you feel? Was anything surprising? Does it make you want to make any changes in your life?

For the follow-up activity, your group will choose two of the profiles below. Using what you have learned in this course and through what you discovered doing your own carbon footprint calculation, discuss as a group what kind of conversation you might have with each hypothetical person.

Profile 1:

Your coworker Bill strikes up a conversation with you during your lunch break. He knows that you have been taking this training and wants to learn more about what he can do to lower his carbon footprint. From your observations and lunchtime chats, you know that Bill seeks convenience in his busy life and right now uses lots of practices that save time but might not be the best for the environment. He drives a big truck everywhere he goes, relies on a lot of plastic packaging, and has a desk full of devices plugged in at his desk...that kind of stuff. He admits that he is new to thinking about living more sustainably but would like some tips on where to start. What might you discuss?

Profile 2:

Your lifelong friend Jan is an eco-superstar! She bikes to work and follows a vegan diet using mostly locally sourced food. She composts. She recycles. She's never even forgotten her reusable grocery bags at home when she goes grocery shopping. The list goes on; it's kind of annoying, actually. Jan tells you she is concerned she still isn't doing enough. What advice might you give her about what else she could do?

Profile 3:

You are volunteering for Waste Wise/Sustainable Community Stewards by running an education booth at a community event. Someone you haven't met before, Crystal, walks up to the booth and takes a look at the carbon footprint display you have set up on the table. She asks, "what's a carbon footprint anyway?" Upon hearing your explanation, she gets a little annoyed that she is being shamed for her lifestyle. She says she travels a lot for work and has to put food on the table. She could never lower her footprint as much as others in the community. What might you say to her?

Some questions you might reflect on:

1. Does your level of familiarity with the person make a difference in how you handle the discussion?

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2. What are some strategies for talking with community members who might not be as “on-board” with Waste Wise/Sustainable Community Stewards’ messaging?