# **Nature-friendly Parenting: Empowering future eco-warriors**

**Source: Abhishek Talwar, Environmentalist & Children’s Book Author**

The vagaries of climate change and its impacts have come home to roost. Today, there is not a single organism on earth that is not impacted by it. For instance, take the summer months, they are hotter, longer, drier and more severe every year. Naturally, a burgeoning middle class is using more appliances like air – conditioners, to mitigate this impact. This is in turn adding to the problem itself through higher emissions due to increased energy consumption. A vicious cycle that feeds on itself.

Scientists say it is too late to reverse some of the damage done. All we can do is arrest the losses in these cases and try reversing the impact in others. Interestingly, this is not a problem for governments alone to solve. [The war against climate change is one that must be fought](https://indianexpress.com/article/parenting/blog/climate-change-kids-influence-parents-to-make-a-difference-5652346/) on multiple fronts if we are to make any difference at all.

The good news is, each one of us has the tools necessary to make a difference! All we need is to be conscious of these and apply them to our daily lives.

If not anything else, even as parents, the impact we make can be magnified simply because we make a difference by our actions and also empower our children to do so. The big question though is, how can we enable our children to be environmentally – conscious through nature friendly parenting?

The first step is to **get**[**children motivated to make a change.**](https://indianexpress.com/article/parenting/health-fitness/children-who-grow-up-closer-to-nature-are-said-to-be-happier-study-says-6289546/) The best way to do this is to get them to love nature and appreciate all she has to offer us. Lectures on how we need to ‘save the planet’ or ‘improve the environment’ will only go this far. There is no greater force than a motivated child!

Spend as much time as possible amidst nature with your children. This needn’t be a walk through the woods. It can be a stroll through your local park or garden every other weekend or whenever the opportunity presents itself.While there, take in the sights and sounds, run barefoot on the grass, play a game of ‘frisbee’ or catch. Essentially, **be the child, nature meant you to be and simply play!**

I am tempted to say that memorize the names of the various plants and flowers and share them with your children. However, please don’t bother. Unless your child has an interest in things that are botanical, this will simply bore her and get her to dread these forays into nature. [Let her love for nature foster the innate curiosity to know more,](https://indianexpress.com/article/parenting/blog/world-environment-day-2019-how-to-raise-an-eco-conscious-child-5765153/) rather than hoist it on her.Bottom-line, make this a thoroughly enjoyable outing for your children and you. Over time, you will find everyone looks forward to these minutes spent in the lap of nature.

Inculcating a love for nature is a crucial first step. Equally crucial is showing them how they can make a difference. There are easy to implement changes that we can make in our lifestyle. While each is a small change, the cumulative impact can be staggering. Imagine us practicing these changes in our lives! A few changes are mentioned as follows:

* **Shut all** appliances like lights, fans, air conditioners etc. when leaving a room.
* **Keep the faucet shut** while brushing & showering. Only open it when you actually need to gargle or clean / wash.
* **Reuse** what you can and **recycle** what you cannot. For instance, for school projects use old newspapers instead of buying new paper! Likewise, old curtains can become washcloths.
* **If something needs to be disposed** of, do so in the appropriate mannerrecommended. Like segregating dry and wet waste separately.
* **Don’t waste.** This doesn’t mean we need to scrounge. All it means is we use only as much as we need, without wasting any of these resources

Having practiced this with our own children, I find that today they are bigger evangelists [to save our planet than I am.](https://indianexpress.com/article/parenting/blog/world-environment-day-2019-how-to-raise-an-eco-conscious-child-5765153/) The best part is that this is not something that has happened gradually. On the contrary, it has happened almost instantaneously. Of course, you will need to nudge them in the right direction. Ask questions like ‘isn’t this beauty of nature worth saving?’ or how can we stop this bounty of nature from getting destroyed. In no time, the pupil will become the teacher, showing us how we can save planet earth from destruction!

Simply put, nature – friendly parenting is the most joyous and fulfilling experience. All us parents struggle to find things to engage with and keep our kids gainfully employed. The good news is that nature has everything needed to keep them engaged and healthy, both in mind and body. Once we’ve introduced them to the beauty of nature and all she has to offer, all we need to do is sit back and enjoy their transformation into environmentally – conscious and responsible people.