

Greener Than Thou: Saving the Earth, One Smackdown At A Time

by Roz Warren

Terry reaches over and shuts off the water as his wife brushes her teeth. "You don't need to run the water when the toothbrush is in your mouth," he chides. "You're wasting a valuable resource."

"Our marriage is a valuable resource too," Deb responds. "And if you want to conserve it, you'll get the hell out of this bathroom and let me brush in peace."

"Suit your self," says Terry. "But when this lovely planet becomes a cesspool due to just this kind of thoughtless waste, you may come to regret your selfishness."

Deb, reluctantly, turns off the water. The planet is saved. But her mood is ruined.

Terry leaves the bathroom smiling. He's discovered the unique thrill that comes from saving the earth and annoying his wife at the same time.

Sixteen year old Sara conserves water by showering infrequently. "You'll never attract a boyfriend!" protests her mother.

"I'll attract an environmentalist." says Sara smugly. "And we'll live happily ever after, working together to rescue the earth from people like you." What teenage girl doesn't love to drive her mother nuts? And Sara has found a great, Green way to do just that.

Are you a hostile person who gets into trouble when you express your anger? Would you like to annoy the hell out of friends, family and co-workers and get away with it? Then join folks like Terry and Sara, who have mastered the art of being Greener Than Thou. You'll drive people crazy. And they can't tell you to go to hell -- because you're saving the planet!

Greener Than Thou is a game anyone can play.

Take Meg. She's an aggressive recycler. She never misses an opportunity to guilt trip friends and family about tossing a magazine into the trash. or committing the heinous ecocrime of enjoying bottled water.

Or Seth. Seth refuses to flush. "Flushing whenever you go wastes water," he proclaims. Even when his room mates protest that the stench that builds up in their tiny shared bathroom makes them want to puke. "I love planet earth," Seth says proudly. "Deal with it."

Of course, these folks could quietly model good ecological behavior, setting an example that others will want to follow, in a manner that is harmonious rather than provocative. But where's the fun in that?

Liza's dad recently divorced her mom after decades of marriage and bought a grand new house with his brand new wife. How does "Greener Than Thou" Liza respond?

Whenever she visits Dad in his new home, Liza saves the planet by unplugging every appliance not actually in use. "You do realize," she explains as she moves through the living room unplugging everything, "that these things gobble electricity even when they aren't turned on?"

"I wish you wouldn't do that," Dad's new wife says through gritted teeth as Liza unplugs the flat screen television.

"I'm just helping you reduce your egregious carbon footprint," Liza explains patiently. "My mother raised me to care about this planet."

Liza is not only saving the earth while annoying Dad's new bride, but she can look forward to entertaining her mother by telling her about it later. Liza is a veritable GTT black belt.

Susan re-gifts. Give her a present, and within a year, you'll get it right back, wrapped in used newspaper. Her friends call her a tightwad, but Susan proudly claims eco-hero status. "I refuse to buy one more piece of useless junk. Our landfills are too full already." Jane won't let you throw away even a single piece of paper. "You can still use this!" she'll cry, grabbing it out of the wastepaper basket. "Just turn it over. There's plenty of room on the other side!" When a pal bites into a burger, Sam invariably remarks, "It takes 350 gallons of water to produce just one hamburger. You ought to care about that, even if you're unconcerned about how bad eating dead cow is for your heart."

These folks have all discovered how satisfying it is to save the earth while annoying other people. You can too! Learn to express your own hostility in a socially acceptable and eco responsible way. If you put your mind to it, I'm sure you'll come up with hundreds of ingenious ways to save the planet by zinging friends, family and co-workers. They may all end up hating you — but Mother Earth will love you for it.

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