



DARYL HANNAH:

Living Consistent With Your Values



My awakening to responsibility for our world began when I was about ten years old. My uncle, an Academy Award-winning cinematographer, sat me down and told me about nuclear power, something that I had never heard of before. I was horrified. I couldn't believe that we as a species were creating waste from nuclear power plants that had a half-life of hundreds of thousands of years. I also couldn't believe that our tax dollars were being put to such use. I was absolutely appalled. When I started working in the movies at the age of eleven, I got my first paycheck. I immediately went into my dad's office and told him that I refused to pay part of it in taxes because I didn't want the money going toward war or toward nuclear power. My dad responded that I would go to jail for that belief, and I said, "That's okay." That's where my awakening began, and it is still happening as my awareness grows.

It manifested even more personally the following year. Suddenly, I was not able to disassociate my food from the creatures that I was eating. So at a relatively early age, I became a vegetarian. After that, my idea of living my life harmlessly and well kept expanding. I realized that all my concerns—about the cleanliness of our air and water, about the health of our soil, about the preservation of our natural resources, and the protection of people who are being exploited—all have the same roots. Humanitarian and environmental concerns are one and the same. I've never been someone who can pick one specific cause, and make that the

Daryl Hannah is an accomplished actress and producer. After graduating from the University of Southern California School of Theatre, she studied drama at Chicago's Goodman Theater. Her breakout role was the gymnastic android in the movie "Blade Runner" (1982) starring opposite Harrison Ford. She portrayed a mermaid in "Splash" (1984) and went on to star in "Steel Magnolias" and many other movies. At the Berlin Film Festival in 1994, she won the Best Short award for a movie she directed and produced entitled "The Last Supper." She is currently involved in several new movie projects. Photo by Sandrine Weinstein.

only thing I work for. They're all notes of the same song; it's all connected. I really love this quote from Francis Thompson:

Thou canst not stir a flower
Without troubling of a star.

As an actor, I've had a hard time figuring out the most effective things I can do personally, aside from giving money to organizations that I believe in. A musician can go out and play a concert and raise money and awareness in a big way. What comparable gift can an actor offer?

I have decided that the best thing I can do is to make sure that, in every area of my life, I am actually living by my own ideals and principles. My home was built with green materials. We salvaged a barn that was being torn down to make way for a post office. The barn was built from exquisitely beautiful old wood, giant lengths of good, solid board. You can't buy anything like it new because we don't have old growth forests anymore. I did a lot of research about different types of green insulation materials, about non-toxic paint, and about gray water system. I equipped the house with solar power; it has a backup generator that runs on biodiesel.

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I also pick all-organic ingredients in my food, and use non-toxic products in my house. I am actually living within my belief system. And that's really important to me, because, in a sense, the strongest effect you can have is a personal one. When people come to my house, they witness that this lifestyle isn't just nice in the abstract. Everything actually works well, and it's beautiful. Even those who want lavish lifestyles can still employ green and harmless methods and materials. You can still have a refrigerator and have earth-friendly values. You can keep nearly all the amenities that people assume you have to give up in order to live in harmony with nature.

Another choice that many people can make is the vehicle they drive. I drive a 1983 diesel El Camino. I drove from Southern to Northern California on about twenty gallons of recycled french-fry grease. Our society is realizing that there's a limit to our reserves of fossil fuels, and that it's very wrong to go to war and incur the wrath of the world to steal oil. We have other options. Even Detroit is starting to realize this. Family-sized hybrid cars are starting to be sold. The demand for new, low-impact vehicles is going through the roof. In the foreseeable future, all the auto manufacturers will be making them because once consumers change the way they consume, big business is right behind them.

I'm moving into a new phase in which I'm focusing on getting the information that supports these choices out to a great many people. The world is open to it at last.

My manager is the kind of person who has never concerned himself with any cause like the environment. However, his dog began getting sick repeatedly, and developing tumors. He couldn't figure out why. Then he realized that he was using chlorine cleaners on his floors, and the fumes were affecting the dog. He began using a non-toxic cleaner, and his dog hasn't had a problem since. It made him think about what he could do for his own health, and the health of his wife and kids. Many families have a member who has cancer, or know a family that has been touched by cancer. This is causing us to consider the toxins that surround us and that we've been ingesting.

It may take a difficult experience to wake people up to the wonderful alternatives that are now available. My effort now is to make sure that the information we need is easily available, to assist us in making good choices. It's getting easier to find the best alternatives, to discover what really works. The formula is pretty simple: what's good for the planet is also what's healthiest for humans. So I recommend we choose organic everything, buy local produce, eat organic food, and eliminate toxic cleaning products from our homes. The harmless ones work just as well, smell better, and are good for you.

Americans are raised to be short-sighted, and to look just at what we need now—not the price of our needs in the long term. We are going to have to learn to be a different kind of consumer. Big business isn't going to take us there, but big business will follow once they see the huge market for natural products. It's already happening: suddenly, Heinz is marketing an organic ketchup. There are even organic versions of the silliest foods, like potato chips and Cheese Curls. People are coming around.

On this planet we have one, and only one, beautiful, magical, karmic set of circumstances. We have this unique atmosphere, water and soil, and all these wonderful fellow creatures. Let's keep it going, rather than turning downward in a drawn-out spiral. Do we really want fish genes in our tomatoes? Are square tomatoes a good idea? I don't think so. This direction doesn't make sense to anyone who understands the situation. We have a great struggle before us, but we're all in it together. We have excellent tools, and alternatives to our destructive path. I'm excited to be one of millions of people actively making a contribution to a green and growing future.

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