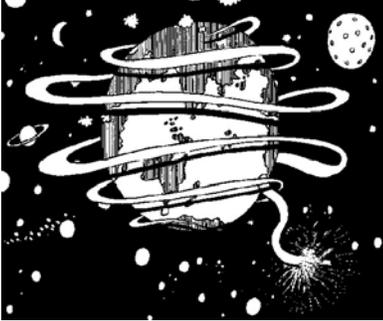


Green Teacher

Blowing Up Your World by Jean Harding



An intermediate activity focusing on individual responsibility for saving the planet.

The "Blowing Up Your World" game shows how an individual's habits and behaviour affect the environment. It can be used or adapted as a quick introduction to a variety of environmental topics, or as an opener for discussions of personal responsibility in protecting the planet's resources.

Materials: one balloon, pencils and paper

How to play:

1. Pick one student to stand in front of the class and blow up the balloon to its regular full-blown size. Do not tie a knot in the balloon, but hold it closed with fingers.
2. Tell students that this balloon represents the world they are inheriting from their parents. They should note that it is already tight with the environmental stress that parents and grandparents have put on it. Environmentally the planet we depend on for our survival is a mess. Now let us see how good a job they as a class are doing.
3. Ask each of the questions below. Students are to put up their hands to be counted.
4. Count the hands up for each question, and blow a big breath of air into the balloon for every three to five students whose behaviour damages the environment.
5. For each question, students record their own score on paper. Points are in brackets after each question.

Questions:

1. **How many of you leave your bedroom light on when you are not in the room?** (Hands down get 2 points.)

Turning off lights saves energy and money. Ask where energy comes from. The more energy used, the more rivers are dammed or more fossil fuel is burned, causing air pollution and increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Explain and discuss the greenhouse effect.

2. **How many of you walked, bicycled or took public transportation to get to school today, instead of coming by private automobile?** (Hands up get 3 points.)

Our reliance on cars that burn fossil fuels is one of the major causes of increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and it is the primary cause of urban smog.

3. **How many of you, when you drink a soft drink, throw the container into the garbage?** (Hands down get 3 points.)

Throwing away containers of any kind wastes energy and resources and adds to our waste problem. Many towns are running out of landfill space.

4. **How many of you eat fresh vegetables instead of canned or frozen?** (Hands up get 4 points.)

Fresh vegetables cook more quickly and are usually more nutritious than frozen or canned foods. Canned and frozen vegetables are often over-processed, contain additives, contribute to air pollution (transport and packaging) and add to our waste problem.

5. How many of you use a hairdryer or other energy-consuming convenience appliance, especially in the morning? (Hands down get 2 points.)

Hairdryers use a lot of energy. In the morning so much energy demand is put on our grids that power companies have to find other sources of energy, often damming more rivers or constructing more power plants just to meet the morning rush hour. Try washing your hair at a different time and letting it dry naturally.

6. How many of you, when you go to a store, get a bag for your purchases, even if you have only one or two small items to carry? (Hands down get 3 points.)

Making paper and plastic bags uses energy and resources. The bags add to our litter and waste problems, and plastic is not biodegradable. Recycling is not the best answer because collecting and recycling materials requires energy. Instead, carry a reusable cloth bag or a knapsack with you.

7. How many of you carry your lunch to school in a lunch box or reusable container? (Hands up get 3 points.)

The same discussion as #6.

8. How many of you eat take-out or cafeteria food that is served in foam or plastic containers? (Hands down get 10 points.)

Polystyrene and other plastic containers are made from precious petrochemicals, do not decompose in landfills, and release toxic gases when they are burned in incinerators.

9. How many of you use handkerchiefs instead of tissues and use cloth towels instead of paper towels? (Hands up get 2 points.)

Paper comes from trees. The more of it we use, the more trees that are cut down. Why is it important to conserve our forests?

10. How many of you have lots of plastic toys or other belongings which you do not use or need? (Hands down get 2 points.)

Why did you buy these things? Shopping wisely and reducing our consumption are the first lines of defence in protecting our environment.

11. Is your sewage treated before it flows into a lake or the ocean? (Hands up get 6 points; zero points if you don't know.)

Raw sewage running into a body of water pollutes it. Water is one of our most valuable resources, yet many towns still do not have waste treatment facilities. When we dump raw sewage, we are using lakes, rivers and oceans as our toilets. Think of this the next time you drink a glass of water, milk or pop: only 1% of the world's water is drinkable and it is constantly being recycled. Every glass of water contains at least two molecules of water that at one time were part of someone else's body!

Add up your score:

31 - 40 Very good. You're an environmentalist!

21 - 30 Good, you're starting to save the world.

11 - 20 Lots of room for improvement.

0 - 10 You're exiled to the town dump!

Did your balloon blow up? Point out that Earth is very resilient and will survive; it is Homo sapiens and other species that we endanger by damaging our environment. Discuss with the class what they have to do to protect the environment.