



## Guidelines for Writing your own 'Why do I care'?

The environmental crisis and climate change are such vast and wide-reaching issues, it can be hard to identify how you personally can play any role to address them. We've been overwhelmed by data, which has had the effect of squeezing out the personal. This is why the "why do I care" programme has been created: to enable all of us to reflect on our core values and from this to be empowered to join others in making a personal difference. We start by telling our own stories.

1. To tell this story, it helps to focus on a single moment or event at its heart.
  - a. This could be a memory, a relationship, a place, an object, or even a piece of art that touched you. To identify this, you might want to reach back to your childhood or to a defining moment in your life.
  - b. This could be something that acted as a catalyst for your conscience, something that prompted a moment of increased clarity, or even a token that stands as a metaphor for why you care.
  - c. Think about what role religious or spiritual beliefs, the arts, your own culture have played in giving you the language, imagery and sense of tradition from which you care?
2. To make this story effective:
  - a. Get into the memory and describe it with your senses.
  - b. Explain how it made you feel.
  - c. If you can, give it a narrative structure of beginning (in what scenario did you encounter it?), middle (what happened?) and end (why did this enhance your caring?)
  - d. Try to get your personality into your story, so readers will be left with a sense of connection with, and hopefully affection for, you.
3. If you wish, you can then use this personal story as a gateway for explaining the importance of any broader values or arguments about the environmental crisis that are important to you. Coming at these through the story of your own personal and emotional connection will make readers much more likely to be empathetic to them.
4. Try and keep it short: 100-250 words or a one minute video.
5. Post it on [www.whydolcare.org](http://www.whydolcare.org), and on any websites or twitter accounts (#WhyDoICare) or other social media places you have access to; make it into a meme, tell people about it, and in turn ask them why they care about the living planet and climate change and see whether they want to join whydolcare?
6. Having told your personal story go to the next question: What can I do now?

**HINT:**  
**Sometimes to answer this it helps to go for a walk, or sit in the quiet or put headphones on, or talk to someone else.**

For the struggle to protect the environment to be effective we need to make it personal; we need to touch our own consciences and help people touch theirs. Join us, and leaders from around the world, in exploring WhyDoICare? and from that, we can go on to touch the conscience of the world.



## Experiences

Some people find it easy, and just sit down at a computer, and five minutes later it's there, fully formed. Some write or say too much and need to edit. Others – including many of the team members at WhyDoICare? – find it surprisingly hard to commit themselves to an answer (a good way to overcome this is to get a colleague or friend to “interview them”). And many find their first answer is not quite right, and needs a day or two to shape it so it's truer.

*“It was surprisingly cathartic.”*

*“I hated sitting down and doing it. I resisted it for days, kept making excuses that I was too busy. But when I finally did it, I was brought back to a moment in my childhood where things were still and made perfect sense, and when I came out of that I felt slightly renewed.”*

*“When I read about what made others care, it made me think about why I did. Of course my obvious response was that it's a massive crisis, but then while I was walking and driving and doing other things I'd find my mind turning on it and finding solutions.”*

## Examples



I've been a conservationist and naturalist since my early childhood. I remember crying when I saw trees being cut down, and lying in meadows watching beetles, ants and bees going about their seemingly busy lives. I became a Christian in my late 20s and that faith grew and became a separate strong strand of my being. When living in Sumatra I was challenged by an American missionary to explore how I could meld these two elements, and over many years I explored and discovered the links which now make so much sense. So I care because I have seen the beauty and intrigue in the small and common, the grand and the mundane, the utilitarian and the esoteric parts of nature. I care because there is no reasonable alternative.

*Tony WHITTEN is the Regional Director, Asia-Pacific, [Fauna & Flora International](#), UK. Before that he wrote the Ecology of Indonesia series, still in demand after 30 years, and then spent 16 years as Senior Biodiversity Specialist at the World Bank, conceiving and managing the World Bank's Faith and Environment programme.*

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*“Ce qui me scandalise, ce n'est pas qu'il y ait des riches et des pauvres, c'est le gaspillage”.  
Mère Teresa. Cette phrase figurait sur toutes les portes de mon collège, scotchée par un professeur, il y a 25 ans. Le gaspillage ultime, c'est l'épuisement forcené des ressources de notre planète.*

*“What scandalizes me is not that there are rich people and poor people, it's the waste.” This phrase by Mother Theresa appeared on all the doors of my college, taped by a teacher there 25 years before. The ultimate waste is the frantic exhaustion of our planet's resources.*

*Alexandre SEVENET est Fondateur du groupe [Nepsen](#)*

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It was a hot summer day and the London park hummed with business people rushing lunch. In the heat my fellow intern had abandoned decorum and kicked off her smart heels; inadvertently revealing that her formal black socks were in fact stitched with bounding foxes. "You like foxes too!" I exclaimed, thinking we finally had something in common. Yet her expression stayed stern. "I'm scared of foxes," she said. And when I asked why, something flinched behind her gaze. "Because they look at you," she said.

Her response stayed with me throughout the following drafts of my first novel. In part, no doubt, because I was writing from the perspective of a girl who turned into a fox, but also because she had unwittingly managed to encapsulate what I so dearly love about foxes – that they are nature looking back.

You can be walking along one night, lost in the world of twitter and take-aways, lattes and late trains, only to turn a corner to find yourself suddenly confronted with a wild creature. Though little larger than a cat, it has the hungry aspect of a wolf. Its eyes catch the streetlight like struck flint, a cold flame that licks across your skin in a shudder of self-awareness. In that moment of vertigo you can see yourself through more than human eyes. In that moment you can see yourself for what you really are.

In our scientific and post-enlightenment age, humans have become used to thinking that 'nature' is something 'out there', we like to think of ourselves as existing outside, looking on, analysing or saving. Yet we are part of nature, nature is part of us and we could not know ourselves without it. Even were we able to escape a dying Earth for other planets, something would be left behind. Flung into the void we would be divorced, atomised, decomposed; we would have lost an essential aspect of what it is to be human. I care because saving the climate isn't an act of charity, it is to save ourselves.

*Emma Geen is a British author, whose debut novel, The Many Selves of Katherine North, will be published by Bloomsbury in the UK and US, Summer 2016.*

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I care because of my mother and father. My father was an Anglican priest who simply knew in his heart that God was love and that everything in this wonderful complex world was born out of love. He taught me to see the trees and mountains and animals as children of God just as we are children of God. He walked me through the beautiful prayers of my tradition with their evocation of the sheer wonder of Creation.

My mother was agnostic but she knew that we are here to protect the vulnerable, whether that was human beings or baby birds, trees and plants. She was an early conservationist, and some of my earliest memories are of being deeply embarrassed by her! If she saw people damaging a tree or throwing stones at birds, or teasing someone who was different, she would never walk by on the other side. She would rush to defend whoever and whatever was threatened. I remember once when she stormed into a group of teenage boys throwing stones at a baby squirrel they had knocked out of a tree; she saved it and let it go back into the branches. When you're a child the last thing you want is for a parent to be odd, or different, or draw you into uncomfortable situations. But from her I learnt that unless you act then you are guilty of being complicit in the abuse of nature or people.

What my parents both taught me was that without love and passion, we will walk through a world which is grey, rather than one (as the poet Gerald Manley Hopkins described it) that is glorious with life and "dappled" with the Glory of God.

*Martin Palmer is the Secretary General of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC). He has been working for more than 30 years to help faiths protect the living planet, through their beliefs and values, their landholdings and teachings and structures. <http://www.arcworld.org>*