

ZeDay: Zero Emissions Day on September 21

Curriculum Guide

Update 2014-08-27

Welcome to ZeDay! If you are reading this guide it may be because you are considering participating in ZeDay. If you are a teacher, a leader of a youth group or a parent/caregiver, hopefully this will encourage you.

The main purpose of ZeDay is to stop and have a fun exploration of what it means to have the use of energy. ZeDay means to celebrate human innovation and possibility of a sustainable world! Simply celebrate being alive with those around us (or you may choose to do this for yourself)!

The following is a simple, profound curriculum prepared to guide or facilitate a person or a group of any size to engage in discussions leading up to and during and post ZeDay. Feel free to modify depending on age or group, or even develop your own!

What we have designed is a four-session, 6-hour curriculum in 1.5-hour modules. You can complete it over a four-week period, three weeks leading up to ZeDay and one post ZeDay. Or you can do the sessions...a la carte or better yet, make up your own! Each module has an exploration, discussion and a call to action.

We want to continue to develop and share great ideas. Please let us know how it goes with you. Do you have a story to share? A discussion question that worked really well? Give us some feedback, we would love to hear from you!

What is it?

The “Z” in ZeDay stands for zero. The “E” is for emissions which means energy consumption. It is simply stopping for a day and having a conversation or reflecting about what sort of world we want to live in. ZeDay is completely different. It is not against anything. It's inclusive, requires nothing save mindfulness, and promises general, universal benefit.

There are scores of campaigns which deal with different aspects of the problems we face (all to be commended). Until recently though, these generally would either focus protest and anger against such and such or encourage an orgy of energy expenditure to draw attention to a cause.

Zero Emissions Day is completely different in this respect. It is simply stopping for a day. Going back to square one. It is not against anything. It's all inclusive, requires nothing save mindfulness, and promises general, universal benefit.

Goal: A Global 24-hour Moratorium on Fossil Fuel use!
Yes, we can!

The Guidelines are simple: (see more on appendix 1)

- Don't use or burn oil or gas or coal.
- Minimize (or eliminate) your use of electricity generated by fossil fuels.
- Don't put anyone in harm's way:
All essential and emergency services operate normally.
- Do your best and enjoy the day!

Why is it important?: The Zero Emissions Day movement is inspired by the awareness that earth civilizations have been accelerating exponentially fed by the consumption of our finite fossil fuel resources – and this hasn't stopped for over two centuries.

A further real benefit of Zero Emissions Day is in the conversations it inspires.
Mark Szpakowski on his blog at memer.com in 2008:

“But this is what the world needs. For example, Zero Emissions Day is coming September 21st – basically, turn off the energy consumption, and go analog. What if people took the opportunity to meet each other, in local groups, eat, talk, and perhaps celebrate in various ways, including theater – and then fed that back to the web, the global play?”

Since we are all in this together and realistically all responsible for the welfare of our planet at this point, it's time to co-create our future. Zero Emissions Day provides a unique open space, a focal point for such activities.

How does ZeDay grow?

Enroll friends, roommates, fellow workers, fellow students, teammates, your family, neighbors, organizations, everyone! Make it a fun challenge to “rest” from using energy consumption for just one full day. How many can you enroll?

Resources

There's an abundance of excellent material on the state of the world today.

Here are some items that are easy to recommend – that you are likely to find either online or at your local library.

Videos

- [From The Heart Of The World - The Elder Brothers Warning](#), Alan Ereira (1991)
- [Donella Meadows "Down to Earth" Speech](#), DMI, (1993), 32 min
- [The Green Beautiful / La Belle Verte](#), Coline Serreau (1996) 130 min
English subtitles
- [How Cuba Survived Peak Oil](#), Community Solutions (2006) 53 min
- [Home](#), Yann Arthus-Bertrand (2009) 93 min
- [Walking On Air](#), NASA short (2012) 5 min
- [Surviving Progress](#), (2011) 53 min
- [What was the message of 'Limits to Growth'](#), Club of Rome (2012)
- [Years of Living Dangerously](#), TV Series, 2014

For youth and young at heart:

- [Wonders of Life](#), Professor Brian Cox, BBC (2013) 5x 60 min
- [Wonders of the Universe](#), Professor Brian Cox, BBC (2011) 4x 60 min
- [Wonders of the Solar System](#), Professor Brian Cox, BBC 2010 5x 60 min
- [How Earth Made Us](#) by Iain Stewart, BBC (2010) 5x 60 min
- [National Geographic: Human Footprint](#), Clive Maltby (2008) 90 min
- [The Human Footprint](#) Nick Watts, Channel 4 (2007) 75 min
- [Earth: The Power of the Planet](#), Iain Stewart, BBC (2007) 5x 60 min
- [Planet Earth](#), David Attenborough, BBC (2006) 11x 60 min

For younger children:

- [The Lorax](#): Dr. Seuss, Universal (2012) 86 min
- [WALL-E](#), Andrew Stanton, Disney (2008) 98 min
- [Over the Hedge](#), Dreamworks (2006) 83 min

Articles

- [August 19 is Earth Overshoot Day](#), Global Footprint Network (2014)
- [Global Warming's Terrifying New Math](#), Bill McKibben, Rolling Stone (2012)
- [Global Warming and the Meaning of Doom](#), Deepak Chopra, Huff Post (2012)
- [Transitioning to a Zero Fossil Fuels World](#), Kjell Kühne, RIO+20 (2012)
- [The rich, the poor, and the hungry](#), Gwynne Dyer, Straight (2012)
- [Loading the Climate Dice](#), Paul Krugman, NYT (2012)
- [Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System](#), Donella Meadows (1999)

Books

- [This Changes Everything](#), Naomi Klein (2014)
- [The Third Industrial Revolution](#), Jeremy Rifkin (2011)
- [The Vanishing Face of Gaia: A Final Warning](#), James Lovelock (2009)

What would you include here?

Send your recommendations to zero@zeroemissionsday.org

Additional suggestions for action:

Go to website <http://zeroemissionsday.org/> and share it with others on your social networks. Tell them how many days until ZeDay!

Take the idea of ZeDay to your church group, youth group or any group you think might be interested.

Put up ZeDay posters (see website to download).

Curriculum/Guide:

Materials (simple and optional): paper (recycled), pencils, markers, flipchart and paper, masking tape).

Module 1 – 1.5 hours

Name: **Power!**

Exploration:

10 minutes: Take out a piece of paper and jot down all the things that happens in the day or that you do during the day that take some sort of external energy use i.e. get stuff from the fridge, turn on light. Think about it from the time you get up until the time you go to bed.

Discussion questions:

Get into groups or pairs, or even reflect yourself in your journal and ask yourself: (each question is approximately 15 minutes).

1. Go through a typical day with each other, what activities do you do that requires an energy source?
2. What can you do through the day that takes ONLY human energy?
3. As a group decide, "If you had to give up everything except for one power source, what would you keep?" Why?
4. Where does this power source come from? How did it get to your home?

Actions:

In the next week, talk to at least one other person about ZeDay and what you learned today about energy use. For next week, "What is natural power?"

Module 2 – 1.5 hours

Name: **Action! Innovation! Make history!**

Check in: Any discoveries or insights from last week? Did you tell someone about ZeDay? What happened? What is natural power?

Exploration:

10 minutes: Take out a piece of paper and jot down what you think would happen if everyone in the world stopped using energy sources for one day (ZeDay).

Discussion questions:

Get into groups or pairs, or even reflect yourself in your journal and ask yourself: (each question is approximately 15 minutes).

1. What would the effects be? What do you think would happen? Would some be valuable? Would some be destructive?
2. How would it affect people?
3. How important is energy? Why?
4. How can we make sure we have it?

Action:

Tell another person or group about ZeDay and what you have discovered. Think about what can you/we do personally, locally, nationally and internationally?

Module 3 – 1.5 hours

Name: **Getting prepared!**

Check in:

Any insights discoveries from last week? What activities did you come up with for personal, local, national and international action?

Exploration:

10 minutes: Take out a piece of paper and jot down all the possibilities of what you could do during ZeDay without using an energy source. Think about it from the time you get up until the time you go to bed.

Discussion questions:

Get into groups or pairs, or just reflect yourself in your journal and ask yourself: (each question is approximately 15 minutes).

1. What are some of the things you came up with? What about the basics: eating, sleeping, bathroom, washing...
2. Fun things you can do?
3. What things do you need to prepare to not use ANY power where you live.
4. How does power make our lives easier?

Actions:

ZeDay – Do your best, don't put anyone in harm's way, have fun! Tell someone or a group about ZeDay!

After Zero Emissions Day

Module 4 – 1.5 hours

Name: Celebrate!

Check In:

How was it? What did you do?

Exploration:

10 minutes: Think about the highlight of the day. Why was it the highlight?

Were you able to go through the whole day without an energy source? Why or why not?

Discussion questions:

Get into groups or pairs, or even reflect yourself in your journal and ask yourself: (each question is approximately 15 minutes).

1. Did you have fun with the people you did it with? What was the most difficult part?
2. How important are our energy sources?
3. What will you do differently now if anything?
4. What can you/we do to enroll others into ZeDay next year?

Every day is now a day when we can celebrate alternatives to energy from fossil fuels – celebrate simply being alive with friends and family – honor how our ancestors have lived for millennia, and help safeguard the wellbeing of future generations.

Zero Emissions Day Curriculum/Guide Evaluation

Let us know what you think. Return to zero@zeroemissionsday.org or write

Zero Emissions Day Curriculum
Box 42,
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2L4 Canada

Appendix 1

The Guidelines for Zero Emissions Day are simple:

Don't use or burn oil or gas or coal.

Power down – go back to the basics – the way our ancestors lived for millennia. The idea is completely outrageous, but why not? There is nothing new about this. It is only in the past 100 years or so that we've grown accustomed to creature comforts and ease that even royalty could not have imagined in previous times.

If you need to be somewhere distant on September 21, get there the day before. Structure your life before hand so that you can easily transition to a day of not turning things on.

Minimize (or eliminate) your use of electricity generated by fossil fuels.

Our fossil fuels are our inheritance and yet we are spending them like there is no tomorrow. It is not that they are bad. It's just that at this point we can see a time when there will not be enough to go around. Therefore this could be a good time to stop and take stock – contemplate and actualize alternative sources of energy – and be thankful, respectful of the bounty we've been granted.

If you stop replenishing the fridge and freezer in the days prior to September 21, you can switch off the power main to your home for 24 hours, feast on the remaining contents, and give the appliance a much needed cleaning.

Don't put anyone in harm's way:

All essential and emergency services operate normally.

Since fossil fuels power civilization, the Zero Emissions Day moratorium applies to everything non-essential. This means essential services for the infirm, the very young and elderly who require them are uninterrupted. Let common sense prevail.

Do your best, have fun – enjoy the day!

With the above guidelines, you are all set to participate. You are likely to find that in practice, ZeDay is easier said than done. Our habit is to turn things on. For instance, it is quite likely that one might jump in the car and drive across town to a friend's house, only to realize that it is Zero Emissions Day! At that point, don't be too hard on yourself. Stop, take a deep breath, and go back to your original intention for the day. Above all have fun with your friends and family, and really enjoy the day.