



The power of reconnecting with yourself, your food and nature to create change

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Whether you're ready to face it or not, Earth has been pushed to her limits and our choices are causing havoc in the world as we know it.

There are many, many issues in this world. Individually and collectively we have responsibility to act. The systems we currently have in place to grow, package and distribute food all add to rising global temperatures which affects the resources to produce food; and they are stripping the planet of the diversity of life - the biodiversity which underpins our diets. At the other end, food is wasted which also contributes to the problem. Now, we all need to eat, and perhaps food gets slightly overlooked when regarding the problems around the environmental crisis.

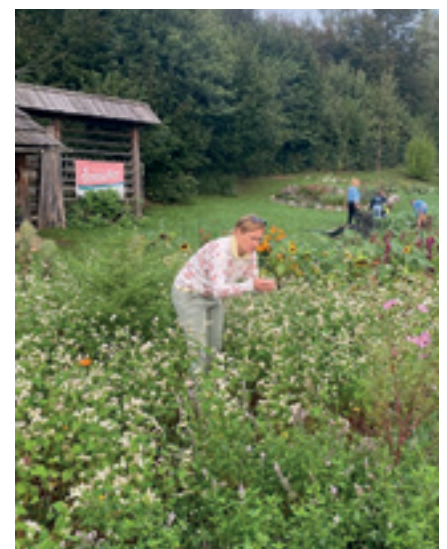
I understand that it is a really hard truth to swallow, but the threat to our food security is pressing and serious. Already, millions of people in the world face hunger, and this will only increase if we don't take steps to protect the land and make choices to build a more secure and sustainable future. It is scary and complicated. As an individual it can feel overwhelming to know what to

do. I am also very aware that it can be challenging to know what choices are the 'right' ones: cost and convenience are huge barriers and these can lead to feelings of guilt and frustration. We live in a world of materialism and injustice; a world in which nutritious food and a meaningful connection to nature are just not necessarily part of life for a lot of people. Chances are, as you've picked up the Star and Furrow today, you probably already have at least curiosity around this.

It is not just about what we consume, improving your connection to food and the land where it comes from can deepen the understanding we have of ourselves, others and the world around us. I had the absolute pleasure of speaking with Maja Kolar and Sam Bullingham about these themes. Maja is dedicated to deepening understanding of biodynamics and spreading the knowledge to students and farmers alike. Sam now teaches yoga in the city, her experience of growing and co-managing a community supported

agriculture farm for 6 years informs her practice and teaching. Their passion and understanding has been a real inspiration to me. Can you take anything from this? Is there a seed you can plant to deepen your journey and be part of this movement for change? Step by step climbs the mountain.

Maja Kolar



It is a long-term process to understand the importance and benefits of investing in yourself through eating high quality, nutritious food.

Approximately 20 years ago, Maja was questioning the approach of conventional farming when studying agronomy. She thought that it would be about maintaining and bringing new life, not destroying it. So her lecturer introduced her to something which he thought was more in line with her way of thinking - biodynamic farming. To begin with, as is the case with many people, some of the concepts of biodynamics were hard to understand and Maja was a bit sceptical with the lack of scientific research to back it up. She continued to explore it, and a personal experience confirmed that the biodynamic path was for her. After a lot of anxiety whilst looking for solutions to help her son - biodynamic food proved to be the key to preventing his allergies from flaring up. So much so, that she could judge if he had eaten conventional or biodynamic food based on how his skin reacted to it.

She realised that the food we eat impacts our bodies and our minds - how we think, work and even our will power. Maja is a perfect example of how nutritious and wholesome food can give you energy and determination. She is involved in managing a seed bank co-operative, certifying farmers and lecturing to biodynamic associations in Slovenia; participating in Goethean scientific research in Denmark and Switzerland, developing and delivering lectures in SEKEM and Heliopolis University in Egypt, working with the Biodynamic Federation Demeter International and running a Demeter certified school garden.

It is a long-term process to understand the importance and benefits of investing in yourself through eating high quality, nutritious food. This education can start in school. When Maja set up the school garden it was hard to get mainstream schools involved. Over time, and after the pandemic, people have started realising the importance of connecting to nature and growing food. Practical food growing education combined

with learning about science and creativity can be steps to encourage healthy eating and engagement with wider environmental issues. Maja notes that often, 'behavioural problems' in children who struggle within the classroom environment will go away as they become calm and develop more focus when connecting with their own senses and learning in an outdoor space.

Sam Bullingham



The links between practising yoga and organic farming may not seem obvious. When Sam found herself pulling up carrots as a volunteer on a farm one February day, she did not expect the two to fuse together like they did. Sam has been teaching yoga for many years. For a while her practice and teaching felt like quite a masculine and rigid approach; she felt like she was missing out on accessing something bigger when repeating the same postures every day. The volunteering led to co-managing the community supported agriculture farm: working on the land really brought home to Sam that each season brings a different rhythm and way of being - offering different parts of nature or ourselves to honour. This is what Sam tuned into to inform her yoga teaching. Her approach is to acknowledge that We Are Nature: it is beneficial for us to tune in to those rhythms, 'As we honour the intrinsic architecture of our body, we are able to better align ourselves to the outer flow of nature'.

Sam is now living in Bristol and city life is sometimes making her feel really disconnected from nature, her food and the seasons. She ponders 'what is the point of rain falling on concrete?': this made me laugh, but actual illustrates that unless you

are working with or consciously connecting with the land it's likely that there is a disengagement from nature. You don't have to wear wellies or get grubby nails: the connection can come through honouring our shared cyclical nature through the mind and body in practices like yoga.

Although it had its challenges for Sam, small community farms are collaborative social movements which can bring people together, create positive energy and provide nutritious food. The opportunity for people to improve their communication skills can help us hear and respect each other more. Moving the body in a purposeful way and eating local, organic/biodynamic food gives a real sense of holistic well-being: the vitality of the food made Sam feel more alive. There was a certain magic about being involved in growing and having a direct connection to her food. For more information about Sam's yoga classes please visit: sambullingham.com

How do you feel when I ask about your relationship with food? Your relationship with nature?

Self-care through a nutritious diet and meaningful connection with nature takes commitment and time. The choices we make can be influenced by so many factors - some real and some perceived. I see and feel the fear which shuts down a sense of environmental responsibility: fear can stop us acting. Increasing awareness of your choices around food and the impact it is having on nature and other humans can help us face the environmental crisis in a positive way. Both Sam and Maja spoke of the power of organic/biodynamic food for physical health, and also mental health - that feeling of 'being alive'. With this foundation of self-care, we have more vitality to give back to others and more energy to consider the messiness of the world. A meaningful connection to nature can awaken our senses to the living organism of our planet and help us appreciate where our food comes from. When you buy food, the choices you make can contribute to building a more secure and sustainable future - creating ripples of change personally, locally and globally. What steps will you take?

Lillie Bellamy works for BDA Certification. She is also a mother and holistic therapist, amongst other things.