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No Impact Man: The Adventures Of A Guilty Liberal Who Attempts To Save The Planet, And The Discoveries He Makes About Himself And Our Way Of Life In The Process



Synopsis

What does it really take to live eco-effectively? For one year, Colin Beavan swore off plastic and toxins, turned off his electricity, went organic, became a bicycle nut, and tried to save the planet from environmental catastrophe while dragging his young daughter and his Prada-wearing wife along for the ride. Together they attempted to make zero impact on the environment while living right in the heart of Manhattan, and this is the sensational, funny, and consciousness-raising story of how they did it. *With No Impact Man*, Beavan found that no-impact living is worthwhile--and richer, fuller, and more satisfying in the bargain.

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Customer Reviews

Beavan (*Fingerprint*) chronicles his yearlong effort to leave as little impact on the environment as possible. Realizing that he had erred in thinking that condemning other people's misdeeds somehow made [him] virtuous, he makes a stab at genuine (and radical) virtue: forgoing toilet paper and electricity, relinquishing motorized transportation, becoming a locavore and volunteering with environmental organizations. Beavan captures his own shortcomings with candor and wit and offers surprising revelations: lower resource use won't fill the empty spaces in my life, but it is just possible that a world in which we already suffer so much loss could be made a little bit better if husbands were kinder to their wives. While few readers will be tempted to go to Beavan's extremes, most will mull over his thought-provoking reflections and hopefully reconsider their own lifestyles. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier

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“The No Impact Experiment changed Colin Beavan and reading No Impact Man will change you.”

Annie Leonard, creator of "The Story of Stuff"

“Far from being a movement of self-denial and stern lectures about having too much fun, the 'no impact' mind-set is actually about increasing fulfillment and happiness by asking us to think about what makes us truly happy and what's really important in our lives.”

Arianna Huffington

“No Impact Man is a deeply honest and riveting account of the year in which Colin Beavan and his wife attempted to do what most of us would consider impossible. What might seem inconvenient to the point of absurdity instead teaches lessons that all of us need to learn. We as individuals can take action to address important social problems. One person can make a difference.”

Marion Nestle, author of What to Eat

“Profound . . . Beavan's project has significant emotional and ecological heft. No Impact Man works, most of all, because Beavan is intelligent, funny, provocative, and, above all, honest.”

The Philadelphia Inquirer

“There's something inspiring about a smart, committed person coming to an elegantly simple conclusion.”

Los Angeles Times

“You have to give Colin Beavan credit; the man put his money where his mouth is. A self-proclaimed 'guilty liberal' tired of the world's general ecological decline, he decided to change his life. And in no small way. Even better, he did it with a sense of humor.”

The Boston Globe

“There's something of Thoreau in Colin Beavan's great project--but a fully engaged, connected, and right-this-minute helpful version. It's a moment when we need to have as little impact in our own lives as possible--and as much impact in our political lives as we can possibly muster. Beavan shows how!”

Bill McKibben, author of Deep Economy

“From their first baby steps (no takeout) to their giant leap (no toilet paper), the Beavans' experiment in ecological responsibility was a daunting escapade in going green . . . So fervent as to make Al Gore look like a profligate wastrel, Beavan's commitment to the cause is, nonetheless, infectiously inspiring and uproariously entertaining.”

Booklist

“With thorough research, Beavan updates his blog (noimpactman.com) with convincing statistical evidence, while discovering new ways to reduce consumption and his family's environmental footprint . . . An inspiring, persuasive argument that individuals are not helpless in the battle against environmental degradation and global warming.”

Kirkus Reviews

“Beavan captures his own shortcomings with candor and wit and offers surprising revelations . . . [Readers] will mull over his thought-provoking reflections and hopefully reconsider their own lifestyles.”

“Colin Beavan has the disarming and uniquely remedial ability to make you laugh while he’s making you feel like a swine, and what’s more, to make you not only want to, but to actually do something, about it.” --Norah Vincent, author of *Voluntary Madness* “No Impact Man is a subversive book--not because it preaches a radical environmental agenda, but because it gives the secret to personal rebellion against the bitterness of a man’s own compromises.” • Arthur Brooks, author of *Gross National Happiness*

This is the autobiographical story of Colin Beavan, an author in New York who becomes greatly concerned with the negative impacts humans are having on the environment and embarks on a journey to discover what it looks like to live life in New York with a wife, small child and a dog while having no net impact on the environment. Beavan makes this transition gradually, making the following lifestyle changes over the course of a year: no production of trash whatsoever, almost entire reduction of carbon emissions, no impact eating through consumption of locally grown, organic foods, only purchasing previously owned or used goods, no coal-powered electricity and making positive impacts on the environment. He does not simply talk about the experiences, however, but explains his motives for undertaking the No Impact project, shares information about the degradation of different environmental resources and integrates his own personal struggles and past experiences in an occasionally heart-wrenching narrative style. This journey is clearly moral as he wrestles with the relationship between humanity and nature and searches for answers to human realities of suffering and death. Beavan ultimately concludes that while action by individuals is absolutely necessary to the restoration of our environment, a fundamental culture change must take place for the degradation of our habitat to come to a halt. The brilliance of this book is its simplicity and acknowledgement of humanity; changing how we live is just plain hard, and Beavan never shies away from that fact but is instead brutally honest about how much he struggled at times. His writing is very accessible and even when he’s sharing a lot of information about ecological crises around the world his terms are never so technical that the average person wouldn’t be able to understand. Furthermore, he provides illustrations that make big numbers make sense for the individual, something that is rarely done but incredibly powerful. He has a very positive view of human nature, which is sometimes inspiring and empowering and other times comes off as rather naive. He is very upfront about his political and religious beliefs which I found refreshing and helpful for contextualizing his arguments and actions, whether or not I agreed with them. The actions he takes to live in a more sustainable way are well researched and quite practical. He admits that he does not really expect the average American to put all of his ideas into practice (and that he was

only able to do so because it was part of his job to carry out this whole project) but he writes of many people who were able to take a few of his ideas and integrate them into their everyday lifestyles. I found this helpful because I think living sustainably often sounds like a lot of work. It's helpful to get lots of ideas of different ways to live that are simultaneously minimally disruptive to the environment and our present lives. If reducing our contribution to the ecological crises of our day is so easy to do then we can feel empowered instead of helplessly complacent. That said, his ideas are significantly more relevant to other people living in large cities.

The statistics that Beavan uses throughout the book were astounding to me. Whether the specific statistic discussed the amount of trash that the average American produces every day or the amount of Carbon dioxide that is emitted through driving, it showed how many things Americans do that harm the environment. Since it seems to me that we are fighting a losing battle, part of me thinks "What is the point?" but I think that this is part of the reason that Beavan underwent this dramatic lifestyle change. His actions show that we can make a difference but our individual actions are related to the individual actions of other people. If individual effort leads to collective effort, the struggle is so much sweeter. Through their actions, Beavan and his family exposed me to a new way to think about the way I affect my immediate environment and the planet as a whole.

I give this a gift and they loved it.

I really enjoyed this book. However, it does not go into great detail about how he did what he did. For example, he stops producing almost all trash, but he only lists a couple of ways he did that. What I'm trying to say is it's a great read and very inspiring, but it is certainly not a "how-to" book if you're wanting to do what he did.

I love this book and its message. Living with minimal impact is something we should all strive for. Not only for humans but for the sake of all nature and all living things. Everything comes in a package it seems, so to attempt living without creating garbage is not easy; but it's very admirable and offers positive influence and change that we need in this world. Hats off to Colin and his family for doing their part towards making a difference.

The book made me take a more serious look at how I use common resources. Even small changes

made by many people can impact our environment. I am a recycler but am now using fewer paper products that litter our landfills and fewer chemical cleaning products.

This book is amazing... (better than the movie). A lot of really good facts. I have been trying to go zero waste which made me get the book. Not only, does it say things that are NOT just common sense it really motivates you. Still reading... wish there was a sequel.

I thoroughly enjoyed this presentation! It was great fun to compare the movie with the audio book--sometimes it was the difference of night and day. I think I listened to this about 30-35 times--and will probably have to order a new copy, eventually! Very enjoyable to see the changes and interactions between the two principals, and how they grew during the course of the year-long experiment. Well worth it!

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