

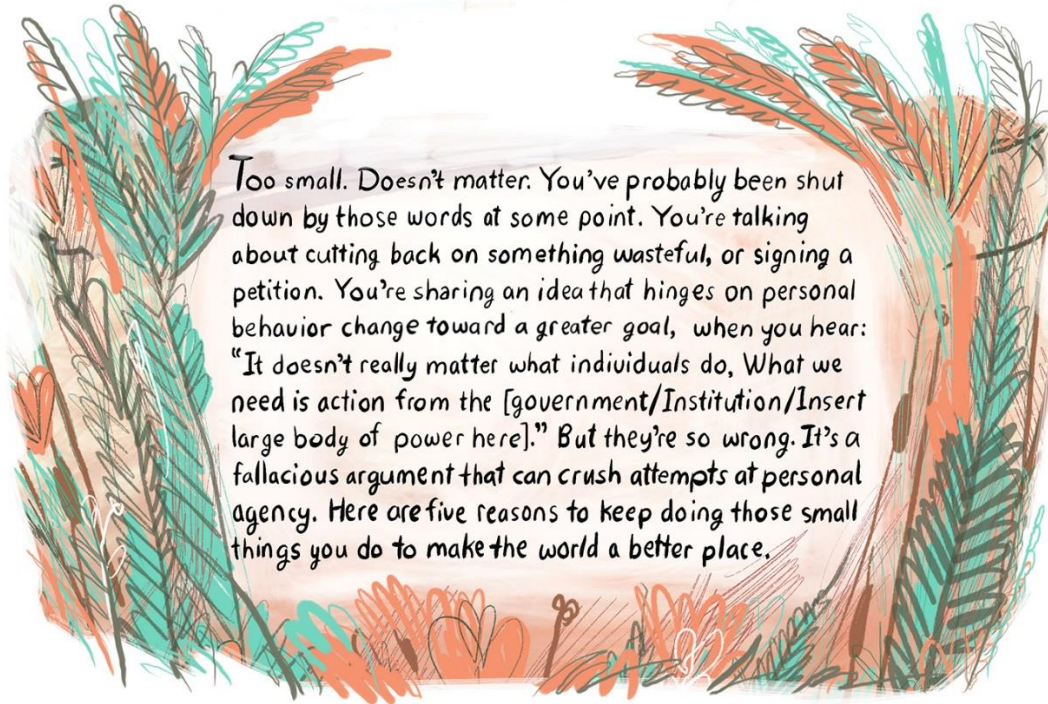
# Small Works

by Sarah Lazarovic

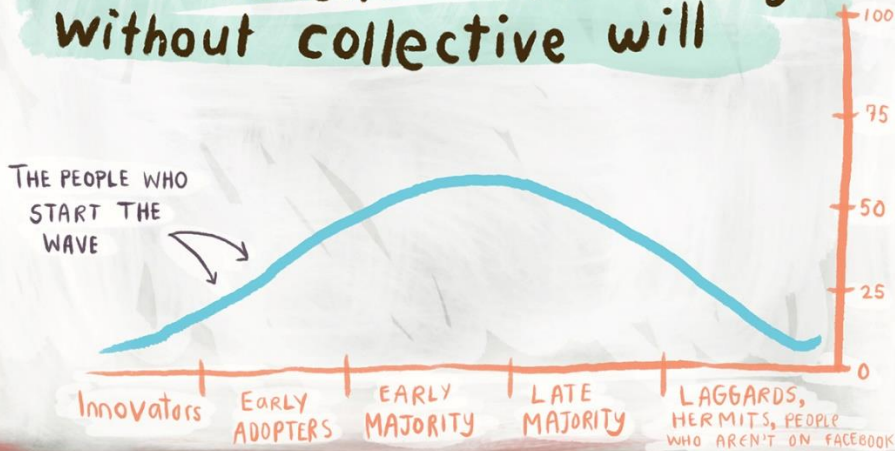
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## 5 Ways Small Actions Have Huge Power

To those who take the bus or refuse plastic toothbrushes: Don't listen to the cynics.



### 1. Institutions don't change without collective will

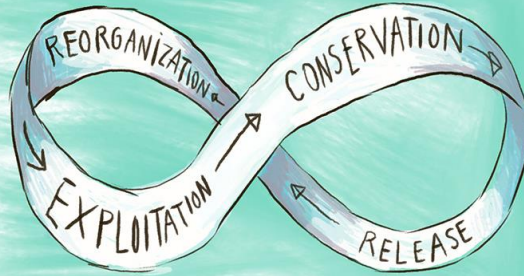


In his book *Diffusion of Innovations*, Everett Rogers set out a basic theory of change that established the idea of "early adopters." These innovators push the majority to think/shop/eat/legislate in a new way. With critical mass, industry and institutions take notice — and eventually change.

## 2. A big thing is just a bunch of small things put together

Most of our challenges exist in systems, in which all the parts are interacting and inter-related. When we push, however small, from within the system, we create a feedback loop that changes it.

**A TINY BITE  
CAN STILL  
BUG YOUR  
WHOLE  
BODY**



The Adaptive Cycle is a Möbius Strip for resilient growth

## 3. SMALL creates new norms

It's more democratic when a million people do something small, than when a very powerful person does one big thing (though that can be nice, too). It's in the small actions of the many that we see behavior change and new ideas seeded by many diverse conversations finding commonality. We'll always need big players to make big gestures, but every movement needs to accommodate for the inclusive participation of all.



**BRINGING  
YOUR OWN  
MUG**



**SIGNING  
THAT  
PETITION**

NO MORE  
BAD THINGS  
PLEASE  
SIGNED  
*[Signature]*

**TURNING  
OFF THAT  
LIGHT**



**UPCYCLING  
THAT  
LAMP-  
SHADE**



**EATING  
LESS  
MEAT**



## 4. GOAL attainment is about little victories

"Chunking" is the term for breaking a goal into smaller pieces, for discrete wins (and frequent dopamine hits). The New York Times writer Tim Herrera calls this process "micro-progress." We need immediate and drastic action on climate change, but no one person can fix climate change. Some people can stop fracking in their community. Others can stop buying plastic toothbrushes.



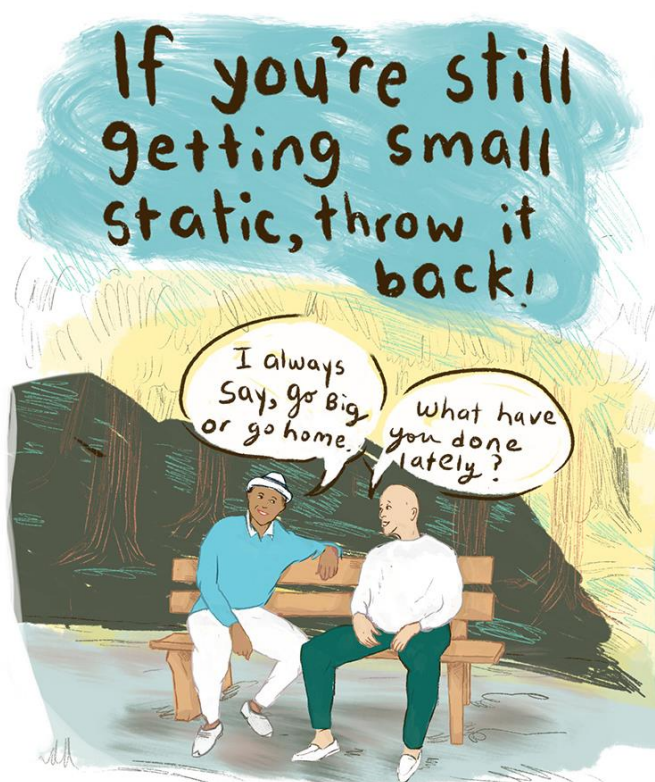
## 5. Small becomes you

Doing something small every day keeps the larger goal top of mind. Stanford Professor BJ Fogg's Tiny Habits program is all about simple "new habit recipes" that ultimately change our identity. Small actions that become part of your routine become habits. Habits that lead to change.

How did you become fluent in Finnish?

One syllable at a time.





# #START SMALL

Behavioral science teaches us that writing down what you plan to do (called implementation intention) goes a long way toward helping you achieve your goals. What little positive thing will you do this week?

I WILL:

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**Updated:** October 5, 2018

*This version removes a reference to weight loss in item 5 for sensitivity to those who experience weight stigma.*

