1. Stop Eating (or Eat Less) Meat
The single most effective action you can take to combat climate change is to stop eating meat. Just limiting your meat consumption can make a huge difference. Greenhouse gas emissions from agribusiness are an even bigger problem than fossil fuels. So while we often talk about cutting our reliance on fossil fuels – and this is still critically important – we rarely discuss the worst culprit. Red meat is particularly to blame, consuming 11 times more water and producing 5 times more emissions than its poultry counterparts. You don't have to become a vegetarian, but eating meat less frequently (the average American eats 8.5 ounces of meat per day!) will significantly help the environment. To get a single pound of beef, it takes over 5,000 gallons of water – as the number one consumer of freshwater in the world, animal agriculture is drastically increasing the problem of water scarcity. Don't forget to inform others: many people simply don't know about the connection between meat and climate change.

2. Unplug Your Devices
You might be surprised to learn that all electronics suck energy when they're plugged in, EVEN IF they're powered down. In the U.S. alone, "vampire power" is responsible for draining up to $19 billion in energy every year. Anytime a cord is plugged into a socket, it's drawing energy – so although your device isn't charging, you're still contributing to your carbon footprint. Simple solution? Leave your electronics unplugged at all times, unless you're actually using them.

3. Drive Less
Choose to walk, bike, or take the bus – leave the car at home. Many people are opting to bike to work or to run errands. In the U.S., public transportation saves 37 million tons of carbon emissions every year.

4. Don't Buy "Fast Fashion"
Many major clothing retailers practice what is known as "fast fashion" – selling an endless cycle of must-have trends at extremely low prices. Heaps and heaps of clothing ends up in the landfill. We're talking over 15 million tons of textile waste – with quantity over quality, fast fashion retailers can charge next to nothing for items that are mass-produced. There's also the issue of contamination: almost half of our clothing is made with cotton, and unless it's labeled as "organic" cotton, there's a high chance that it's genetically modified cotton sprayed with lots of pesticides (including known carcinogens). This, like all non-organic crops, can be damaging to neighboring non-GMO crops, cause water contamination, reduce biodiversity, and have negative impacts on human health. Don't forget that anything made overseas has a huge environmental impact – from the physical act of shipping a product across the ocean, to the chemical runoff from garment factories (leather tanneries are particularly bad). As if that's not enough, fast fashion is an industry still largely propped up by child labor. Toxic to the environment, detrimental to human rights – who needs it? Try alternatives like buying vintage, re-purposing old clothing, choosing locally handmade garments, or participating in clothing swaps with family and friends.

5. Plant a Garden
Whether you live in a house or an apartment, planting some greens is a quick and easy way to reduce your carbon footprint. We all know plants absorb carbon dioxide – a beneficial relationship for humans that we should all be seeking to nurture. Plant some bee-friendly flowers, a few trees, or a vegetable garden.

6. Eat Local (and Organic)
Whenever possible, try to eat local, in-season produce. Sticking to foods that are grown locally helps to reduce the carbon footprint created by shipping foods from elsewhere. A general rule for where something is grown? The closer to you, the better. When a fruit or vegetable can be grown in your own backyard, or a local farm, the environmental cost is significantly reduced. Just imagine the journey that food from a distant country has to take – by plane, ship, train, or truck, the produce must stay cooled, so it doesn't spoil, and has usually been picked way too early (resulting in not-so-great quality, and fewer nutrients). Small farms are more likely to adopt beneficial soil-care practices and maintain borders for local wildlife, and eating locally-grown food supports your local economy and promotes food security. It's equally important to eat organic produce, which hasn't been sprayed with toxic pesticides and other environmentally detrimental chemicals. Don't forget to avoid processed foods: processed and packaged foods are often bad for your health, not just the environment. Processing plants are major polluters. Choose whole foods that are better for the planet, and better for your own longevity.

7. Line-Dry Your Clothes
The traditional method of line-drying your clothing is much better for the environment. One dryer load uses 5 times more electricity than washing – by simply line-drying your clothes, you can save 1/3 of their carbon footprint. Unfortunately, line-drying seems to be America's least favorite way to save energy – despite the fact that running a clothes dryer is equivalent to turning on 225 light bulbs for an hour. Europeans, on the other hand, are excellent at this (95 percent of Italians don't even own a dryer) – it might be time to follow their lead, especially considering the tumble dryer is one of the top energy-consuming appliances (not to mention the leading cause of appliance-related house fires).

Anyone can make these simple changes: they're easy to implement, and are immediately effective in reducing your carbon footprint. Our actions and choices ultimately make a difference, and we all share the responsibility to do whatever we can to address climate change, big or small.