

The Psychology of Inspiring Everyday Climate Action

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WHEN KIMBERLY NICHOLAS, a sustainability scientist at Lund University in Sweden, decided that she needed to confront the climate effects of her frequent flying, she took a scientist's approach. She spent hours making meticulous spreadsheets comparing the costs of all the modes of transport she might take—in terms of time, finances, and emissions—and when she finished, she *still* didn't know what the right choice was. She had, she says, “analysis paralysis.”

In the end, the spreadsheets were for naught. Instead, what it took for her to make a change was an hour-long conversation with a friend who had himself stopped flying. Seeing how a fellow academic made his career work without air travel convinced Nicholas she could do the same, so she quit flying within Europe (although she still flies to visit her family in the United States.) Now she takes trains across the continent, extending trips when she can to justify the travel time. She joins events virtually when the travel math doesn't add up.

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