

Living green with Dia Mirza

By ANAND HOLLA, Pune Mirror | Updated: May 25, 2019, 06:00

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The actor-producer and UN Environment Goodwill Ambassador gives a lowdown on practising sustainability on a day-today basis

What Dia Mirza preaches, Dia Mirza lives by. As United Nation's Environment Goodwill Ambassador for India, the actor-producer is a true novelty in the sea of celebrities who do little for causes they espouse.

An active campaigner for environmental issues that

range from shunning plastic use to beach clean-up movements, Mirza admits that city life often isn't conducive to making eco-friendly choices. "I struggle to find a balance in leading a wholesomely sustainable lifestyle, but I've found ways to do my best," she says.

That means, in her office, for instance, neither single-use plastic is allowed nor print-outs are taken "unless absolutely necessary", and all paper is recycled. "When I hold workshops with schoolchildren, addressing consumption patterns and plastic use, I always tell them: Every item that you use and throw, think of where it's coming from and where it's going to go," she explains. "That is also what I try to apply to all consumption in my daily life."

From refilling detergents and shampoos to carrying her own mug for takeaway coffee, Mirza is a wizard at implementing greener, practical lifestyle solutions, and inspiring others to do so via her social media outreach. Some of her popular hashtags on

Instagram are #TravelingBottle and #beatplasticpollution, which drill in the idea of using a metal bottle when on the move.

“I only share what I do, and in doing so, I learn and perhaps inspire others to make a switch,” Mirza says. “#Beatplasticpollution is one of the most relevant campaigns of our time. It highlights how our unchecked consumption patterns and reckless disposal of waste is clogging our oceans.”

Mirza shares her smarter, greener lifestyle choices with the hope that you feel inspired to incorporate them as well.

Single-use plastic

90 per cent of single-use plastic is not recycled and is burned. They end up either in landfills, on the roadside or drift into our water sources. It's also one of the easiest to replace. Before I order a beverage, I tell the server to not give me a plastic straw — one plastic straw lasts in the environment for up to 500 years. Whenever we have events or parties, we use bamboo, paper, metal or leaf-based cutlery.

I don't use packaged water bottles but always carry my metal bottle. It's not only carcinogens. I also carry my cloth handbags to shop, and not just for groceries but any item really. I avoid buying food that is plastic-packed.

Waste segregation

Segregating waste at source is key. We practise separation of wet and dry waste in our housing society. We ensure that even the e-waste is disposed of responsibly by contacting initiatives that come home and collect it. We have set up a compost system, which turned us into a zerowaste society — only our dry waste gets collected — and the compost is used for the garden. Initially, some people had opposed composting, but today, they are proud of it.

Saving water

We have installed water metres and gauges in our society, which automatically turn off the pumps when the storage tank gets full. By not letting our tanks overflow, we have saved hundreds of litres of water over time. Every car gets only one bucket of water every day for cleaning. We find ways to reuse water for washing common areas as well. All in all, it's a matter of making greener lifestyle choices a habit.

Better choices

Men can stop using disposable razors. Women's sanitary napkins too are mostly made of plastic and take up to 300 years to degrade. Most of the used sanitary pads are incinerated, releasing all kinds of toxins in the air. I've found a sustainable, 100 per cent bio-degradable substitute to the regular napkin and I hope other women too, make such choices. Menstrual cups are also sustainable. Speaking of better choices, I use bamboo ear-buds and bamboo toothbrushes instead of the plastic variants.

Give green

Instead of buying somebody a usual gift for their birthday, or a special occasion, I gift him or her a tree via initiatives like grow-trees.com. Even to mark important festivals, I prefer gifting indigenous trees and plants to people because it's important to introduce plantations that are bio-diverse. If I'm to gift someone a bouquet, for instance, I opt for a flowering pot — and most people really appreciate such a gift. I am also heartened to see people's growing interest in green Ganesha during Ganesh Chaturthi, as Plaster of Paris is toxic and not earth-friendly.

I prefer everything that's recycled and refurbished; from furniture to clothes. It's important that we proudly re-wear and upcycle our clothes to make them fashionable again.

Eat green

I am 90 per cent vegan and my diet is high on fruits and vegetables. I feel like it has made me healthier and more energetic. I say 90 per cent, because I allow myself to consume meat on a few occasions as I grew up on a non-vegetarian diet. When it comes to buying fruits and vegetables, I always opt for local and seasonal produce as they are both healthier and more sustainable.