

What can you do?

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What can you do when the world seems to be going wrong? The far-right is rising, neoliberalism is failing, democracy is under threat, and millions of people are increasingly worried about their futures. It is easy to feel powerless, but I believe everyone has something they can contribute.

In this video, I explain how you can make a difference, even if you have limited time, money, confidence or experience.

You do not need to change the world on your own. You do not need to become a politician, a professional campaigner or an expert. What matters is finding something you care about and developing the knowledge and skills to contribute to the debate.

I explain why understanding an issue is the foundation of effective campaigning. Whether your concern is economics, climate change, electoral reform or public services, learning enough to discuss it confidently is an important first step.

I then explore the different ways you can communicate your ideas. Writing blogs, publishing articles, contributing to online discussions and making short videos can all help bring new perspectives into public debate.

But campaigning does not have to mean publishing anything. Talking with friends, joining discussion groups, writing letters to newspapers and contributing to radio phone-ins can also make a difference.

Perhaps most importantly, I explain why listening matters as much as speaking. Changing someone's mind rarely happens through a single argument. It requires patience, understanding and a willingness to engage respectfully with people who disagree.

I also discuss the importance of avoiding burnout. Campaigning is a long-term commitment, and everyone must recognise their own circumstances, responsibilities and limitations. You should never feel pressured to take risks that could threaten your employment, family or well-being.

Small successes matter. Every conversation, letter, article or video has the potential to influence someone else's thinking, even if you never discover the impact it had.

Democracy depends on people believing that their voices matter. If we want a better society, we cannot simply leave its future to politicians and powerful interests.

You may not change the world on your own, but together we can make a difference.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0bsTTYbmCA?si=fpoQEaV9oHpCK3fk>

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=sgjhw-1b92830-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

What can we do when the world seems to be going wrong? It's a question I hear all the time. People ask it of me.

The far-right is rising. Neoliberalism is failing, and democracy is under threat. And many people, especially the young, face growing insecurity about their futures. It's easy in that case to feel powerless when the problem seems so, well, overwhelming, but there's always something that each of us can do.

The question is then: what can we do that will actually make a difference? That's what this video is about: you figuring out what you can do to make the world a better place. I'm trying to do my bit. Can you take part?

Remember, though, you do not have to change the whole world on your own. None of us can solve every problem or become involved in every campaign. What we can do depends on our skills, knowledge, and circumstances.

We must also recognise the risks that we can afford to take, including at work. Some people can't be involved in politics or anything close to it. Their employers won't let them. Please don't take those risks.

The important thing is to find a way of contributing that suits you. Doing something worthwhile matters more than trying to do everything. You'll only burn out if you try to do that.

The first thing you can do, though, is improve your knowledge, and I can't stress that enough. Choose an issue that concerns you and learn as much as you reasonably can about it. It might be economics, electoral reform, climate change, or the special needs of children, but whatever it is, do learn more about it. You won't become a world expert, but you don't need to in order to make a contribution. You simply need enough knowledge to discuss your subject with some confidence. That is sufficient.

Understanding an issue is the foundation for doing something about it, and that's why this is most definitely the first step.

But don't be incapacitated by that quest for knowledge. That can also become a quest for perfection. And for some people, that means that nothing ever happens. That is not the right approach. You've got to decide when the time has come, when you can begin to communicate.

And the next step is, in fact, to develop your ability to communicate. This is very important, and finding the right way in which you want to communicate is just as important.

I suggest you start trying to write about the subject you've sought to understand. You could start a blog, publish on Substack or Medium, or comment on other people's work. Writing is a skill that improves through practice and experience. You will make mistakes. We all do, but that is part of learning to communicate.

And this is relevant now. Feel free to use AI as an editor. I stress quite strongly that you should not use it to write your material. You should use it, though, as an editor because if you do, you will see what mistakes you've made. You can learn from it. But remember, at the end of the day, the writing is yours, and the important thing is to start and then keep improving.

Now, writing may not be your thing, and if that's the case, well, there are other ways in which you can do it. You can write short posts on Bluesky or Mastodon. You can even use Twitter if you really want to, and I still do because that's where some people are. But the point is: you can write very short posts, and they're less stressful than longer ones, of course.

Or you might prefer to make videos. You might have that knack. You might have that ability. You might be a natural communicator in front of a camera. Some people are. Others loathe the idea.

TikTok, Instagram and YouTube Shorts are all there and available to you. 150 words of

text is enough on any of those platforms, and you can probably remember that much and your phone is good enough to record on, but a decent microphone does help. But you can get one that will plug into your phone for well under £100 in most cases. It will make a difference, though. Sound quality matters more than the image.

And you do not even have to appear on camera to communicate effectively on these platforms now. You could use animations or AI-generated voiceovers to achieve the outcomes that you want.

Just choose a medium that suits your abilities and that you can develop over time. That's the message I'm trying to impart. There are many ways in which you can try to say, "We need to improve this world."

And as a matter of fact, you don't need to publish at all. My inclination is to do so, but yours may not be. Talking with other people is another way to build confidence. Find people who share your concerns and want to understand them better. An online group, even better, a face-to-face group. Meet some people for coffee. Do whatever you can. Start a book group if that is possible. Just a few people will help you test your arguments and discover what you do and do not know. It also helps other people develop their knowledge and skills and their confidence. Learning together can make everyone more effective.

And you can also take your arguments, those that you've practised in that small group, into the wider public debate.

Try writing letters to newspapers, beginning with your local paper. There's no reason why you should not also approach national newspapers. But remember, most letters will not be published, and that's life. That's the fate that everyone who writes to newspapers suffers. One in 10 letters published is good, in my experience. Some will be published, others won't. But over time you will have an impact. And for some people, that is what they want to do.

But remember, rejection is normal and don't get down about it. You shouldn't be discouraged from what you're trying to do. Try again. The world is changed through effort as much as anything else, and every opportunity to reach a wider audience is worth considering.

Also, remember, you can try radio phone-ins, and I think these are a particularly useful way in which people can contribute. Radio stations run phone-in programmes, and very often they do not have enough people calling in to fill the time available. I've even seen people in radio studios phoning regular commentators to ask them if they'd like to join in a debate because they're short of callers. And normally those people are the right-wing people who appear time after time, after time.

They need people with different perspectives on these programmes to take part in the

discussions. Choose a subject you understand, phone in, and prepare before making your call. That doesn't need a lot of effort. Just write down one, two, or maybe three points you want to communicate. You won't be able to do more than that. You will not have that much time available. So work out precisely what you want to say. Make a note of it. That will remind you when you go on air and feel as though you can't remember a thing you've ever done in your life. And at that moment, you've got something that will tell you what you need to say.

You do not need to make more than a single point to make a useful contribution to debate. You can take part in these things. It's as available to you as it is to all those right-wingers who try to dominate the scene.

But the most important thing you can do of all is to talk to other people. I do this. I do it a lot, and I learn a great deal from it. Explain what concerns you and why you think change is necessary to anyone who will listen. Of course, don't bore them. Don't alienate them and do so gently and without lecturing, harassing, or trying to humiliate anyone.

Then listen to what other people say because even when you disagree with them, there is always something to learn. Many of these videos are influenced by conversations I have. I've heard that somebody doesn't understand something. I've heard they disagree with something. I want to put the record straight. I make a video about it. They might never know that's the case, but it does matter, and it informs my work.

And if someone becomes hostile, and some people will, it's usually best to withdraw. Don't worry about it. Just say, okay, let's leave it there, let's move on. And perhaps you might physically move on, but the point is, you will have still given them something that they will think about later. You may have made a difference.

And remember, changing minds is rarely an immediate process. People do not usually abandon deeply held beliefs after one conversation. An argument may take time to have an effect. You may never know whether something you have said changed someone's thinking, but that does not mean your contribution was wasted. Success sometimes happens simply because someone reconsiders what they believe, and that could be a long time after you said something. You might never realise what you did, and that's okay. That's part of this process of change.

But, vitally, you must choose what you can realistically sustain. Don't burn out doing this. That helps no one, and I see that quite often. People come into a cause with great enthusiasm. They throw themselves into things, and then a few weeks later, a few months later, maybe a year or two later, they're utterly worn out by the process, and they leave, and you never hear from them again.

That is not what creates change. Pacing yourself is important because we are in a long, slow process of change. We might have an urgent need to see that change now, but it

isn't going to happen overnight, so pacing yourself is going to mean you are here for the long term to see the change through.

And not everyone can anyway take the public risk of becoming a visible campaigner. Your employment, family responsibilities and well-being must be considered first. There's no shame in making the contribution you can within those limits, and please do that. What matters is making a contribution that you can continue to make.

And in this context, do remember we are not going to change the world overnight. I've already said that, but it's worth reiterating. Progress depends on people developing knowledge, confidence, and the courage to speak the things I've already spoken about.

It also depends on recognising small successes, and do celebrate them. There's every reason to do that. You get a letter in the paper. Give yourself a pat on the back. Accept the applause from somebody else. You made a video for the first time. Put it up on TikTok, then celebrate the fact. We may never know what the consequences of our actions are, but we can celebrate the small successes that we can see, because they matter.

There is no reason to remain silent when change is needed. There's no reason to be depressed about the fact we don't seem to be making progress. Every small change makes a difference.

The future then is not something we should simply leave to others. The rise of the far-right and the failure of neoliberalism are reasons to act. Democracy cannot flourish if people believe they have no influence. We each have something to contribute, however limited it might seem.

Find your subject, develop your skills, and use your voice wherever you can, in whatever medium you think best suits you. You may not change the world on your own. In fact, I'll guarantee you that you won't. I won't. You can't. We can, however, work together to change the world. We can all be part of the difference we want to see in this place that we call home, and that to me is why campaigning matters.

That's what I think. What do you think? This is an occasion when I would be really interested to see your comments. There is a poll, but your comments matter more. Please let us have them, and I will therefore think about what you have to say because that could influence what I do.

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Poll

[poll id="568"]