What is 'the environment'?

What is 'the environment' and what can we do to help? A video for schools made by a worldwide Buddhist organisation.

Discuss before watching

- Have you heard the word 'environment' before?
- What does it mean?

What to look out for in the video

- What 'the environment' is
- Suggestions of things we can all do, and why

Watch a video (3 mins)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFK5DUJ7_pw

Reflect and discuss

The word 'environment' means everything that is around us. When people talk about caring for *'the* environment' they are thinking about how people can take care of the Earth so that it is clean and beautiful and a healthy place for people, plants and animals to live.

- What did the video presenter say was the problem?
- How do you feel about that? What do you think?
- What things did she suggest we can all do to help?
- Which of these do you already do?
- How do you feel now you know there are lots of things we can all do to help?



Background information for teachers

This video was made for primary schools run by one of the largest Buddhist movements in the world, the Tzu Chi Foundation (and uploaded to YouTube by Tzu Chi in Indonesia). Tzu Chi is a Buddhist tradition within Chinese Buddhism.

Started in Taiwan in 1966 by its female founder Master Cheng Yen, Tzu Chi began as a local women's project collecting small amounts of money for those in need. Today, it runs secular projects in many countries, informed by Buddhist values, in areas including medicine, disaster relief and education – as well as environmental projects.
https://global.tzuchi.org/we-do_environmental-protection

Some relevant Buddhist teachings

Ahimsa, or non-harming
The Five precepts
Karma/kamma

Why be kind, thoughtful and generous?

Ahimsa and the Golden Rule

The ancient Indian word *ahimsa* means, literally, non-harm. Like many spiritual leaders, the

Buddha taught what has become known as the Golden Rule: treat others as you want them to treat you. This takes training: even if we don't mean to harm others, all of us behave unkindly sometimes, through lack of awareness.

If it's true that everything we do, think and say has an effect on us and on others, it's very important that we learn to be more and more thoughtful, kind and generous. As with anything else in life, if we practise, we'll get better at it.

The Five Precepts

Unhelpful behaviour

harming living beings
taking things that don't belong to you
being greedy *(for children this is adapted from the original precept relating to sexual behaviour)*
telling lies or speaking unkindly
clouding the mind with alcohol or drugs

Helpful behaviour

1. loving-kindness
2. generosity
3. stillness and contentment
4. truthful speech
5. mindfulness, or awareness

More information about the Five Precepts
https://windowsintobuddhism.com/topics-11-16/five-precepts-2/

The principle of ahimsa is expressed in the Five Precepts, a set of guidelines for living offered by the Buddha for those wishing to move towards Enlightenment by developing wisdom and compassion. (See below.)

Karma/kamma

Karma/kamma is another ancient Indian word, which simply means 'action.' This word is found in several ancient religions which began in India. The Buddha's teaching about karma/kamma is that actions have consequences, or results, for us and for others:

Being kind, thoughtful and generous has a positive effect, leading to happiness for us and others.

Being unkind, careless and selfish has a negative effect, leading to unhappiness or suffering for us and others.

Pupil activity

The world needs more people with awareness and kindness, who care about taking care of our Earth. What positive things do you already do, which you can encourage others to do too?

Think about the suggestions from the video.
Do you have any other ideas?
Now do one or more of these:

1. Make posters for your school, encouraging others to help take care of our environment.

2. Give a short talk to your class about the problem and what we can all do about it.

3. As a class, give a presentation to your school assembly.