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The Make-It-Better Book

75 ways you can change the world

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Back cover:

The world isn't perfect. Make it a little bit better!

Save the environment, protect animals, be nice to yourself and other people – lots of little changes make a big difference. The Make-It-Better Book is a mine of good ideas for how you can improve our world, one bit at a time. No matter where you start, start today!

One Euro per book goes to the *Children* charity: with children, for children

Foreword

The world isn't always the way we'd like it to be. There are people who have too little of the most important things. And there is much too much of some other things: rubbish is a huge problem, for instance, and so is air pollution. And sometimes there is something quite simple lacking in our everyday lives: friendship and good ideas. At first glance, this is all very bad – but there are A LOT of things you can change!

Not everything at once, in a few seconds. But little by little, and ideally in as many places as possible.

You know the old saying: from little acorns, mighty oaks do grow. And that's exactly how one small, good idea can change everything. Ideas are catching – try it for yourself! This book will show you how to start making the world a nicer place.

Would you like to cheer people up when they're lonely and sad? Or maybe you'd simply like to share something you don't really need with other people? Do you love animals and nature?

Find something that interests you. It doesn't matter where you start; the important thing is that you start today. You'll see: it's like magic! Even small changes can have a big effect – and bring happiness, too.

Malte Arkona

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Save the planet

- How you can do something good for animals and plants (which is good news for people, too)
- Look at your lifestyle
- Pay attention to what you buy
- Avoid waste
- Be an animal lover

Join in and have your say

- How to join in with big organisations and even get involved in politics
- Pay attention to what's happening around you

Before you begin

There are lots of different ways to use this book. You can carry out the projects exactly as it suggests, or use them to develop your own ideas and do something that suits you. All the projects are marked with one, two or three stars depending on how much effort they take.

*You might want to start with something small. Find a project you can do quickly – you might even be able to finish it in less than an hour. These are the beginner ideas.

**Slightly bigger projects that will take some planning and probably can't be done in just one day (unless it's a day when you have a lot of time, like at the weekend or in school holidays, or if you're off sick). These are the advanced ideas.

***And finally, there are the demanding project suggestions, for which you'll need other children and possibly adult supervision as well. Putting these ideas into practice will take a bit more effort. That's why we've called them expert ideas.

For every project, it's important that you have fun, and do things you enjoy or are good at. Or something you've always wanted to do.

Five golden (but super simple) rules for making it better

1 You don't need money to make the world a better place

Lots of the make-it-better ideas are completely free, because you can work with things you already have: your brain, some paper, pens and glue. For a few of the expert ideas, however, you will need some money. But even children can earn money: you could sell something or offer a service: this book has suggestions for that. There are plenty of ways to fill the make-it-better money box if you need to.

2 Tell someone what you're planning to do, and get advice

Tell the people around you what you're planning to do, and advertise your good deed. Maybe that way you'll get some valuable support, or at least a few good tips. It might be useful to make a little leaflet about your idea and do a few photocopies that you can take around with you, perhaps putting them through your neighbours' letter boxes. Then everyone can read about what you're planning. If you want to tell people about it in person, be careful: people aren't always pleased when someone rings their doorbell.

If you're not sure how to put your plan into action, then speak to the professionals. There are all kinds of clubs, initiatives and organisations who have good ideas about how to make the world a better place. At the end of this book, you'll find a list of addresses you can turn to for advice or a chat. People who work professionally in a particular area often have helpful tips for developing your project further.

3 Go public

Most people want a better world and a nicer life. But not everyone knows how to start doing something about it. So tell them about your make-it-better ideas! When as many people as possible hear about what you're planning, you might get so much support that you can carry out a big project. Or maybe a lot of people will benefit from one small action.

You could get in touch with your local newspaper. Most places have a free weekly paper or magazine that lets people know what's going on in their town. And every paper has a list of people who work there and report on different things. You can phone them up or write an email to the editors, telling them about your idea and suggesting that they report on it. Or you could go to the local paper that people have to buy. Someone there might also be interested in what you're trying to do and write an article about it. Give it a go!

4 Join forces with other people

Some ideas are so complicated that it's better to work on them with other people. Why not ask your school if there is a teacher who would help with a project? It can be a real advantage when a whole class organises a jumble sale or the whole school organises a Christmas bazaar to raise money for a good cause. Sports clubs, choirs or church groups can also put the make-it-better ideas into action together, and have fun while they're doing it.

5 Don't be disappointed

It might be that no one wants to help, or shows any interest in your make-it-better plans. Don't be sad! There could be all sorts of reasons for that: some people might just not understand your ideas. Others might find them too much of an effort. It can be very difficult to give up old habits and try something new (just ask an adult about that!). And there are some ideas the world just isn't ready for yet. You can always try something else first and come back to that idea later on.

But if you're really convinced about your idea, then stick with it and don't let people put you off. Start on your own. Doing something is always better than doing nothing. And when other people see that someone has started something, they're more likely to join in.

You'll soon see: it's fun to make the world a better place, and it feels good to change things. So be patient – with yourself, with other people, and with your idea.

Some people own a lot of things, and some very few – for different reasons. There is probably someone in your class or your neighbourhood who doesn't have enough of something, while you might have things you could do without. You just need to find each other.

If you want to figure out whether you have too little, just enough or even too much of a particular thing, the first thing to do is to take a proper look at what you own. It's easy to forget how much stuff you have collected over time.

Sample chapter:

Too much and not enough

How you can start to even things out

Give something away

It's good to give: that's something scientists have discovered. Giving someone a present can make you feel just as good as you do when you get a present yourself.

So your gift won't just be a good thing for someone else, it'll be good for you, too. Handy, right?

Put a gift box together

*If you have any toys you no longer need, then decide whether they are only fit for the bin, or whether they could still be used – it might just be that you're bored of a certain card game, or you have a book you don't want to read, or a CD you already know off by heart. Collect up the things that are still okay, put them in a cardboard box and stick a big sign on it: Help yourself!

You can leave the box on the pavement outside your house for a day. People might come past and be pleased to have something you don't need any more. If there is anything left in the box, try again another day. Or hold onto those things to sell at a jumble sale (see page 27).

Fill a piggy bank

*Small coins aren't that popular – there's practically nothing you can buy for 2 cents or 5 cents. But every little helps! In other words: if you collect up all the coins that are lying around here and there, then eventually you'll have an amount you can do something with.

You can decide who would be pleased to have your cent-savings. Keep all your small coins for this person for a whole year, and then give them the pot – maybe as a Christmas surprise.

Ask your parents if they have a piggy bank you can use, or collect your coins in a jar with a screw top. You can decorate it with stickers or permanent markers. Then start saving, and put away all the small coins you end up with. Tell other people about your idea, too, and ask for their support. That way, a few coins will quickly turn into more.

Learn to use up food

**Lots of food ends up in the rubbish rather than on our plates. That's a real shame, and it harms the environment: food production uses energy – and sometimes takes a lot of work, too. So make sure that whatever food your family buys also gets eaten.

Food needs to be packaged and stored properly, ideally in jars and tubs with lids rather than in open containers. Some things should be kept in the fridge or the cellar. That stops harmful things getting in, and the food stays fresh for longer.

If you can cook and you know how to turn leftovers into a delicious meal, it's easy to use up all the food you buy. Get someone in your family to teach you how to cook. There are a few basic rules that aren't very complicated, and that will help you to come up with your own recipes.

There is a web address at the back of the book where you'll find tips for using up food.

Do something nice for poor people

*A lot of beggars suffer from being cold, wet and hungry. But it's just as bad for them when other people ignore them or are even mean to them.

If you see someone who is begging, then smile and say hello. Tell them you hope they are well. If you happen to have some spare change as well, that's even better.

[Good morning!]

Give presents to other children

[For you]

**If you have good toys that you don't really need any more, you can pass them on directly to children who might not have as much as you do. How about an old jigsaw puzzle that you've done

often enough? Or action figures that you used to love but hardly use any more? Books you've read many times? Dolls that you're too old for now? Make another child happy with them!

You will need to make a few phone calls (if you prefer, get an adult to help you with this). If there is a children's home near where you live, call them up and ask if anyone there would like the treasures you've picked out. Or perhaps you live near a home for refugees where there are children who don't have much.

When you've found someone to give your toys to, check that they're clean and don't have any parts missing, then maybe put them in a pretty box – and pass them on.

Give things to read

**It can be fun to read the same comics over and over again. But eventually you get tired of them, and then you can give them away. The best place for them is where children get bored and are really glad when there is something to read. That might be the waiting room at the local doctor's surgery. The next time you have an appointment, ask the doctor if they would be interested in some good entertainment for their little patients, and bring your comics round. Or picture books that you're too old for.