

Start by asking students if they think the environment is important.

* “Can humans survive without it?” Belabor the point – you want them to be almost annoyed saying “YES, we need a healthy environment to survive!” It’s important for success of the exercise to reach a point where everyone (or almost everyone) agrees that they personally feel the environment is important.

Continue by asking students, “Why is the **environment** important? Let’s break it down:

- “How long can people go without **water**?” (~ 3 days)
So water is important? Really? Can’t survive without it? Would you say that we couldn’t live without water? Do you care if it’s clean water? OK, so, do we all agree that clean, non-polluted water is important to all people?
- “How about **food** - do we need food? How long can we survive without food (~10 days)?
“Where does our food come from? (soil/the land) Does it matter if the soil is polluted? Why is that? So unpolluted soil and food is important to all of us? Can we all agree?”
- “What about **air**, is air important? “How long can we go without breathing?”
What if the air’s polluted, is that a problem? etc.
- “So just to belabor the point, a healthy environment is important for all of us to survive? Can we all agree on this??”
- “Hmmm, interesting... Do you think other people outside this classroom would agree? (At our University? In the world?)
- “OK, But if we all agree, and most other people also believe this, I wonder why we have pollution and other environmental problems... Never mind - we’ll come back to that.

Part II: Next, DRAW 3 separate circles on board (DON’T LABEL them, but keep these categories in mind: ecology, society, economy). As students answer the following questions, put a slash in the corresponding circle based on their answers. Mark 2-4 responses per question. This is meant to feel casual and fun -- make jokes, try to figure out what’s going on their minds. Make it seem like you’re randomly making a slash in a circle for no reason.

- “How do you decide where to go *grocery shopping*?” [What do you think about/look for?]
If they respond, “Do they sell organic food? Do they sell local food?” -- Mark the ‘ecology’ circle.
If, “Do my friends go there? Is it a “cool” place to shop?” -- Mark ‘society’ circle.
If, “Is it inexpensive? Are they having a big sale?” -- Mark “economy” circle.
- “What did you think about/look at when *applying to/deciding on college*?”
- “What do you think about/look for *when you buy clothes*?
 - *in a job?*
 - *when you are planning a trip?*
 - *when you’re making plans for Friday night?*
 - *when buying a car?*
 - *in a boyfriend or girlfriend?*

Part III: “Earlier, we agreed that a healthy environment (air, water, food) is important to everyone, so WHY do we have a problem with environmental degradation?” [At this point, add headings above the circles (ecology, society, economy).]

- “What do we think about most in our daily routine?
 - (Probably money (economy): how much will it cost/how much can I save?)
- “What did we think about second?”
 - Society: Are my friends there? Do I look cool? Do I fit in? Will they like me?
- “But the LAST thing we think about is the ENVIRONMENT (Ecology).
- “Why is it that the environment, which we all agreed *we can’t survive without*, is the *last thing* we think about in our daily routines?
- “THAT is why we have environmental degradation: We have traditionally prioritized **money** and **society** over the **environment**. Yet the irony is that without a livable planet, there is no society, and without society, there’s no money/economy. We have it all backwards.”

Part IV: Discussion: “How do you *feel* about this process?”

- “What could you do differently, to include the environment in your thought process when making decisions?”

At this point, instructors could also introduce *cognitive dissonance* (chapter 5): The discrepancy between thoughts/values and actions; People are motivated to reduce the associated anxiety.