

- Be responsible about what you say about other people's activism, and be careful who you speak to about other people's activism. If you don't know what "loose lips sink ships" means, look it up.
- Think carefully about demeaning or bashing other people's activism; sometimes you may be justified and sometimes not. Just THINK about whether or not it's a good use of your time in the moment.
- Understand that all actions and tactics are open to scrutiny and criticism regardless of who initiates or supports them. What looks like a great idea on the surface may be detrimental to animal liberation, while other things that appear to be harmful may indeed be just what is needed given current circumstances. As you gain more knowledge, your ability to analyze a campaign or an action will develop... Grant yourself the willingness to LEARN and CHANGE.

Perspective/Judgment

- If we knew the right thing to do to cause animal liberation, we would all be doing it! There are as many options, choices, and behaviors as there are people working to help animals. Consider all of them, try what you will and stay true to your convictions and respect other people's evolution.
- Be open to new thoughts, new tactics, new methodologies. Think outside any box you ever believed in. You'll need to THINK like you've never thought before. You WILL create new points of view.
- Be willing to be wrong; you may be committed to a particular person or group or ideology or line of thinking or methodology for a few weeks, a month or two or 20 years and one day realize they are not as effective as you once believed. You can always take on new ideas and strategies.
- Be cautious about what you DO use or DO NOT use from animal-advocacy organizations or individual activists. Only use, endorse flyers, info that you are committed to.
- What criteria do you think are "the true" measures of being vegan? It's important that you define that for yourself, and continually relook and maybe change your criteria. Is someone really vegan who feeds dead animals to their companion animals? Is someone really vegan if they are pro-choice? Is someone really vegan if they are anti-choice? Should vegans have children who may grow up to be non-vegans? Which politicians should vegans support? (etc., etc.)
- Learn, study, delve into, question EVERYone and EVERYthing about all animal-related issues so you can be a solid, valid resource to help people make a difference for animals. You have to know more than the "other side." If you are NOT certain about something regarding animal abuse issues, say "I don't know" rather than make something up.

- Be willing to be bigger than you ever believed you could be... think seriously about the people you admire and how you can be like them. If an activist you truly admire tells you that this course, or this technique, or this seminar, or this entertainment made them better activists, believe them. Education will make you more effective and more knowledgeable. Don't EVER think you will ever "know it all" because there are far too many animal abuse issues to be an expert in all of them. Gain a broad and thorough knowledge of ALL issues, not just those you're most drawn to in the moment.
- You cannot measure making a difference. There are no measures that can accurately reflect the impact you have on people at every moment. There is no way to know if what you said, did, wrote, or handed out altered someone's view or behavior toward animals. Your communication with them may be the next to the next to the next thing that turns their life around.
- DO NOT believe that because someone is "a vegan" or "an animal rights activist" that they're automatically going to be in agreement with you on all social justice issues. How many people in your life have you agreed with about "everything"?
- Pick your battles. Some activists think dealing with politics, politicians, and legislators is one of the most important thing to do to make a difference for animals. And some activists think dealing with politics, politicians, and legislators is a huge waste of time. And other activists have varying opinions pro or con those two points of view. THINK for yourself.
- There are several issues in the animal rights movement that cause divisiveness, contention, personal conflicts, and occasionally (like sports fans displaying unwavering loyalty to their home team) ...open hostility. It is extremely smart and vital for YOU to be open and learn all YOU can about those issues from all sources. And be open to changing your points of view over time as you learn new things. Thinking these arguments through rigorously and then committing to and sharing openly what you've resolved about these issues will give you clarity and power dealing with humans and will really sustain your activism.

THANK YOU FOR BEING
AN ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVIST!

veda@wavecable.com
(360) 631-5100

downloadable PDF available at
[http://www.all-creatures.org/
articles/act-new-to-activism.html](http://www.all-creatures.org/articles/act-new-to-activism.html)

Brochure by AnimalsVoice.com

SOME THINGS I WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME WHEN I WAS NEW TO ACTIVISM

...and some things I have learned the hard way and some things other activists have told me have helped their activism. And some questions I have found it useful to reconsider from time to time. Imagine a bowl of cherries. This is not about the cherries/animal activism in the bowl, but rather it's about the bowl where all the cherries/animal activism live.

Veda Stram
June 2016



Never Forget

- It is a truly, amazing wonderful commitment to be an animal rights activist. It is truly something to be proud of. It can give you a life worth living.
- Margaret Mead: *“Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”*
- As committed animal rights activists we keep hoping that it’s not just a “small group,” but ya know what? It always has been and always will be a “small group.” THANK YOU for being in this small group.
- Animal rights IS the most important social justice movement because humanity’s relationship with other-than-human animals is at the heart of and impacts the quality of our food, air, land, water, medicine, holidays, surgeries, religion, affection, pharmaceuticals, family relationships, entertainment, fashion, festivals, ethics, companion animals, despair, morality, personal commitments, and the importance of the impacts of our personal choices.
- People want to make a difference and are horrified when they realize that means they’ll have to BE different. Be prepared to be different, to become stronger, smarter, and more effective... constantly. How can you handle almost always being the odd one in the crowd? Are you strong enough to be that? If not, figure out what it takes to build those strengths. The animals need committed activists, not fair-weather friends.
- Be aware of the fact that the depth and breadth of animal abuse is beyond your personal comprehension. After over 27 years of activism, two or three times a week I learn of NEW horrors inflicted on animals that I had not known before.
- You need to deal with the reality that you have NOT seen the worst. Brace yourself.
- However much of your time and energy you devote directly to working for animal rights, this IS a lifetime commitment. Long-term work may or may not result in long-term payoffs. You’re most likely in it for the long haul... not as in a few weeks, but as in years and years and decades and decades. Be aware of and deeply appreciate ANY good news about animals.

Balance/Personal

- Burnout, compassion fatigue, withdrawing from taking action, stopping being vegan often result when activists have not managed themselves and their heartache, their despair. Make it a vital part of your activism to find out for yourself what YOU need to do to relax... to disconnect... to refresh yourself...

- Then DO IT. Schedule it. Do NOT sell out on yourself. You cannot make differences for animals or with people if you are depressed, sick, distracted, disconnected. Be intent on studying what activists have provided about ways to avoid burnout: read books, attend seminars, participate in online sessions, read blogs, search websites. LEARN from ALL social justice activist tactics and strategies and messages.
- Reclaiming and reinvigorating your sense of humor is lifesaving. Satire is wonderfully powerful!
- Manage your life! Deal with your finances so you can make the greatest difference for animals; don’t be another victim in your life because you aren’t taking care of yourself. It’s great to have the money to donate to activism you respect and to be able to participate in conferences, seminars, workshops, etc. Providing sanctuary for yourself enables you to provide sanctuary for others—for human animals and other-than-human animals. The more stable your personal life is, the more you will deal from a position of strength.
- How often do you NOT say or do something that you KNOW will make a difference for animals because you’re more concerned with being scared or concerned about looking like a fool or more concerned about being “precise” or “chic” or “cool” or “efficient” or being “accepted”?
- When you DO sell out (which you WILL), forgive yourself and move on! You WILL make mistakes. All social justice activists have made terrible errors, and you will likely follow in their footsteps. Learn from ALL mistakes.
- There are people who can work undercover and document horrific abuses. If you’re not able or willing to do that, FIND what you can do, and do it. And do it well. Use the talents, skills, abilities, training, physical attributes you have and expand and strengthen them. Never diminish what YOU can provide by comparing it to what you think you should be doing or what somebody else is doing.
- Let yourself be moved and touched by how much animals mean to you. Never diminish this deep-seated, profound appreciation. Let yourself be touched and moved by the differences you make with humans FOR animals and thank those people for letting you contribute to them.
- Manage your relationships. Do you want to have personal relationships that strengthen OR diminish your commitments to animals? There will always be tough decisions in the next week or five months or 20-plus years.
- Absolutely take care of yourself in terms of what videos/images you watch or horror stories you read. There may be times when you CAN see these and get fired up and get into action, and there may be times when you just cannot see these without becoming angry or debilitated and cannot get into action. Learn to do what works for you to stay in action. Do NOT martyr yourself... it helps no one.

- Subscribe to more email lists and join more social media groups than you think you can stand so you get to know more about what millions of activists have done and are doing around the world so you can be educated and inspired.
- Find a FEW activist friends/family to speak with confidentially, person-to-person to keep empowering your commitments to animals, to keep yourself clear and moving forward, someone you can vent to and who can vent to you to release tension and maybe sometimes someone to laugh with which can be lifesaving.
- Ask for feedback about how you’re doing from activists you trust. Consider any advice you’re given and be willing to accept criticism.
- Be willing to CHANGE to make more differences for animals. You may not be the first one to notice that you’re about to burn out or if you’re in over your head on some specific project.

Dealing With Humans

- Never forget that MOST PEOPLE do NOT get the depth and breadth of animal abuse. They have NO IDEA what we’re upset about. And if they do know, some people do not want to change their thinking or their behavior. Have compassion for them by remembering how oblivious you once were.
- This does not mean to suppress your passion. Speak powerfully to people where they are right now, what opinions they hold, what they defend.
- Always remember that you will be dealing with human beings and we are judgmental, and opinionated, and open-minded, and closed-minded and absolutely marvelous and complete assholes and everything in between.
- Be clear that YOUR “ah-ha” moment may resonate with some people AND your “ah-ha” moment may be absolutely meaningless to others.
- The most important conversation you can have about making a difference for animals is always that person right in front of you at any given moment.
- You may like some activists while disagreeing with their tactics, methodologies, ideologies; and you may dislike some activists while agreeing with their tactics, methodologies, ideologies.
- And just because you respect an individual’s or group’s tactics, strategies, methodologies, writings doesn’t mean you need to follow that individual or group blindly in everything they say, write or do...think for yourself.
- Be prudent, be cautious, be authentic in your personal relationships; be careful about sexual liaisons that might cause you problems in the future.

continued on next page