





Survival is the focus in the long run

By Bronwen Dyke

Braam Malherbe is not comfortable being a passive spectator. He's a doer. Whether it's running along the Great Wall of China or from Namibia to Mozambique to raise funds for children's cleft palate operations, teaching vulnerable youth about the laws of nature or filming for television's conservation programme 50/50, he's always got something on the go. And that's how Malherbe likes it.

He's a man on a mission, a self-styled eco-warrior who believes his purpose in life is to help people - children in particular - to understand that man has lost touch with the primary law of nature, that "every species on the planet gives to one or more other species, thereby ensuring their own survival".

He may be an idealist, but he has none of the naivety of some of Cape Town's "hey shoo-wow" tree-huggers and is all too aware of how difficult it is to break the consumer-driven mindset that is so at odds with the laws of sustainability. This conditioning, he says, makes us believe in the illusion that the more we have the happier we will be and causes us to continually use much more than we need.

And even though "going green" is all the rage nowadays, bandying about these buzzwords isn't nearly enough, he says. He's particularly vehement on this point when talking about some large corporate entities, which he accuses of being guilty of "green-washing" - half-heartedly adopting a green model purely to earn corporate social investment points.

"We speak about crimes against humanity such as the holocaust, Pol Pot and the Rwandan genocide but I believe that the greatest crime against humanity has been committed by most adults alive today: what we've done to the planet and how we've left it for our children," argues Malherbe.

All is not lost though. His simple solution to our "emotional impotence" on environmental issues is the Do One

Thing (DOT) initiative, a cause he will be championing tirelessly on his upcoming regular 50/50 segment entitled "Get Connected with Braam". The idea is simple: every person takes one positive action towards environmental sustainability and encourages others to do the same in a "pay it forward" sort of way, until a critical mass of people have become involved and a tipping point is reached.

"What if nature's law applied to people? What if you had no right to be here unless you

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were helping others? How many people would be here?" he asks, adding that it may seem daunting at first, but small changes can lead to massive results if everybody implements them.

He's adamant that the human race needs to stop trying to bend nature to suit its evolution. Rather, the way we change and grow should be dictated by nature. And our survival ultimately depends on this, he stresses, pointing out that the high rate of species extinction - one third of all mammals are expected to be extinct by 2050 - and a potentially crippling water crisis are a direct result of human beings living against nature's laws.

Urging others to reconnect with nature is another one of Malherbe's missions. "When we lose that connection we add stress to our lives and that ultimately causes diseases such

as cancer, strokes and heart attacks," he says. "Indigenous people didn't suffer from these diseases. There is a lot to be learnt from them."

As if his day job as a conservationist, motivational speaker and television presenter doesn't keep him busy enough, Malherbe now needs to try to squeeze another title on to his business card: author. His first book, *The Great Run*, will be published in May and recounts not only his gruelling run along the Great Wall of China (all 4 500kms of it) but also his journey towards inner peace and understanding.

Of his mammoth run Malherbe says he constantly pushes himself to the limits of what is considered possible because "pain is only temporary but quitting lasts forever". He adds that he ran for three reasons: to test his limits; to make a difference to others and the planet; and to show people that nothing is impossible if you dream big.

He quickly adds a fourth reason to the list, his dream of a better future. "I'm not convinced that I would have succeeded in everything I've done were it not for a cause beyond myself."

Braam's top 5 sustainability tips:

- 1. If you choose to eat meat:** Go organic or eat venison.
- 2. Don't buy plastic bottled water:** It takes seven times the amount of water in the bottle to make the bottle. Our tap water is just fine.
- 3. Avoid plastic packaging wherever possible:** Plastic kills animals and we need to challenge stores to be eco-friendly.
- 4. Be the change that you want to see in the world:** Challenge others to change their ways and be aware of your own carbon footprint.
- 5. Moms and dads:** Lift-clubs are the way to go.