



A PROJECT OF



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## My Name is Jane, and I'm an Autoholic

"The idea of a self-help programme for 'car addicts' might sound absurd at first. Yet Autoholics Anonymous is a serious, if light-hearted, programme helping people improve their quality of life," says project coordinator Randall Ghent. World Carfree Network Europe, a coalition of NGOs supporting sustainable transport alternatives launched a UK pilot project in December that offers auto addicted Britons a one-year plan to cure their car dependence. Modeled after 12-step programmes, Autoholics Anonymous (AA) is a tongue-in-cheek approach to educating consumers about how personal transport choices affect our well-being and the livability of our cities.

Recent reports about the scale and potential effects of climate change provide good incentives to reduce car dependence, but there are more reasons to drive less. Time spent driving has been linked to stress-related illnesses and increased risk of skin cancer. Driving less means exercising more, which improves health. A bus ticket costs less than a tank of petrol. Road rage and car accidents are on the rise. And the list goes on...

For those who have succumbed to the seemingly warm embrace of the automobile only to find it impossible to live without, AA offers the support of other 'recovering autoholics' to guide folks on the path to finding their own two feet again.

"Responsibility for our current mess – noise and pollution, death and injury, auto-blight and urban sprawl – does not rest chiefly on the shoulders of you, the individual driver," says the AA website. "You are the victim of a powerful and self-serving transport industry that has taken advantage of our natural desire to sit. Take back your feet, put one in front of the other and turn your back on the peddlers of the automotive drug. Join us. Become happier, healthier and wealthier."

Car addicts can join the support group for £9.95. Membership includes all the resources needed to cut car use: a welcome letter and membership certificate, an easy-to-follow practical 12-step programme with painless and fun weekly tasks and activities, the practical guidebook 'Cutting Your Car Use' by Anna Semlyen, a 'Recovering Car Addict' bumper sticker and bike sticker, an Autoholics Anonymous key fob (with its 'Strive Not to Drive' reminder) and access to a member forum. Interested individuals can join AA by visiting [www.autoholics.org](http://www.autoholics.org). Gift memberships are also available.

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*World Carfree Network brings together organisations and individuals dedicated to promoting alternatives to car dependence and automobile-based planning at the international level and working to reduce the human impact on the natural environment while improving the quality of life for all.*