

Project Green Challenge Final Portfolio

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A foreword on what PGC has meant to me:

Project Green Challenge has been a life-changing journey. I was semi-conscious when I began the road to comprehensive conscious green living. That is, I already knew much of what I had to do to lead an eco-friendly lifestyle, but I only really took the necessary steps when they were convenient and did so at my leisure. Green living was a passion hobby, not a way of life. Now I am aligning the values I already had with real change!

After learning about zero-waste over a year ago when I stumbled upon Lauren's singer's YouTube channel, I am finally taking meaningful steps towards a transformed, (nearly) waste-free lifestyle and wondering what took me so long to realize that I couldn't wait for another day to start. I have outlined a plan of action for myself: make at least one zero-waste switch a month until I have adopted a completely zero-waste lifestyle, a.k.a I can fit the garbage I produce in a mason jar like Lauren Singer. Turning thoughts and ideals into goals and results is one way I have transitioned from conventional to conscious! I am excited to start off my journey by switching to organic cotton cloth napkins in November to stop creating waste by using paper napkins.

In this portfolio, I have included the challenges that contain the moments that have been the most inspiring, mobilizing, and exciting during my experience as a PGC participant. Some of those are: cooking my first meal ever in the most memorable and sustainable way (in a dorm room kitchen with FLOSN ingredients!), stepping out of my comfort zone to carry my trash around with me for 24 hours and tell people about zero-waste, wearing my shirt inside out to tell people that our fast fashion is at the expense of real lives, making a chemical and toxin-free DIY natural and organic body scrub, cleaning the bathroom with a DIY safe cleaning alternative, and others, that inspired me to make real change to my everyday life. As you can see, all of my most memorable challenges required action, activism, advocating, and making. What made PGC particularly

paradigm-shifting was the change in my mindset and my definition of living sustainably. I no longer view a planet-friendly lifestyle as recycling and doing what I can to reduce my contributions to climate change when I remember to. I live out sustainability comprehensively, or at least I am doing the most that I can every day to get there. I don't make the excuse of convenience for myself anymore. I am no longer just a thinker who cares about the environment. I am becoming a doer who changes the world by example. I am taking action to, in the famous words of Gandhi, "be the change [I] want to see in the world".

Many of the submissions I wish to feature in my PGC portfolio were recognized as winners and therefore made publicly available! The links to these submissions are as listed below, while all other noted submissions are included in full form.

Highlight #1:

Day 3-4: Zero-Waste Greener

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This challenge was the most significant for me. I carried my waste around for 24 hours and at the end, I knew I had to make changes as soon as possible because every day I was making unnecessary waste that could easily be avoided. This was the first catalyst for immediate change on the PGC journey.

Highlight #2:

Day 5: Energy Greener

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This challenge caused me, again, to investigate my daily habits that were creating waste unnecessarily. I am so much more thoughtful and purposeful about my energy use now. I turn on the lights only when there is no natural light source available. I unplug electronics before I leave for class, and turn off my power strips. I evaluate which course of action, or of travel will use the least amount of resources and energy possible. That is what living consciously means: being aware of the impact everything you do has on both the health of the planet on your own health. However, living intentionally doesn't stop at awareness, especially because there is always more to learn. Living with purpose means taking these considerations and translating them to action!

Highlight #3:

Day 6-7: Food Greener- The FLOSN Meal

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I cooked a meal for the first time ever during this challenge, learning and teaching myself on the go and in the process. I am so proud that it came out amazingly tasty and that I will always remember my first cooking experience (and first meal planning and ingredient-specific shopping) as sustainably designed and made with FLOSN guidelines!

Highlight #4:

Day 8: Body Greener and Greenest


Greener- https://2dvxfm48odni22182s4bfu1x-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/winners_2016/day8/greener/8_emilyklotz-greener.pdf

Greenest:

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Day 8 Body: Greenest Challenge

I used to use this face scrub every morning:



I stopped using it a few years ago when I found out the damaging effects of plastic microbeads. I have been missing my morning face scrub for a while now and am longing for a replacement product that will not hurt me or the environment. For this challenge, I searched the web for a face scrub that was good for fall, used ingredients I already had and replaced the yummy citrus scent that used to wake me up in the morning. I found so many recipes that worked for me! I was surprised at all the amazing, simple products that I could make with leftover ingredients from my food challenge meal and ingredients I already had.


I ended up using a combination of these recipes:
<http://manouvellemode.com/2014/11/09/orange-cinnamon-homemade-body-scrub/>
<http://notenoughcinnamon.com/2014/12/05/diy-cinnamon-sugar-scrub/>

My hybrid recipe:

DIY Orange Cinnamon Brown Sugar Scrub

RECIPE

- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 3 tsp coconut oil
- 15 drops orange essential oil
- 1 tsp cinnamon



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place solid coconut oil in a container/bowl.
2. Fill up large bowl with hot water. Place the container in the hot water until the oil is melted. This will take a few minutes.
3. In the meantime, mix the brown sugar and cinnamon in a separate bowl.
4. Once the oil is melted, remove from the hot water and add essential oil.
5. Pour this into dry mixture and mix thoroughly. Place in a sealed container and enjoy!

Body Care Facts:

1. "Our skin absorbs 60% of any topical product we use."
<http://ronandlisa.com/2013/07/30/dangerous-chemicals-beauty-products/>
2. "The average woman wears nearly 515 chemicals a day."
<http://ronandlisa.com/2013/07/30/dangerous-chemicals-beauty-products/>
3. Even baby shampoos and other baby care products contain carcinogens!
<http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TEDxGreatPacificGarbagePatch-St>
4. We have the power to control the beauty industry by voting with our money. If we stop buying toxic products, we will decrease the demand for them and, therefore, decrease the production of these products.
<http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TEDxGreatPacificGarbagePatch-St>
5. "On cosmetics labels, words like "herbal", "natural", even "organic" have **no legal definition**. That means anybody can put anything in a bottle and call it natural." - Annie Leonard, The Story of Cosmetics
<http://storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-cosmetics/>

My friends were surprised by most of these facts! Most of them were aware that their products probably contained harmful substances, but didn't think they really absorbed into their skin. When they started thinking about it, they didn't think chemicals should be in their body products, and especially not in products for little helpless babies' bodies.

The experience of making my DIY body scrub was very positive, although it was quite messy! It took less than 15 minutes to make and it was certainly fun. It doesn't take much effort at all to make DIY products because they can be made from simple ingredients that I already have. I will definitely try more DIY recipes in the future.

These challenges made me drastically rethink what I was putting in my body via my skin: harmful, damaging chemicals and toxins! Luckily, I made a quick transition to safer alternatives thanks to PGC prizes that arrived in the mail shortly after I was horrified by my own lotions and other products. I now use Acure brand body products and so far, I am loving them, especially the orange-scented energizing body lotion. It smells just like a freshly-peeled orange and works great. Thanks Acure and PGC for the awesome (and helpful) prize!

Highlight #5:

Day 10: Meatless Monday Greener

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This challenge meant a lot to me because my boyfriend Sean, a meat-lover, willingly participated in Meatless Monday with me. I am a vegetarian so the challenge was dear to my heart and his enthusiasm made me feel so empowered and supported. It truly strengthened our relationship and gave me hope for making change in the lives of people I care about.

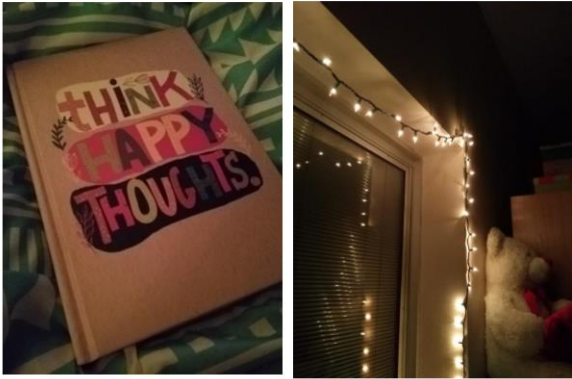
Highlight #6:

Day 11: Wellness Greener and Greenest

Greener-

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Day 11 Wellness- Greener Challenge



I take care of myself in a variety of different ways. One of those ways is writing in a gratefulness journal. Whenever I have a moment during the day, I write at least one thing I am grateful for that day or that moment. This helps me focus on the positives in my life and works quite well for me. Today I took several minutes to write a longer list than usual of the things I am most grateful for in my life in the relaxing setting of my bed where I was surrounded by comfy pillows and soft blankets and the space was lit by the string of gold lights that hang above me. Here is what I wrote:

I am grateful for...

The opportunity to go to college
Supportive parents

A loving and supportive boyfriend

My brother

The opportunity to get out in nature today

The ability to afford many of the experiences that I want

My education

Professors that are understanding

A roof over my head

Clean, running water

A warm place to snuggle into in the cool weather of Upstate NY

A regular income/ that I have a job

That I have time and am able to pursue my hobbies/passions

That I live in a country where I can freely practice my religion without fear of prosecution

Colorful fall leaves

Friends and family

Netflix

Having enough (probably even too much) clothes

Can afford to eat everyday

Have a bright future ahead of me

Project Green Challenge because it has given me so many opportunities to express myself, learn new things, and be recognized for my dedication to sustainability

After I wrote this list I also practiced another mindfulness activity that I do often: meditation. I learned this practice from my Philosophy of Nonviolence professor who begins each class (3 times a week) with about 3-5 minutes of meditation. I find that when I meditate in this class, it allows me to simply think of nothing and focus on my body. Even though it is a short amount of time, often during this time my shoulder tension goes away and I notice how my body feels: if I am hungry, if I have tension, if I feel tired, etc. Many times I realize I was simply ignoring how my body felt and become attuned to what my body needs whether that is relaxing, a nap after class, or food. I also often notice that when I am going about my day I hold tension in my body without even noticing. Meditation is a chance for me to consciously relax all of these muscles. Even when I only meditate in class for a few minutes, three times a week, it significantly

improves my quality of life because I have less body tension and pain. It's really amazing how the effects of a few minutes of relaxation can multiply throughout my life.

Five words that describe how I felt afterward:

Thankful

Relaxed

Self-aware

Blessed

Centered

Two changes that I noticed in my mindset, mood, being, etc:

1. Changed my mindset from what do I have to do today to how am I blessed today
2. Journaling relaxed my mind and meditation relaxed both my mind and my body

Greenest:

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Reflecting on all that I am grateful for and taking time to relax and recharge was so important to my PGC journey. I incorporated wellness into my definition of sustainability as a result. I hadn't thought of the fact that I had to live not only to sustain the planet, but also to live to sustain myself. If my personal practices do not lead to a lifestyle that can be carried out indefinitely with success, then they are not sustainable. Wellness is essential to sustainability.

Highlight #7:

Day 17: Dining Greener

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This challenge meant a lot to me because it inspired me to come up with a realistic plan to make my campus dining experience more sustainable and leave a lasting impact on SUNY Cortland. I am currently in the process of setting up a meeting with the Director of Dining Services to talk about implementing my plan for zero-waste dining. I am so excited and I hope real change comes out of this!

Highlight #8:

Day 19: Fashion Greener

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This challenge asked me to step outside of my comfort zone again to raise awareness of the harms of fast fashion on people and planet. I never thought in a million years someone could convince me to do something as embarrassing as wearing my shirt inside out in public for as long as I did. Project Green Challenge has had this effect on me. Throughout the month, I have become empowered by moving past fear and mobilizing in big and small ways! The conventional me was ruled by fear and played it safe and comfortable. The new me is fearless and ready to take action no matter what it takes!

Highlight #9:

Day 21: Clean Greener and Greenest

Greener-https://2dvxfm48odni22182s4bfu1x-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/winners_2016/day21/greener/21_emilyklotz-greener.pdf

Greenest-

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Day 21 Clean - Greenest Challenge

Green Cleaning Recipe:

All Purpose Cleaner

Apple cider vinegar can be mixed with water and essential oils as a surface cleaner and disinfectant.

1 cup of apple cider vinegar

1 cup of water

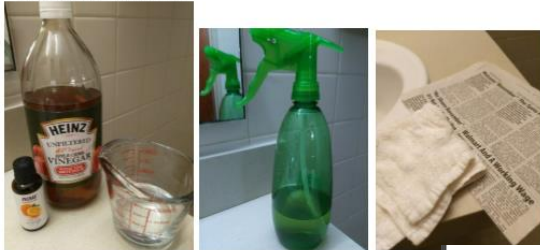
10 drops of essential oils

Source: <http://www.natural-organic-products-and-recipes.com/organic-cleaning.html>

I used Apple Cider Vinegar as the basis for my search for cleaner recipes because it's a product I already had, which means no extra money spent on supplies, which is always a good goal to reach for- use what you have. I used a spray bottle that contained a small amount of another DIY cleaning product (simply a solution of a conventional dish soap and water) that I transferred to another container for storage since I would like to switch to a greener DIY cleaning product. I mixed my new DIY product in this spray bottle after rinsing thoroughly. Altogether, this recipe is a cheap, zero-waste DIY project.

My adjustments:

To make a smaller batch for testing, I used ½ cup ACV, ½ cup water, and 10 drops of sweet orange essential oil.



I used this product to clean the bathroom sink and counter, as well as the mirror in the bathroom, since it is a versatile cleaning product. I cleaned the mirror with newspaper because this was recommended in my search for window cleaners. For the sink, I simply used a cheap washcloth that I already use for general cleaning.

Before Photo:



Notice the hard-water spots on the faucet and sticky spots on the counter.

After Photo:



Look how clean! Even the hard water spots are gone!

Before Photo:



Lots of grime and spots caked on the mirror!

After Photo:



I can see a lot better into the mirror now! It's mostly streak free and very clean!

In both cases, the DIY Cleaner worked great to get a variety of surfaces clean and streak-free! I will definitely continue to use the DIY cleaning product.

How does it smell compared to the products you have used in the past?

I noticed that although I don't love the smell of vinegar, it was a lot less volatile than many of the cleaners I was using before and the smell of orange sweetened the smell a lot.



This challenge inspired me to take a much closer look at my cleaning products and question what sorts of products the bathroom cleaners use on my campus. Cleaning happens often and needs to be addressed as a part of sustainability. It's so important not to fill your home with products and fumes that could harm you.

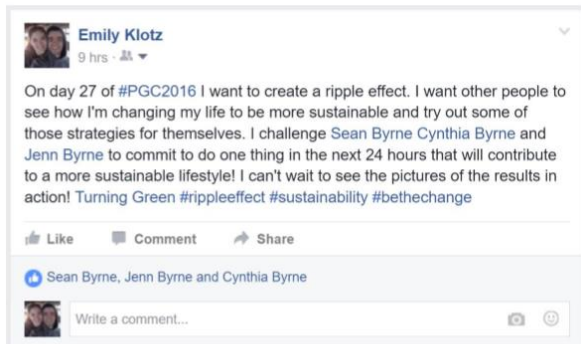
Highlight #10:

Day 27: Ripple Greener

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Day 27 Ripple: Greener Challenge

THE CHALLENGE:



I challenged my boyfriend and two members of his family to do something sustainable that they have done because of my influence. I was very touched that they all responded with pictures of different acts that represent what they learned from me about living sustainably. It is amazing how I have impacted people in ways I don't even know and how I can get a whole family involved in my Project Green Challenge journey!

This challenge was particularly inspiring because I was able to see how changing myself has had ripple effects and changed the lives of the people around me! I was so inspired that my boyfriend and his family made an effort to reduce waste for this challenge because they know how important it is to me to use reusables instead of single-use!

THE RESULTS:



Jenn Byrne, pictured below, committed to using a reusable napkin with her dinner tonight instead of using a disposable paper napkin, a sustainable zero-waste swap!



Mrs. Byrne committed to unplugging electronics in the household that weren't being used in order to prevent vampire energy and reduce energy-waste. She started with the toaster and the toaster oven, pictured above.



Sean Byrne committed to carrying his sandwich to work in a reusable sandwich holder instead of in a plastic sandwich bag!

I found it so encouraging and inspiring that my interest in zero-waste has rubbed off on my boyfriend and his family. Reusable lunch containers and cloth napkins will save a lot of plastic sandwich bags and paper napkins from the landfill! I am excited that they have realized that reducing waste is simple and you can start anywhere! It was also encouraging to see that I taught them something new about reducing energy use!