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Day 3/4 – Zero Waste, Greener

Story of My Day:

Going zero waste is actually a goal of mine, but I'm still a little while away. I enjoyed doing this challenge because it really made me conscious of what I'm using. In the morning, I went to a farmers market to get produce instead of a grocery store. I put the produce in my own bag and declined any plastic they offered to put the veggies in. I bought a lot of little tomatoes, and the farmer asked if I wanted a plastic bag to keep them all together. Trying to stay away from plastic, I declined his offer and just put the tomatoes in my own bag along with everything else. For lunch I was making broccoli. Normally, if the broccoli has a long stem, I cut off the stem and compost it and just eat the top half of the broccoli. However, in an attempt to be low waste today, I cut up the stem of the broccoli and boiled that as well! Cooking all parts of food that I might otherwise dispose of really makes a difference.

Conversation:

I was in class before dinner carrying around my chip bag. A friend who sits next to me was eating an apple. When she was done with her apple she asked if she could put the core in my chip bag full of trash. I said yes and told her I would compost it later. She then proceeded to ask me why I was carrying around a chip bag. I explained that it was to see how much trash I use in a day. Instead of using a plastic bag, I was using a chip bag which was trash from the chips I ate earlier that day. She thought it was a cool project and mentioned how she had seen people do something similar on social media before. By the time I was talking to her I only had some food scraps and a tissue in my bag and she was shocked that by 5pm that was all the waste I had produced. I told her that just being conscious is a good first step and making a simple change, like buying foods that aren't served in plastic, or using a cloth towel instead of a paper one really adds up! After class she invited me to go to dinner in the campus dining hall. I normally may have agreed, but campus dining generally involves a lot of waste even though they try to keep it down. Because I was trying to see how low waste I could go I declined her request and went to cook something at my apartment instead. She was impressed and said that she never really thought about how much waste dining on campus produces. Most of the items on campus come in containers and plates that are compostable or recyclable, but few containers or plates that are reusable.

Pictures of Trash Below



Left Picture Piles: Top left: Trash; Top right: Recycling; Bottom Left: Can be Terracycled; Bottom right: Compost.

- Consider some reusable options for each of your piles. Pick two items in each pile. Tell us how these items might avoid ending up as waste in the future.

Trash Item 1: Sanitary Wipes. Today I went to my college's gym. At the gym they have sanitary wipes for wiping down equipment after you use it. I try to reuse my sanitary wipe for as many equipment pieces that I can before getting a new wipe, but I know others who replace their wipe every time they use a new piece of equipment. A reusable option would be to use a reusable cloth and some soap to wipe down equipment instead of using a sanitary wipe every time. The gym has signs saying we must use a wipe, but I would like to bring this up to my gym if I would be allowed to bring my own cloth and soap to avoid using a disposable sanitary wipe.

Trash Item 2: Shredded Cheese. The main grocery stores I go to generally only have shredded cheese packaging in plastic. I have been meaning to see if there is a deli around where I live. At a deli, they will be more likely to have fresh cheese that may not be stored in plastic. In that case, I could take my own container and ask if they could put my cheese in my own container and then just shred it on my own when I get back.

Recycling Item 1: Yogurt container. Most yogurt around my stores are served in plastic and I have yet to see yogurt in bulk at any places around here. I was at a grocery store the other day and I noticed that one company started serving some of their yogurt in glass. It was a little bit more expensive, but I do know that glass can be recycled an infinite number of time as opposed to plastic, so perhaps paying a little bit more for a glass container would be worth it.

Recycling Item 2: Grocery Store Receipt. I had to go to the grocery store today to pick up some items I was unable to find at the farmers market. Sometimes the store will ask if I want a receipt and I would normally say no, but today it gave me a receipt without a choice. A more sustainable option would be to have the receipt emailed to me instead. Then I could keep track of my spending and I wouldn't have to worry about saving the receipt in case if I had to return something.

Terracycling Item 1: Chip Bag. I don't buy chips often, but when I do, they generally come in bags that have to be either thrown away or terracycled. A reusable option would be buying chips in bulk and using my own bag, or just making my own homemade chips.

Terracycling Item 2: Yogurt Lid. (See: Recycling Item 1)

- What is something you could change in your own lifestyle today that will contribute to a zero waste world?.

Carrying around a bag of trash really puts into perspective how much trash I produce in a day and allows me to physically see it so I can make a change. Noting the sanitary wipes at the gym is something I find wasteful because so many people use the gym and have to use the sanitary wipes. I think I will talk to the gym about a more sustainable option to better campus.

In my own life, I say no to unnecessary plastic, and don't buy things that I don't really need.

However, watching the Story Of Stuff video today really opened my eyes to everything behind the scenes. The video mostly talked about consumer goods, but you can relate it to food as well. For example, even if I go to the store and buy an apple that is not wrapped in plastic, there is still so much waste that goes on behind the scenes. Growing the apple may use pesticides to keep bugs off. Then someone has to pick the apple and sends it off to a factory where they may spray it with wax to make it look 'clean'. Then they ship it to the store, which requires gas and packaging. Then they put the apple on the shelf for me to grab. When I pick up the apple I think it's "plastic free," but so much goes on behind the scenes it's impossible to know if plastic was not used somewhere along the line before I picked out the apple. That's why buying local and going to the farmers market is a better option that I can implement into my life. At the farmers market, you generally know where it came from, and if it's an organic farm, you also know they probably didn't spray it with the dangerous pesticides that an apple at the store may be sprayed with. At the farmers market, apples tend to taste better too. 😊