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Wasteful practices

At highschool pre pandemic (I live at home and have limited contact with university campus because most of my classes are online and in person classes all things are digital in case they go online): Lack of recycling in classrooms and cafeteria had no recycling and no compost just trash cans

Grocery store: Excessive use of plastic for everything, like individually wrapped potatoes and grocery sacks. Excessive amounts of food waste due to food packaging being damaged or old.

Home: We use a lot of single use paper products like paper towels, smart strips not on all outlets. Pet lifestyles, dog and cat, leads to waste.

Story of Plastic Take Action Kit

- Zero waste is possible on a large scale, for communities and even cities it takes a lot of work and collaboration
- Reduce and Reuse are very interesting and important stepping stones in getting to zero waster, but I also think it will be harder to implement because it requires more time than recycling and a conscious effort to use less. It would also require a new mindset of people because it goes against the consumer culture.

Greenpeace Toolkit

- I copied the Greenpeace email outline to ban single use in my community. I find this really helpful because it provides the facts about single use and helps guide me what to write which is really nice for someone who has never done it before, like me before PGC.
- Very interesting fact that I found “ Globally, only 9% of plastic gets recycled. Even in developed countries, the recycling rate for plastics collected by households is often far less than 50%, with very little of that converted back into packaging. Most “recycled” packaging waste is downcycled into lower value or unrecyclable products, meaning that the process is only delaying the plastic’s inevitable journey to the landfill.”

Post Landfill Action Network Toolkit

- I like the idea of places offering single use items like ketchup packets, napkins etc. by request only because it is such an easy solution that not only deters and reduces the use but it also benefits the companies because people don’t consume as much product that they have to pay for.
- There are so many alternatives for one use items that it seems unreal that it is such a country wide mindset that one use items are okay. More companies should get rid of single use for more environmentally friendly alternatives, even if the cost of that item is more than single use items the publicity of a company going eco friendly would hypothetically negate the cost.

Zero Waste Home

- I like the idea of using the grey water from washing vegetables to water plants
- I know that most of our cleaning supplies are organic or better for the environment, but I never thought about the tools used for cleaning being plastic or even realizing that things like that can be compostable.

5 Gyres Trash Academy

- Not all plastic with the recyclable symbol is actually recyclable in many areas.
- Why do we still use plastic grocery bags? Who benefits from that, the people who produce them? Why don't grocery stores offer an incentive for people to bring their own bags like a small discount or an awards program. I would think that companies would save that way because they give customers the bags for free and offering an incentive would reduce the number of grocery bags that grocery stores have to buy

How to make my house as waste free as possible:

1) What is wasteful?

- Why do we use so much paper towels
- Is there a more sustainable product to generic cat litter
- Can we save water by reusing some grey water

2) Alternatives

- Paper towels
 - alternative: old towels/t-shirts
 - Positives: reusing an old resource, free, easy to implement
 - Negatives: single use in a sense because can only use a couple times or once depending on the spill before becoming dirty or stained. Less absorbent
 - Alternative: reusable paper towels
 - Positives: more absorbent than traditional paper towels, compostable once use is done, more similar to traditional
 - Negatives: maybe cost more than traditional, but maybe not because traditionals are single use whereas these are multi use only buy a few times. But, perceived cost will be higher.
 - Implementation: buy Bamboo Reusable Paper Towels Washable Roll, cost \$7. Product is packaged sustainably and claims to be the same as 200 traditional. Is machine washable
- cat litter
 - Alternative: paper litter
 - Positives: made from recycled materials, produces no dust
 - Negatives: More expensive to what I use now, will take time for cats to adjust, cost, unsure how to dispose. Is it compostable? No
 - Alternative: walnut shells litter
 - Positives: Is a byproduct of walnuts that would otherwise go to waste, dust free
 - Negatives: Disposal method is to flush down toilet, cost
 - Alternatives: wood shavings
 - Positives: It is absorbent, biodegradable, and easy to clean
 - Negative: some would be toxic to pets, hard to find

- Alternative: DIY
 - Positives: easy and cheap, better for environment
 - Negatives: takes a lot of time, not something I would enjoy, cats might not like it
 - Middling option:
 - After some research I found out that at petco allows you to scoop your own litter, meaning you buy the container with the litter once and then bring that container back and refill it at a discount
 - Pros: Is the cheapest option to buy cat litter, cuts way back on plastic
 - Cons: litter itself is landfill
 - As it turns out there is a lot of options for more sustainable cat litter
 - Implementation: Difficult choice, but for now I am switching to the middling option because it is the cheapest and it cuts down on plastic packaging unlike some of the other options and is easier to implement.
- Simple ways to reuse water:
 - When washing produce put bowl or bucket in sink to catch the water to water plants
 - Same with recipes that call for water as a byproduct, like pasta water or boba water
 - Water in old water bottles used to water plants
 - Less conventional: bucket in shower would collect a lot of unused water which could be used
 - Idealistic: Make rain barrel to collect rainwater to cut back on using the hose to water garden
 - Hesitations: cost of materials, location relative to house with regards to the geography of the land, assembly of rain barrel/tools needed, do we get enough rain to make an impact?

Who needs to be involved?

- Other people in the household, i.e my mom occasionally brother

Potential barriers:

- Biggest one for all is cost and ease of use. Getting people on board with reusable, could be bumps in the adjustment period. Choose options that are easiest to use and that I think could be incorporated seamlessly into lifestyle.



Paper Towels

How often do you use them?



Is it really worth it?

- Globally, discarded paper towels result in 254 million tons of trash every year.
- As many as 51,000 trees per day are required to replace the number of paper towels that are discarded every day.
- If every household in the U.S. used just one less 70-sheet roll of paper towels, that would save 544,000 trees each year.
- To make one ton of paper towels 17 trees and 20,000 gallons of water are polluted.



Are there alternatives?

- Yes! There are many options on the market, from cloth to bamboo.
- Most are reusable and compostable
- Or you can make your own buy upcycling old t-shirts