

Why We Need to Reduce and Reuse, Not Just Recycle

by Layla

You've probably heard of the phrase "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle", but do you really know what it means? When we think about reduce, reuse, recycle, our minds almost immediately wander to recycling. Why is that? Well, it's because no one really talks about reducing and reusing, much less taking the time to research about or participate in them.

Think about this; when you go to a store, you're immediately hit in the face by the outstanding amount of plastic packaging all around you. Take a simple sleeve of Ritz Crackers, for example. Many people would throw the plastic sleeve in the garbage, but some may leave it on the ground at a local park, or toss it out of a car window without a second thought. Why don't people reuse or recycle food packaging?

"What about reducing?" you may ask yourself. Well, reducing is a very uncommon, yet important step we need to take in solving our problem of waste on this planet. When walking through a store, you may wander through the drink aisle. There, you will see the bottled water section. Lots of people don't think twice about buying bottled water, even though they have water at their house. Yes, I do think about how many people can't, or don't want to drink tap water, but if more people invested in a filter for their faucet, they could save money and plastic waste from being thrown away. So many people don't care to contemplate about the benefits of stopping and taking a moment to think about what you buy, even if it's just for a moment.

Big companies don't reduce the amount of packaging they use. In fact, they don't reduce the amount of plastic that they make at all. They ship products with packaging to stores using trucks, which produce insane amounts of pollution into the air. The problem with the companies producing so much is that Americans are keeping up with them, buying and relying on packaged

food as our nutrient sources. We don't think twice about reducing when we see our favorite candy bar in the store. The amount of plastic that one person uses and only uses once in a day is crazy!

In the article, "Reduce. Reuse. And Then, When All Else Fails, Recycle," Brynn Wilcox explains that even when we recycle, most of the recyclables don't make it to a facility. Most of it still goes to the landfills. She continues on to say that in the 1970's, the slogan "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" was extremely popular. She tells us how manufacturers couldn't have us buying less products, and they didn't reduce or reuse. People weren't interested in consuming less, so they just skipped the first two steps and went on to recycling. When recycling should have been the last option, people thought it was the only solution to our pollution problem. Reducing and reusing were soon forgotten

So, while recycling is good, reducing and reusing are the way to go. If humans could put aside their own greed, pollution wouldn't be such a big problem. In America, obesity is a huge problem that so many people face. If we reduced and reused more, then we could overcome that challenge, and America could be happier and healthier.

If people stopped consuming so many products from the store, then the plastic would be decreasing drastically. Of course, everyone would have to have the motivation to save the world. Realistically, those big companies are too power and money hungry to slow the production of plastic and make a difference.

In short, I'm not disregarding recycling. I'm just trying to illuminate that people don't think about reducing and reusing, when these are the steps we need to take in order to solve this global problem.