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Reduction of plastic waste

We have all seen the sad videos that involve animals and plastic bags, straws or some other type of plastic object harming the animal. Plastic material is a danger to our earth and while doing research, facts can prove this. The amount of plastic that is used around the world each year is mind-boggling. With new initiatives in place, recycling processes and, different companies removing certain plastic utensils, the world will be one-step closer to being more fruitful and healthy.

Is there any way to get rid of all plastic material? Maybe not, but there can be better measures taken as far as how we use this every day material. Even though this may seem like an easy task, it is not. Plastic is in our everyday life and it is very convenient. This convenience blasts out to be “an estimated 60 billion tons of plastic material each year. Each of us uses an average of 190 pounds of plastic annually” (Watson). 60 billion tons of plastic waste each year, where some gets recycled, some are burned and the toxins get but into the atmosphere, but most go to the oceans to end up being eaten by animals of the sea and harming them in physical aspects. There are big companies like Starbucks and Ikea that are planning to be plastic free by 2020.

The United Kingdom has gone as far as taking the 2020 initiative a step further and turning it into a positive aspect by introducing potential jobs to their economy. They have named their 2020 initiative PIRAP which stands for Plastics Industry Recycling Action Plan. PIRAP “will promote best practices and co-operation between all relevant stakeholders to help delivering a sustainable recycling business sector in the UK, producing high quality products and additional jobs” (Plastics Industry Recycling Action Plan to be Launched at PRE). This is a great way to motivate people into recycling. People would be more likely to recycle at home if they are doing it on a daily basis at work. It also helps the company by reducing the amount of plastics but increases the number of income for people of the United Kingdom to grow their country.

Big companies like Ikea have taken a step forward for companies by removing plastic bags from their stores. As stated before, removing the amount and usage of plastic will be nearly impossible but what Ikea has done is a great accomplishment. “Eighteen months since the program began, plastic bag reduction continues to be at 92%.” (IKEA; The End! No More Plastic Bags Available at IKEA) Once the major companies similar to Walmart, Coca-Cola, and McDonald’s catch on to this trend, a lot more other people will do the same.

A company named *Boxed Water is Better* is a company from southern California that has strayed away from using plastic bottles and has started using cartons for water. The company did this for reasons to “reduce their carbon footprint” (Boxed Water expands product distribution in Southern California). Princeton University has booked this idea of boxed water on their Campus. The mission of the school is to make the students aware, and hope to change their habits to reduce the plastic usage. They have also removed the use of plastic utensils on campus. (Buzalka). I hope that this will encourage other universities to improvement of plastic waste.

The only issue is not that plastic particles end up in our lakes, oceans and local water sources, but that they are not biodegradable. Biodegradable item decompose with no harm to the environment. These items use “starch and regenerated cellulose” (Biodegradable Plastics Market to reach US$17.66 bn by 2023, Driven by Growing Emphasis on Ecofriendly Materials: TMR) as components. Since plastic itself is such a necessity, using biodegradable plastics and other alternatives would be the ecological option.

Once we figure out how to find efficient alternatives to plastic the world will be a healthier place. Replacing one third of 60 billion tons is still a huge help environmentally. There are alternatives. There are biodegradable bags, stainless steel reusable straws, bamboo toothbrushes, and glass bottled water. Recycling itself allows used plastic to be used again without creating more plastic and potentially creating harmful to the environment. . The mindset of the world has to change and that can start with small initiatives like having a town wide cleanup even up to something bigger like the 2020 initiative. The younger generations need to get smart about what recycling is and how it can improve our carbon footprint not only from recycling but also from treating the earth as our home as we should. It can happen with a little time and patience of everyone.

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