

WHY I LIVE A ZERO WASTE LIFE

*We
develop a passion
for Teaching!*



This is all of the trash that I've
produced in the past 3 years.
When I say that, people think
that I'm crazy, or that I'm
lying,
or they'll ask me questions
like:

"Hey. So, how do you wipe
your butt?"
(Laughter)

I live a zero waste lifestyle,
and I have for the past 3
years.

Now, zero waste, that's a
pretty big idea. Right?
So let me define it for you.
To me living zero waste
means that I don't make any

trash.

So no sending anything to
landfill, no sending anything
in a garbage can,
and no spitting gum on the
ground,
and walking away.

Right? No trash.

This is a big concept, and this
all started

when I was an environmental
study student at NYU.

My senior year, I was taking a
course called:

"The Environmental Studies
Capstone course",

which is the culminating
course that all environmental

study students need to take
in order to go out into the
world, and make it a more
sustainable place.

Well, there was a girl in this
class,
and every class she would
have this big plastic bag,
with a plastic clamshell full of
food,
a plastic fork and knife, a
plastic
water bottle,
and a plastic bag a chips,
and she would eat all of this,
and then class after class,
would just throw it in the
trash.

This was really frustrating,
because here we were
these environmental study
students trying to make the
world a better place,
and there she was, throwing
all this stuff into the garbage.

One day after class,
feeling still particularly upset
about watching her throw
everything away,

I went home to make dinner,
and I opened my fridge,
and noticed something that I
had never seen before.

Every single thing in my
fridge was in one way or
another

packaged in plastic,
and I couldn't believe it.
You know I was getting so
mad at this girl for making so
much plastic trash,
and it turns out that I was just
as bad.

I was that girl, and so I made
a decision in that moment.

I was going to stop using
plastic.

Well, quitting plastic --
(Laughter)

not so easy of a thing. Right?

When you think about your
everyday life,

when you wake up in the
morning, go into the

bathroom, and you brush your
teeth.

What is your toothbrush made
out of?

Plastic.LS: Plastic.

What is your toothpaste
probably
packaged in?

Plastic.

LS: Your face wash, your
moisturizer, your contact
solution.

So many things that are in our
everyday lives come
packaged in plastic,
and so I realized that if I was
going to move away from
plastic,

the only way that I was going
to do that
was to learn how to make my
products myself.

Well, I don't know about you,
but I certainly didn't
knowhow to make deodorant.

I didn't have the recipe just
hanging out in my back
pocket,

and so I realized that I hadto
do some research,
and while I was doing
research online, I came across
a blog called
the "Zero Waste Home"
started by a woman named
Bea Johnson

who is a wife, and mother of
2 kids, out in Mill Valley,
California,
and the 4 of them live a
completely zero waste life.
When I learned about Bea,
and her family, my mind was
completely blown.
I thought that I was doing the
best thing for the planet
by not using any plastic.
But the idea that I didn't have
to produce any trash,
was so empowering, and so
inspiring,
and it made perfect sense.
Right?
Because I was this

Environmental Studies
student,
I cared about the
environment, studied
sustainability,
talked about sustainability,
protested for sustainability.
But I realized, that I wasn't
actually implementing any of
those values
into my day-to-day life, and
so I made the decision to go
zero waste.

Let me break it down for you,
and tell you some of the
things
that I did in order to make this
transition a little easier.

The first thing that I did was I
stopped buying packaged
food.

So instead of going to the
store, and buying things
packaged
in paper, and glass, and
plastic, I started bringing my
own jars,
and bags to the store to fill
with bulk, or package-free
items.

I also started buying my fruit,
and vegetables from the
farmer's market.

So, package-free.

The second thing that I started
doing

was I started making all of my
own products.

Before I started living this
lifestyle, my boyfriend at the
time,
used to brush his teeth using
baking soda,
and I thought he was probably
the grossest person in the
entire world. Right?
There's no way that you can
get your teeth clean
using something like baking
soda, it's gross.

Well fast-forward, and it turns
out that the first product that I
made
was toothpaste, made with

baking soda.

So overtime I started making
all of my own products.

When I would run out of
something, instead of going to
the
store,

and buying a new one, I
would learn how to make it
myself.

So when I would run out of
lotion, I learned how to make
it myself.

Run out of deodorant, learn
how to make it myself.

Over time, all of the things I
had previously purchased,
were now, ones that I made

myself.

The third thing that I started doing, was shopping second-hand.

So instead of buying new clothing,
and putting new waste into the waste cycle,
I would buy things that were totally recycled, second-hand.
So not making any new trash.

The fourth thing that I did was I downsized.

So I focused on having only the things that were truly necessary,

and that I really needed.
Well this was really, really

hard
because I'm the kind of person
who's really sentimental,
and I can tell you as to why a
toothpick needs to be in my
life.

But after I really got through
that process, and I completely
downsized,
I realized that I had so many
fewer things in my life,
my home was less cluttered,
and everything with easier to
clean.

And when you have fewer
things
you realize that you take
better care of them. Right?

When you take better care of
your things you don't have
this mentality like:

"If I don't want this anymore
I'll just throw it out and I get a
new thing later."

No, I only had a few things
and so I took care of them,
and wasn't sending anything
to the landfill.

All this must sound pretty
difficult. Right?

I assure you, it's not that hard.

I'm just an average, lazy
person,

and I wouldn't live this
lifestyle if it was difficult.

In fact the benefits of living

this lifestyle
far outweigh any of the
negatives that you can
imagine.

The first benefit is that I save
money.

So I save money when I buy
my food,
and the products, and when I
make my own products,
because I'm not paying for the
embedded cost a packaging,
so things are cheaper.

I'm also saving money by
shopping completely second-
hand,
because second-hand clothing
is usually less expensive than

new clothing.

I'm also saving money
because I've downsized.

I don't go shopping all the
time now

and you know just buy things
on impulse.

I only have what I really need.

The second benefit is that I
eat better.

When I go shopping now I
don't have the option to buy
processed food products,
package-free, and so now my
diet consists of things like
fresh fruit and vegetables,
or bulk greens, and nuts that I
buy

with my jars and my bags.
And so when you eat better,
you feel better.

Over these past few years,
I've noticed that my weight
has stabilized,
I have more energy, I need
less sleep,
and when you're eating better,
and you feel better,
and you save money, you're
happier.

But besides those things I'm
happier, because for the first
time in my life,
I'm living in direct alignment
with my values.

And why is this important?

Right? Waste.

Well, waste is a really big problem.

In fact the average American person produces approximately 4.4 pounds of trash per person per day.

Over the course of a year, that's like taking 8.5 of your best friends, and throwing them in the trash.

(Laughter)

Don't do that, it's not nice.

(Laughter)

So, if you care about your friends, and you don't throw

them away,
and you think that it's possible
for you
to reduce how much trash
you're producing,
I have 3 simple steps for you.
The first step is to actually
look at your trash, and
understand what it is.
Because you can't solve a
problem of having a lot of
waste
until you know what is it.
So when I did this exercise,
I realized that I had 3 main
sources of trash.
The first was food packaging,
and so I learned how to shop

in bulk or package-free.
The second was product
packaging,
and so I learned how to make
all of my own products.
And the third was organic
food waste, and so I learned
how to compost.
And just by identifying those
3 sources of waste and
eliminating them,
I have reduced my trash by
about 90%.
The second thing that I'd like
to suggest is picking at the
low-hanging fruit.
So doing little things, one-
time changes in your

everyday life
that have a large-scale, and
long-term positive impact.
This includes things like
using a reusable bag instead
of a plastic or paper bag.
Or using a stainless steel, or
glass water bottle,
instead of buying plastic
water bottles.
Over the course of however
long, you realize that these
little changes
actually add up, and make a
big difference.
The third thing that I'd like to
suggest is the DIY
or actually learning how to

make your products yourself.

Now I absolutely love doing this because when you go to a

store,

and you have to buy products

you kind of have to settle,

and accept them as they are.

Right?

If you don't like the way they
smell, too bad.

If you don't like the way they
feel, sorry.

If you don't like what they're
packaged in, you don't have a
choice.

But for me, since I make all
my own products,

If I don't like the way they

smell, I change the scent.
If I don't like the ingredients
in them, I change it.

If I don't like the packaging,
it's my choice.

And so by making my own
products I have complete
control

over what I'm putting in my
body.

Now I started living this
lifestyle while I was still in
college.

And when I graduated, I had a
real job, a real-person job in
sustainability,
which is exactly what you'd
think I'd want to be doing.

Right?

Well, at the same time I was still running my blog: "Trash is for tossers"

and I noticed that I was getting a recurring question, and it went something like this:

"Dear Lauren, I absolutely love the products that you're making, and I too want truly natural products.

But because of life, family, friends, blah, blah, blah, I just don't have time to make them myself.

Do you have any product that

I can buy that are equivalent?
Thanks for your help. Lots of
love. Person XYZ."

So I went to stores, and I
started
looking at products,
and while I found that they
were beauty products
that were reminiscent of the
ones that I was making
myself,
I didn't notice the same trend
for cleaning products.
When I looked at the
ingredients of cleaning
products,
even the "natural" cleaning
products

contained ingredient that were
really harmful.

Things that were
carcinogenic, and endocrine-
disruptive.

You know, when I looked
into it further,

I learned that cleaning
product manufacturers
aren't even legally required
to disclose the ingredients of
their products

on the product packaging,
and so when we go and buy a
product,

we're at the complete mercy
of the company,
hoping that they have our best

interest in mind.

I feel that we, as consumers,
have a right to products that
are transparent
and that aren't bad for us,
and so I started thinking about
my own products,
the ones that I've been making
for years.

That are safe, and effective,
and have ingredients that I use
to do things
like brush my teeth, or make
salad dressing.

And I realized that I had an
opportunity,
and so I quit my job, and
started a company.

Because I feel like we, as
human beings, have a right to
products that are safe
for our homes, and our
bodies, and the environment.
I get comments all the time,
that I'm doing this for
attention.

But I live this lifestyle for
myself.

I would never tell anyone how
to live
or how much trash that they
should produce.

I just want to provide tools,
through my blog and my
business,
for people, who like me,

want to reduce how much
trash they're producing.
I live a zero waste lifestyle,
because to me,
it's the best way I know, how
to
live a life
that aligns with everything
that I believe in.
And what's the point. Right?
I'm just one person. What
difference can I make?
The point is simple:
I want to be remembered for
the things that I did while I
was on this planet,
and not for the trash that I left
behind.

Thank you.

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