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Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle - **At Home!**

February 9, 2010 19:39 by [kelly](#)

Thinking back on my early childhood (I'm talking 70's & 80's), we didn't do much recycling, until, I'd say, the late 80's. It's then that I remember starting to crush soda cans, and saving newspapers. As a young child, growing up in Southern NJ, I recall driving by landfills – huge, hulking, smelly things, and my young mind wondering at the mass quantities of garbage that it took to create them. At the time, saving the earth seemed more distant - like saving the whales. The closest thing to home was the anti-littering push. There were signs along the highways indicating hefty fines for dumping, and I remember watching in amazement as a McDonalds bag full of wrappers was tossed out of a car window in front of us while driving down the turnpike (Seriously did anyone, anywhere, ever really think that was okay?). But, aside from littering, it seemed as long as you picked your trash up, and put it in its place, all was well. Reducing waste wasn't really part of everyday concerns that I recall. I now look around my own house as an adult and see many examples of how recycling, reusing, and reducing waste have become a regular part of our lives. How times have changed - for the better!!

I asked my children yesterday if they could think of ways that we help keep the earth clean, and their answers came quickly & effortlessly. They said thing like: We save the caps from our bottles. We open the windows when we're hot instead of turning on the air conditioner. We don't wash our towels every time we use them.

My heart smiled - these kids really get it - and their attitude can only make the world a better, cleaner place into the future!

Feeling inspired, we went on a search around the house for some other examples of ways we reduce, reuse, and recycle, and here's what we came up with:

In the kitchen, we have a whole "recycle station":



One bin for bottles & cans, one bin for paper, and a small can for plastic lids. Our township only recycles #1 & #2 plastic, glass, aluminum, and steel cans, and newspaper/cardboard. Now, while this is wonderful, it does leave a whole lot of things un-recycled: #3, #4, #5, #6, & #7 plastic for example. They also do not allow plastic caps of any kind. Fortunately, we have found a solution for the caps, which previously would have gone right into the garbage. We participate in the [Recycle Caps with Aveda](#) program.

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In the midst of writing this blog post, I found a wonderful site that allowed me to locate a township just a few short miles away that DOES collect #3 - #7, including unnumbered plastic! I'm super excited about this, and it seems we'll have to add level three to our recycle station in our kitchen! Want to find out if there is a place near you that recycles #5 plastic (i.e. yogurt containers)? Check out earth911.com.

At the grocery store, we shop with the reusable bags.



Most of the shops around here now offer them for only \$.99 at check out, and some places, like Ikea & Whole Foods, no longer even produce the plastic bags. Meaning, you HAVE to bring your own bag. I think this is a wonderful move forward! I put this one in the Reduce AND Reuse categories.

In our kitchen, while I haven't been able to eliminate paper towels completely (has anyone been able to do this? Please let me know how!), we keep a stack of dish towels at the ready for drying hands, wiping spills, cleaning surfaces.



I found our old cloth diapers easily double as dish rags! Reuse & Reduce Win!

Also in the kitchen, we're slowly moving away from juice boxes through the purchase of awesome #5 plastic juice boxes.



I've found them easy to clean, and the kids can put them together themselves. Plus, they were only \$1.99 a piece. That's just a bit more than the 3-pack of organic juice boxes I usually buy – so we've made the cost up quickly!

I haven't yet been able to separate myself from bottled water though. At this point, our township water is fluoridated. I'm not comfortable with ONLY drinking this water (though we do filter it, it doesn't take out the fluoride), so I still purchase bottled spring water. But I'm stymied by the plastic – both from the waste production aspect of things, as well as the leaching chemicals into the water aspect of things. Now, we do recycle the bottles & caps. But I wish there were affordable glass-contained spring water. That would be a perfect solution!

In the playroom, the kids' play kitchen itself is a Reuse curbside find!



I can't believe it would have or eventually will hit the landfill (and I hate to even think of how many plastic play kitchens currently reside in landfills!), so I vow to donate it when we're finished. Though it was trashed, it's in perfect play condition, and we furnish it with yogurt & spice containers that were heretofore un-recyclable.

In the laundry room in the winter, we detach the dryer vent so it vents indoors!



In this way, anytime a load of laundry is drying (most of the time with a family of four!), it helps heat & humidify our house. Reduce win!

Finally, in the Reduce category, over the last few years, as our incandescent bulbs have burned out around our home, we've replaced them with fluorescent bulbs. A few of the bulbs were provided by [Project Porchlight](http://www.projectporchlight.com) (they stopped by our door last year, and gave us three!). They've distributed nearly 3 million fluorescent light bulbs door-to-door in neighborhoods - for free! If you're interested in getting involved in their volunteer program, visit their site here: <http://www.projectporchlight.com> Over time, the savings from switching to fluorescent really adds up - in reduced electric bills, repurchasing of light bulbs, and reduced trash.

So how are you Reducing, Reusing, and Recycling in your life? I'd love to hear some more ideas!

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