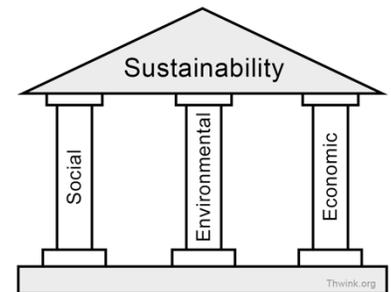


International Conversation Cafe

Lifestyle topic: Taking Care of the Environment

People around the world talk about environmental sustainability, which is our ability to continue to use the earth's resources while protecting the earth in order to provide for future generations. Another way to understand it is stated in the Brundtland Report of 1987. It defines environmental sustainability as, "...the development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Twinkl.org suggests that in order for the world to achieve environmental sustainability it must also provide social and economic sustainability. Social sustainability has to do with people living in peace. Economic sustainability has to do with an economy that sustains a level of production and prosperity.



Explain how one of these areas affect another.

Renewable Resources

Renewable resources are resources that can be replenished over time. For example, using wood. Trees can be planted and harvested. Solar energy continues to produce as we use it. The same could be said for wind. Most fossil fuels such as oil, natural gas, and coal are considered nonrenewable resources because the formation of these substances takes billions of years.

What kinds of renewable resources do you use in your daily life?

What kinds of nonrenewable resources do you use in your daily life?

Pollution

Pollution means the rate of waste produced should not exceed the ability to dispose of the waste with no threat to the environment. Typically, we think about air, water, and land pollution. The chief contributor to pollution is businesses and industry.

What are the biggest problems your country faces when it comes to pollution...air, water, or land?

Who are the biggest contributors to pollution in your city or country?

What are some steps being taken to control pollution?

Nonrenewable Resources

People worry about how long we can continue using up nonrenewable resources like coal and oil before we run out. They emphasize the need to develop renewable substitutes. This is where research and development are important. The five commonly used renewable resources are Biomass including wood and wood waste, municipal solid waste, landfill gas and biogas, ethanol, biodiesel, hydropower, geothermal, wind, solar.

One disadvantage of renewable energy is that it is difficult to generate the quantities of electricity that are as large as those produced by traditional fossil fuel generators.

What kinds of renewable resource development do you see in your city or country?

Besides voting for politicians that will make laws to improve sustainability, are there are modifications each person can make to promote a healthier earth? Read through following list and discuss what practices you are likely to adapt and which are not practical.

1. Recycle. Recycle and buy products made from recycled material.
2. Purchases. Don't buy things you don't need. Read labels to see if the product supports the environment or demand from the environment?
3. Grow your own garden. You can grow without chemicals and recycle your kitchen waste as fertilizer.
4. Minimize waste. Avoid excessive packaging. Give away or recycle furniture and appliances.
5. Watch your utility bills. Look for ways energy has been wasted in your house; faulty wiring, dripping faucets, insufficient insulation
6. Purchase energy efficient appliances and windows. They will pay for themselves in a few years.
7. Compost kitchen waste. Anything but meat or milk products can be composted and used in a garden.
8. Carpool or use public transportation.
9. Plant more trees.
10. Support organizations dedicated to sustainability. There is power when people cooperate and unite.

Are there other ways you use or have read about to sustain the environment?

There are many initiatives to improve the environment. Consider the following story.

The 4th Bin

The 4th bin (NYC) collects, reuses or recycles unwanted electronic goods in New York City in order to prevent the accumulation and export of hazardous waste; e-waste. In 2009, discarded televisions, computers, peripherals (including printers, scanners, fax machines) computer mice, keyboards, and cell phones amounted to about 2.37 million tons.

Previously, this waste was mixed with other waste, sent to landfills or exported to other countries (including those in the developing world). It contained pollutants (lead, barium, mercury) which can have long-term devastating effects on both ecologies as well as human health.

The 4th bin initiative collects e-waste from private addresses and companies. Used electronic goods are then sorted and sent for re-use wherever possible. Otherwise, goods are broken down into their component or material parts and sent to source the supply of new products. 4th bin reuses first, recycles second. Since 2009, the 4th bin has been responsible for diverting 500 short tons (1 million pounds) of e-waste generated in New York City.

Read more at www.4thbin.com

What other initiatives do you know about?

