



To be 'sustainable' we need to be: "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations, 1987). Thinking of future generations, and not leaving them increasing problems is very important to us all. So we need to consider the 6 R's of sustainability:

- 1) We need to reduce our over-production, over-consumption, and the amount of waste we produce. For example, companies such as Amazon have been found to throw away perfectly good, completely unused products they've been unable to sell. These products could have donated to charities to use.
- 2) We need to refuse unsustainable products. This is 'consumer power'. If we decline to buy products and services that harm people, or the environment, then companies realise they need to rethink and improve.
- 3) We need to attempt to repair things instead of just disposing of them.
- 4) We need businesses, companies and corporations to rethink the design of products and services. So they make things that can be repaired, reused or recycled more easily (a circular economy). We need them to rethink how they source raw materials and foods. For example, do they use palm oil grown on land where rainforests are being stolen from indigenous peoples and destroyed.
- 5) We need to recycle more; to be able to convert waste products into the basic elements to build new products, instead of wasting those basic elements (for example, recovering metals from waste electricals and aluminium cans, instead of burying them in landfill for future generations to sort out).
- 6) We need to reuse products instead of just throwing them away. Could we repurpose or refurbish them?

As individuals all of this can seem very difficult. In our very busy modern lives it can seem very difficult to learn about and consider all of these issues, but every little helps. As Anne Marie Bonneau said: 'We don't need a handful of

people doing zero waste perfectly. We need millions of people doing it imperfectly.'

Every time you try to consider these issues and try to make small changes in the way you do things, or make small changes in what you buy or don't buy, you are helping. You are helping to change mind sets, businesses, systems and the direction of our communities.

If you need more information about which products are best for people and the planet Ethical consumer website (<https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/>), can be used to find out about specific brands and products. For example, try searching their website for information about chocolate Easter eggs. It's a real eye opener! Even if you don't subscribe, you can see some useful information to think about.

Beware 'greenwashing', as companies and businesses realise we're choosing products that are less harmful to people and the planet, they may use false claims and 'natural' or 'green' wording in their advertising. For example air fresheners which claim to have 'natural' scents may also contain artificial chemicals, which can be harmful. The Breast cancer UK website has information about how to avoid products containing EDC's (endocrine disrupting chemicals - chemicals which affect our hormones). Over time, exposure to EDC's may increase the risk of developing some types of cancer (<https://www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/chemicals-environment-breast-cancer-risk/edcs-breast-cancer-risk/>).

So learning a bit more about the products we buy and use, and trying to change some of our choices, can help protect our own health as well as the health of future of generations, the environment and our world.