**Here's How This Mom Reduced Her Family's Plastic Consumption**

**Source: DeepaMiglani, An Engineer &A Mother**

Pollution is the topic that everyone loves to discuss but places most of the blames on the government for not taking adequate steps to curb the menace. Garbage management and the air quality are the familiar subjects we hear about, the latter more around Diwali time.

The ‘*Swachh Bharat’* campaign is an attempt to clean up the streets in both urban and rural India by focussing on the reasons behind the lack of cleanliness. But does our responsibility end on doing the segregation and handing it over to the corporation for disposal, or should we take on a little more of the onus of being the garbage creator?

As a family, we decided to do the latter and make a few conscious changes in our lives to make the earth a better place.

**Our Tiny Steps:**

Since plastic is already a part of our lives as a family we decided to implement the policy of “refuse” in addition to the reduce, reuse and recycle part. It doesn't mean that we completely banish this polymer from our life. However, a huge reduction was done in buying plastic products and a conscious switch was made towards alternate materials.

The family started with using bamboo toothbrush in place of the regular one which came as a return gift from an environmentally conscious family. We realised that toothbrushes only have the bristles that are useful, the rest of it consists of multi-coloured plastic which just adds to the percentage of this material in this world.

In addition, we decided to ban from the kitchen the addition of any new plastic food storage containers, water bottles, aluminium wrap for food. These have been replaced by glass storage containers, glass bottles and *OddyUniwrap* for food packaging. The children school tiffin still remain plastic boxes for want of a lighter alternative but I am exploring steel boxes that will be lightweight and relieve me of the guilt of plastic use.

Our next opportunity came when we needed to purchase disposable cutlery for an occasion. We had realised that single-use plastic was adding to the plastic garbage. We set out to procure non-plastic disposables and found to our disappointment that the difference in price between the plastic/ thermocol cutlery and the palm leaf ones was a lot. However, at least we found that alternatives existed.

We decided to go in for the more expensive biodegradable plates and spoons. The store promptly started putting all of these in a polythene bag when we whipped out a shopping bag that took about 50% of the shopping and the rest was carried to the car in our hand. Already the cling film packaging was pricking our conscious, we didn't need a bag to add to it. More such pocket bags have been purchased since and placed in the cars.

Among other things, what we as a family refuses to use is the 200 ml water bottle that seems to have caught everyone’s fancy. Whether its a shop or a small get together, this evil alternative seems to be presented with a lot of pride. Though the initial refusals to drink from these caused us a wait to quench our thirst, it instilled in us the discipline to carry our own water. When you refuse, it also creates a small awareness in the person serving the water. I feel proud when my kids come back home telling me how they refused to use a plastic cup at the birthday party and requested the waiter to bring them water in a glass instead.

***One plastic cup refused today, will definitely go a long way.***

**Doesn’t the almost invisible plastic straw seem like the best way to sip your lemonade?**

Now imagine that plastic straw shoved up your nose without you being able to remove it. After watching a heart-wrenching video of volunteers trying to pull out a plastic straw stuck up the nose of a turtle, the family decided it was time to say no to straws. We proactively specify at restaurants that our drinks should be served without a straw and without the plastic cover if they are serving in a disposable cup. Tell people to use paper straws instead.

We had heard of these things so many times, but never really acknowledged the problem to be ours. Recycling seems to subdue our inner voice but that is not enough. That doesn't make reuse or recycling less important, it just makes the reduce part of the cycle more effective.

***When you refuse, you contribute one drop of elixir to the earth and do your bit towards making it a better place for the future generations.***