

Breaking Free from Plastics Dependence Webinar

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Moderator: Ed Begley Jr., Actor and Activist

Panelists: Alex Schulze, CEO and Co-Founder of 4ocean
Arun Krishnamurthy, Founder of Environmentalist Foundation of India
Charlie Rolsky, Director of Science at Plastic Oceans International
Melati Wijsen, Founder of Bye Bye Plastic Bags
Billy Lombe, Founder & CEO of Centre for Zero Waste & Development in Africa

Some Big Take-Aways

(to see the whole thing go here: <https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-live-webinars/>)

Stop Plastic Pollution

- The most effective way to stop plastic pollution is to turn off the tap
4Ocean is involved in ocean clean up, but there is only so much that can be done. All the collected plastic is weighed, documented, and sorted – then the plastic sent to the appropriate location for recycling. However, there are always items that are not recyclable, so if all the outlets are exhausted then that plastic is landfilled or incinerated
- More than looking at technological solutions, we need to look at self-discipline
- Do some unlearning and go back to our traditional roots
- Must address the denialists – there has been too much talk about recycling – that is not what is happening when you go on the ground – most of the plastic is in the ocean, etc. Must get people understand that recycling is not a super bullet – the real solution is to produce less plastics.

Activism: Make A Difference

- Like climate change, plastic pollution affects everyone, but not equally!
- The three pillars to effect change are:
 1. personal action
 2. corporate responsibility
 3. good legislation
- Have a set goal, recognize the issues in your own community and address those
- Hold the corporate brands and political leaders accountable → need policy change and regulation
Most plastics are being produced by companies, much of it for packaging – we must hold the big companies accountable
- Using social media is one way to have a massive impact by creating a global movement

- Take picture of plastic wrapped items and send to the company and politely ask if there is a way to do it without plastic
- Plastic bag 'exchange' – keep the plastic you have received unwillingly from your grocery or other shopping source, then return it to the store and ask them to keep it – this is one way to bring the problem to the companies attention

Education: Raise Awareness

- People use plastic because it is cheap and it is easy, but they must be taught the consequences of plastic
- We must reach out to young people (and others) to educate them about the challenges and impacts of microplastics - need to raise awareness by bringing it down to a level that people can really understand so that policies and laws are created and enacted
- Clean Up Events
 - These are an intimate way for people to interact with the environment and their community – clean up events often spur people into activism
 - Simply cleaning up the oceans will get us out of this problem, however, doing a clean up makes it relatable to people – we have consumers have the power to make choices
 - We have all been taught to dump our trash, but have not been shown what happens to it – helps to invite people to participate in clean ups – this brings a change in their lifestyle
- Well-intentioned people can be, and have been, misled by misinformation (example: recycling), so getting real information quickly into the hands of the people is critical
- Scientists need to get better at communicating their results and be comfortable speaking to all kinds of people
- Activists and scientists need to communicate in a way that is digestible to everybody, particularly those who have the ability to impact or create policy – we must be transparent about the knowledge and spread the word quickly