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Finding “Eco-Normal”

From the founder of the Crayon Collection

I recently attended a dinner party and was seated at a table with an astronaut who has visited outer space twice in his lifetime. He shared what his experience was as he left the Earth’s atmosphere and looked at our planet from above for the first time. He showed me an image of something you don’t see everyday. It was a green glowing halo that surrounds our gorgeous planet, its ratio being equivalent to the skin of an apple. Minuscule and delicate...very delicate. This halo is us, it is our atmosphere. This is where we live, breathe, eat, sleep, work, love, learn, fight wars, make peace and sadly where we are destroying our planet. That view is what brought this astronaut to realize that if it weren’t for this halo, the Earth would be one giant dead rock. Preserving that halo is our job.

We need to look deeper at what our “normal” is right now. In hindsight, we are surprised at what past generations used to do because they didn’t know any better. My grandmother used to tell me that she smoked because she didn’t know it was bad for her. I believe that the stories we will share with our grandkids will be about the lack of responsibility we are showing the environment today because “we didn’t know any better”. I think we do know better and that we must make a very crucial shift in our behavior towards a new normal, an “eco-normal”.

Parts of our daily routine are so engrained in our minds that we don’t notice them anymore yet they contribute to the disastrous path our planet is facing. Have you noticed that when you order a drink at a restaurant it automatically comes with a straw? Well, that straw is one of 500,000,000 straws that are dispensed each day, never to decompose, poisoning our sea life. What about plastic cutlery – 40,000,000,000 plastic forks, spoons, and knives are used and thrown “away” each year just in the US. But where is “away”? “Away” is in the mountains of trash the Earth struggles to absorb that is now causing our climate to heat up. I started the Crayon Collection to teach children about conservation and philanthropy and to partake in a new eco-normal, bringing light to billions of good crayons that are thrown into landfills per year

by restaurants worldwide. We provide a solution to show restaurants, and families in America that this level of mindless wastefulness must stop.

I use this analogy to teach my kids about the environment; imagine someone asked you to eat pebbles and stones in hopes that you could digest it. That your body could withstand the removal of a few organs here and there, and that you should just keep going as though you are whole, without missing a beat. How can we expect our planet to maintain its loyalty to us day in and day out, with perfect sunrises and sunsets while we are mindlessly destroying it? We are asking our precious Earth to digest billions of pieces of plastic and to breath toxic gases. We are cutting away at its organs by cutting down its rain forests, and polluting its oceans. We are disfiguring our beautiful mountains because we want our kitchens and bathrooms to have the best Calacutta or Carrera marbles. At what point will we stop? When it's all gone?

Here's the good news. I found myself observing some of the 100,000 different faces walking by me at the Coachella Music Festival. The faces I saw were all different shapes, colors, sizes with different likes, dislikes, dreams, wants and wishes. Every single one of them had this in common- we ALL have the same exact needs. Whether you are a man, woman, teenager, adult, celebrity or a super star, we are the SAME. We are all inhabitants of this planet with a need for food, water, oxygen, sleep, and shelter.

Scientists say that the next generation and possibly the one after that will “make or break” the state of our environment. They are the ones who can determine the trajectory of our precious planet. It is our responsibility to teach our children about the environment from an early age and plant the seed for new “eco-normal” behavior. We must take notice of all the regular things that are contributing to our planet's demise, such as plastics and carbon gases. This Earth Day, consider making a small change in your daily life - switch to paper straws or better yet tell your waiter you don't need one in your drink. Try using reusable utensils in your meals. Teach your children about conservation in fun and interesting ways such as the Crayon Collection - they LOVE to get involved. Or start a compost with your kids - it's another great way to experience cycles of nature. Lastly, please know how much we are counting on you (yes, you) and your children to be eco-minded citizens of the Earth in order to regain control of the very slippery slope we are on.

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