

Transcript

Sustainability Day - 28 October 2020

Sustainable(ish) – Jen Gale

Jen: I'm going to talk to you a little bit about sustainable(ish) and why I think that the (ish) is all important really in sustainability.

So just a very brief intro to me. I am Jen, I am an ordinary knackered mum of two I always say. I used to be a vet and my journey into sustainability began when we spent a year buying nothing new, rather randomly. It was about 8 years ago now and I slightly naively thought it would be quite a fun challenge and I blogged every day for the year, which actually was harder than buying nothing new. It really opened my eyes to the climate crisis I guess. We were still calling it climate change back then. This was pre-Greta, this was pre Attenborough's change in stance about highlighting the climate crisis. I think, probably like a lot of us maybe are now, I'd failed to join the dots really between the things I was buying and the impact it was having, between the things I was buying and the things we were throwing away. I think I'd also just chosen to look away a lot of the time from the stuff that I guess we're all vaguely aware of like fast fashion but I think to a certain extent we feel like it must be okay. If they're allowed to sell 3 t-shirts for £6 or whatever, it must be okay. Somebody somewhere has got to be looking after these people and making sure everything's all right. But actually I realised during that year it's very much not okay, and nobody is looking after these people and that I do and we do as a family have a responsibility and all the choices that we make have an impact.

So now here we are 8 years on, I've got this amazing sustainability online community. There's 50 or 60,000 people when we look at email lists and various social media platforms, and it's all about taking imperfect eco action. Earlier on this year I founded the Knackered Mums Eco Club, and that was really driven by a desire to try and challenge these stereotypes a little bit. I think there's a lot of people out there, I see a lot of mums in the playground. I say I see a lot of mums in the playground, I don't anymore, we have to do stop and drop. But a lot of my friends who probably are a bit worried about the climate and are feeling a bit of eco anxiety, but we're not talking about it, and they probably don't associate themselves or think of themselves as green and they wouldn't necessarily come and join a sustainable group. But they probably do relate to being knackered mums. So that's hopefully the idea that we can break down these stereotypes and get some more people on board. I was really fortunate to have my first book published in January, *The Sustainable(ish) Living Guide*, and all of this is just to really make the point that you don't need to be an expert to make change happen. I am very much not an expert. I am not an environmental scientist. I can't go in and assess someone's carbon footprint or anything like that. I'm just somebody who saw something I wanted to change and wanted to try and have an impact and we can all do that. We don't have to be Greta. We don't have to be Attenborough. We don't even have to have a community of 50,000 people taking imperfect action. We can do it in our own homes, in our own communities, and these ripples really do spread when we start to take action.

So I'm just going to very, very briefly talk about the problem just so we're all on the same page. I'm guessing by the very fact that you're here at a Sustainability Day means that you're already aware of the issue and hopefully wanting some inspiration and some ideas for some changes you can make. I had a chat with one of my school friends the other day and just said to her 'Are you worried about

this? Is it something you're concerned about? What do you think things are going to look like in 30 years' time?' And she said 'Well, I don't really know.' Fair play to her she's got twins who are 2 and a 9 year old so she's full on busy. But she's got a PhD, she's incredibly intelligent. But she said she just doesn't have time to sit and read massive, long social media posts. Unless it comes through on the BBC News app or whatever she's not seeing it. I think to a certain extent we're a little bit guilty of assuming a certain amount of knowledge that people have and I think as an environmental movement we shy away a little bit from talking about what it might be like in the future that we're facing, because we don't want to scare the pants off people. Because when we scare the pants off people you get this massive amount of eco anxiety and this paralysis and then from there it's a very, very difficult place to start to take action. So we're just going to have one slide on this, and then we're going to spend the rest of the presentation talking about solutions and how we can be part of those solutions.

What we're looking at when we're looking at climate change, or the change in global temperatures, and I'm probably teaching my grandma to suck eggs here because there's probably people far more qualified than me on this call. But we're looking at the change in temperature, the change in carbon dioxide concentrations since the industrial revolution really and we're at about a 1° rise since then which doesn't sound much does it. I've got a cup of tea here and I wouldn't be able to tell you if it was 93° or 92°.

I wouldn't be able to tell you if my bath was 1° out. But the planet can tell and the ecosystems and things that are on the planet depend on this sort of steady state temperature and depend on climate changes happening very, very slowly, so they have time to adapt to them. At the moment they're happening very quickly. So we're already seeing these consequences with more extreme weather, rising sea levels, the polar ice caps melting and actually we're on track if nothing changes for at least 3° of warming by the end of the century. This means that our children and certainly our grandchildren will be looking at a vastly different world. There will be millions, if not billions, of climate refugees. There will be large tracts of the planet that are uninhabitable, certainly unfarmable. The current global commitments we have got aren't really enough to prevent temperature rises above 2°, let alone the 1½° that were set out by the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. They said that we really need to take unprecedented action if we're to keep global temperatures below this rise of 1½°.

When they talk about unprecedented action it feels quite daunting doesn't it. I had to look up what unprecedented actually meant, and it means doing things we've not done before. So from our governments and our businesses that means big policy shifts. That means radically new ways of doing business. But it also means for us that we do things we've not done before. But actually when we say that's all that is, all it is is that we've got to do things a little bit differently, do things we've not done before. It feels a little bit less daunting when you put it like that. For any of us who are parents, we've had to adapt. We've had to start doing things differently when a small person arrives in our life. So we can do it and we can do it relatively easily. I'm going to talk to you about the fact that maybe we're doing some things we've not done before, but that can be something like buying an item of organic food from the supermarket that you haven't before, replacing one organic food.

So the decisions we make, and I think David Attenborough has talked about this, the decisions that we make today and certainly in the next 10 years are absolutely critical in ensuring a safe and sustainable world for everybody for the next hundreds of years, so no pressure at all. So that's the problem and the solution I absolutely adore. Actually I was reviewing my slides for this and it's a bit of a quotetastic presentation, so bear with me but there are quite a lot of quotes but hopefully inspiring

ones. This is from Jane Goodall, 'You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do, what we do every single day makes a difference and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make'. I absolutely adore this quote, but I'm also aware that maybe we feel a bit paralysed then.

Like every single decision we make, every single thing we do obviously has an impact and we've got to decide, do we want to do positive or negative and sometimes I just need to get tea cooked and I just need to get the shopping done. And that's absolutely okay. That is where this sustainable(ish) comes in. So for me it's not about making the best decision all the time. It's about making better decisions more of the time. I've put my attempt at a Venn diagram in here because this is The Open University after all, and I suspect we're all probably big fans of Venn diagrams. I get asked all the time if individual action is enough. No of course it's not enough. We need businesses to take action. We need governments to take action. But we do have a role to play. I think it's very easy to feel like as individuals and as families and as communities that we don't have power or influence, and we can't create change. We absolutely can.

Obviously there's this sweet spot where business, government and individuals are all working together, and we've got that lovely green star there and we're all on the same page pulling in the same direction. When we're in that sweet spot change will happen much more quickly. But actually you can see that there's an overlap as well between us as individuals and families, and business. So we have an influence there and there's an overlap between us as individuals and the government. So actually the choices that we're making, the things that we're choosing to buy or not buy, and the interactions that we're having with businesses, they can all absolutely make a difference. So when we're thinking about the influence that we might have on businesses, just have a think about all the public reaction that there was to Blue Planet 2 and the way that that actually forced businesses and indeed the government to change. We've just seen a ban come in on plastic straws and stirrers and things and yes it's the tip of an iceberg but it does show us that public voices, public choices, do make a difference and do make businesses react.

So businesses ultimately will follow where the money is. So if we're choosing to not buy a certain thing, and to support another business that sits more closely with our values, that's putting a message out there and then actually we can amplify that message by emailing the people that we've chosen not to spend money with or tweeting or whatever and saying, 'Look guys, I really absolutely love your products, but I really don't like the impact that they're having and actually I've chosen instead to give my hard earned money to these people over here'. So actually our choices and our voices I think are much more powerful than sometimes we give ourselves credit for. And again, the same with government, there's a very important election coming up in the States at the moment. Our vote matters, sometimes it feels like it doesn't. But it absolutely does. At local elections, at national elections, but even being aware of who your MP is, being aware of how they voted, knowing who they are on Twitter so you can tweet them and ask them how they're planning to vote on a certain thing. There was a study out in 2017 that said that MPs weren't taking more action on the climate crisis because they weren't being told by their constituents that it was an issue for them. Now I'm sure that's probably changed with the student strikes and all those sorts of things and I'm sure they're aware it very much is an issue. But I'm in an area where our MP has been in place for years.

He's a Conservative. He's in a very safe Conservative seat. He might not feel like it's an issue for his constituents, but I'm one of his constituents. I have written to him. I have emailed him. He is very aware that I think it's a problem and we can all do that. It doesn't take long to write an email and often

with petitions and things there's template emails, and I absolutely do think that signing online petitions really does count. I don't know if any of you guys saw it, there is a charity called City to Sea and they ran an online campaign, a petition, a couple of years ago to get supermarkets, it was called Switch the Stick, to switch the cotton buds sticks from plastic to cardboard or bamboo. They got over 100,000 signatures and now all 8 of the big retailers have signed up to that and will start engaging with them. There's an amazing woman called Ella Daish who does a lot of campaigning around plastic in period products. Again she had an online campaign and I don't think any of the retailers and manufacturers would respond to her or interact with her or engage with her until she got about 100/150/200,000 signatures and now they're sitting up and they're taking action and they're engaging with her. So yes that's my soapbox of please don't worry about signing online petitions. But the takeaway from this is that we can have an impact as individuals but remember that we're all interlinked and that we can absolutely make changes in our own homes and in the things that we're doing. But remember the power of these choices and the power of our voices as well.

This stat is just to really demonstrate actually how impactful our choices that we're making every single day are. I discovered this stat when I was researching my book and I had to doublecheck it but it comes from the Journal of Industrial Ecology or something like that, it's a properly referenced peer-reviewed thing. Household consumption is responsible for more than 60% of global greenhouse gas emissions. So the food that we're eating, the clothes that we're wearing, how we're travelling, these really mundane dull decisions that we're making every single day, they absolutely do all add up. The other stat that I think is really quite telling is that there was an article out in The Guardian earlier on this year that said that the world's richest 10% are responsible for over 50% about 52% of global greenhouse gas emissions. It's very easy to look at that stat and think celebrities and footballers and WAGs, of course, they're flying this way and that way all over the world, and probably huge consumers.

But actually to be in the world's wealthiest 10%, your salary needs to be around £27,000 per annum. Yes that's a lot of money, but that's not a huge amount of money is it. I have no idea what you guys salaries are, but it's not unreasonable to expect that quite a lot of people on this call might have a salary in excess of that. So actually our consumption is responsible for more than half of global greenhouse gas emissions. So again that's I think quite telling of the fact that we have very high levels of consumption. David Attenborough talked about this recently. I keep talking about David. I absolutely love David Attenborough, who doesn't love David Attenborough. He said that actually our consumption levels, our quality of life here in the developed world needs to stall. So it's not saying we have to take massive great big steps backwards, we're not going to go back and live in the 50s and all that sort of thing, but we just need to stall. We need to start being a bit more conscious, a bit more deliberate about the things that we're buying, a bit more thoughtful about the things that we're buying, and the impact that it's having.

For me that was the biggest takeaway from our year buying nothing new. It forced this stop gap between I want this or I need this, and going and getting it because it's very easy. We're constantly bombarded and it's not surprising that we've all bought into this consumptive society. That sounds like we've all got TB. This society that's built on consumption and in a very disposable way of looking at things because we're constantly bombarded with all these messages from advertisers that newer is better. We will be happier. We will be more attractive. We will be richer, more beautiful, if we've got X, Y, and Z. Of course we all know it's not true. But there's no denying there is this kind of endorphin rush we get isn't there, or we believe that when we have certain things, it's aspirational isn't it, we will be a certain type of person.

But actually in doing that year buying nothing new, instead of when doing a supermarket shop and seeing a couple of T-shirts and thinking the kids need a couple of T-shirts, or the kids would really like that and just chucking it in the trolley, I had to think where am I going to get this from. I've got to go round the charity shops and hope it's there, or I've got to have a look on eBay, or I've got to ask on Facebook to see if any of my friends have got something they've grown out of or whatever. It forced that stopgap which gave me enough space to just step back from it and think whether I actually needed it or wanted it and 9 times out of 10 by the time I'd managed to track it down or whatever, we didn't really need or want it anymore anyway. So I think that's a really, really important thing to do, just to take a breath, take a step back, almost like with the kids when they say they want something, you say we'll put it on your Christmas list and knowing or hoping that they'll forget about it. Maybe we can start to do a similar thing for ourselves.

So all of this might leave you feeling a bit like this. A bit like 'Oh my god, there is so much responsibility in the things that we're doing as individuals and it sounds like there's all these different decisions I'm making every single day and you're telling me that they add up to 60% of greenhouse gas emissions', and do you know what, like I said earlier, sometimes I just need to make tea, sometimes I just need to get an online shop and I'm torn up with guilt at the amount of plastic bags and that sort of thing. But at the moment it's what needs to happen, and it can leave us feeling really quite overwhelmed. It can leave us feeling really quite anxious and those are places where we get this sort of paralysis and we feel like we can't do right for doing wrong. So it's almost easier to then just wait for somebody else to sort it out and just to hope that it all goes away somehow. Sadly it's not going to go away.

So that is where this whole idea of sustainable(ish) comes in. You're going to hear, like I said at the beginning, loads of amazing talks today and you're probably going to end the day with a notebook full of ideas and a brain that's feeling a little bit fried and wondering where to start first and what to do first, or maybe you'll be full of enthusiasm and you'll be like, 'yeah, I'm going to do this, this, and this' and then life intervenes and nothing happens. You realise that maybe the thing you thought you were going to change was harder and it all becomes really difficult. So for me the (ish) in sustainable(ish) is all important. It's all about making the best choices that you can. The choices that work for you, that work for your family, and that hopefully will work for the planet as well. It's about accepting that we all start from different places. We've all got different challenges and circumstances. No change is too small. We're aiming for progress and not perfection, and we're focusing on the things that we can change and not the things that we can't, because some things as individuals we can't change. We do our supermarket shop and that plastic is really, really visible isn't it. I think that's why it's one of the things that, probably completely the wrong phrase to use, but it's a bit of a gateway drug isn't it, it's very visible. It's very easy to see the cause and effect. We drink our bottle of water or whatever and then we see empty water bottles out on the street, or we see some horrific images on social media of all this plastic washing up. But when we unload our shopping, again it's really visible. We see all these bags and bags of plastic packaging. But some of that needs system change to happen. I speak to a lot of people who are really frustrated about that, that they can't do anything about it and it feels like they can't change anything. So I say let's take a step back. If you do want to look at plastic then let's have a look at plastic in your bathroom, that can be a really easy place to start. Let's have a look at changing your energy supplier. That's a really lovely, easy, but massively impactful thing to do. So rather than just constantly feeling like we're banging our head against a brick wall trying to change something that needs a lot of other things behind it to change, let's go back and let's have a look at some of the things that we are a bit more in control of.

The 2 pictures there on the right, the triangle at the top is to say that I think that often we think that there's this green hierarchy, that we think that we start at the bottom at the very palest of green and just dipping our toes in and that we're working our way up to the top and the perception that in order to be green we need to be right at the top there. We need to be uber crunchy green. We need to be living off-grid and weaving our own yoghurt and that we're working our way from doing nothing up to there in a very linear fashion. But actually lots of us won't aspire to be at that very top bit and that's absolutely okay. But also I think it's much more like this very messy splodge of green that we've got at the bottom where it's different shades of green in different areas of our life, in lockdown and not in lockdown, when the kids are on half term and when they're not. All those different things and that's absolutely okay. If you remember one thing, remember that we are all these big, messy green splodges and that is absolutely all right, to be different shades of green around different things.

So just some reassurance and as I said earlier, it's not about making the best decision 100% of the time, it's about making better decisions more of the time. So there will be times when our decisions are dictated by the amount of time we've got available, by the budget that we've got, all those kinds of things. But I think it really is about this intention, about this consciousness and this awareness and about this intention to be doing things better. So it is absolutely okay to not do it all. I don't do it all. I don't think anyone can do it all. Especially when you throw family and things into the mix. We've got Christmas coming up and I always think Christmas is an especially difficult time to try and create changes around because not only are we trying to create changes ourselves, either as individuals or as families, but also we've got the wider family as well who might not be on the same page as us and that's really, really difficult to manage somebody else.

You might have decided you don't want to buy the kids any more flimsy plastic toys or whatever. But you can't dictate to other people really what they buy your kids or what they spend their money on. So it becomes really, really difficult. So just remember that. It's okay not to do it all. It's okay to still eat meat and to still drive a car. But maybe you eat less meat and maybe you make a commitment to try and walk or cycle journeys that are under a mile. There are things that we can do that still have an impact without having to do it all.

It's okay to go for the low hanging fruit and by the low hanging fruit I mean start with the easy stuff. In fact please do this. I don't know if this is true but I was told once that when it comes to making change, there's a graph and actually the first thing you do is really, really hard and then after that it tails off, the effort you need becomes easier. It takes an awful lot of momentum and effort to make that first step but once you've made that first step and you've realised actually it wasn't that bad, that gives you more momentum to carry on and make other changes. So if we're about low hanging fruit I know Jo's coming on to talk to you about Giki and she's got some amazing ideas and there are loads of brilliant ideas on the Giki website. Some of the things that maybe we think of as being hard work but like changing energy supplier.

That's actually pretty low hanging fruit and pretty big impact as well. If we're talking about plastic, look at the plastic water bottles, the disposable coffee cups, and I know it's harder at the moment but maybe you can say actually if they won't do it in a reusable cup then maybe I'm going to go without my coffee just for a week, and see how I get on with that. There's a brilliant campaign again by the charity City to Sea called contactless coffee whereby they have a video up there that shows coffee shops how they can do a coffee in a reusable mug without the barista having to touch the coffee cup. That's a really lovely thing to maybe share with your independent coffee shop and just say, 'Look, I

know you guys were really making an effort on this before the pandemic and I know it's really difficult to know what's the best thing to do but actually there's research out there that shows that disposables aren't any safer and if you're worried about it could you consider doing it a bit like this.' and show them the video or send them the video via social media and ask.

Again that's another really great way of making our voices heard. So absolutely go for the low hanging fruit. Go for the remembering your reusable carrier bags. A lot of this stuff is about behaviour changes. So it's not necessarily about having shiny, new sustainable things. It's about remembering to take these shiny new reusable things with us because reusables actually take a lot more energy and resources to make them. There's a statistic by the environmental charity Hubbub that something like 69% of us have a reusable coffee cup. Only 1 in 6 of those 69% remember to take them out with them every single time. I'm sure we can all slightly shamefacedly look at the cupboard we've got full of reusable water bottles and reusable coffee cups and the stash we've got of reusable tote bags under the stairs. But that doesn't necessarily help us remember to take them with us. So think about the things that we can do to make that behaviour change a little bit easier. Can we keep a reusable bag in the car? Can we keep a reusable bag in our handbag or backpack? Can we put a Post-it on our phone that reminds us to take our water bottles with us or whatever. But let's just think of some ideas that make it easier for us to do these things. But absolutely go for the easy things first.

Start from where you are. Don't worry about where other people are. Don't worry about the fact that so and so down the road is already doing all these amazing things or actually that so and so down the road isn't doing anything and that's really frustrating. Start from where you are with the things that you've got, with the budget that you've got and the time that you've got, and make a plan that works for you. It is absolutely okay to do that.

Be imperfect. It's absolutely okay to be imperfect. This is the running theme throughout this. I am very, very imperfect. I wrote a blog post recently about the 10 things I still do that make me a really rubbish environmentalist and this is after 8 years. It's absolutely okay to be imperfect. There's a brilliant quote coming up. The quote comes from En-Mari Bono who is the Zero-waste chef on social media. It says 'We don't need a handful of people doing zero-waste perfectly. We need millions of people doing it imperfectly'. So it's absolutely okay and your version of perfect will be somebody else's imperfect and again that is absolutely okay.

On a similar theme, it's okay to not live up to someone else's idea of what it means to be green. Veganism is a really polarising debate within the environmental community. We still eat meat, we're not vegan. We do it very consciously and we're very thoughtful about the meat that we buy and we eat a lot less meat. But I have had people, not attack that's probably too strong a word, but quite strongly criticise me for still eating meat. There'll be some people who say you shouldn't ever fly if you're an environmentalist. There will be some people that say you should never ever, ever use a disposable coffee cup and all these kinds of different things. But they don't know what circumstances you've got, what challenges you've got going on at home, the other things that you're juggling, and it's absolutely okay. I think one of the things we really need to move away from is one of the things that can be really off-putting for people wanting to get started. They will come into an environmental Facebook group or something and dip their toes in, and there's lots of people out there very quick to bash them with this big green judgy bashy stick saying that that's not green, or that's not green enough, or actually you should be doing this but it's alright to have your idea of what green and sustainable is. That is absolutely okay.

It's okay to take baby steps. Sometimes it can feel very much like we're not doing enough once we start to realise all these issues. Very much I felt during our year buying nothing new like I'd opened this massive can of worms and that I wished I could put it all back in the can and ignore it. But it's okay to take baby steps. So if you've decided you want to try and maybe get plastic free milk, you want to get a glass delivery. So the first actual baby step to do is maybe knock on your neighbour's door who you see get a delivery and ask them where they get it from. All these baby steps really, really do add up, no step is too small. It's also alright to park something for a bit if it starts to feel too hard because otherwise if it just feels like a drag, if it just feels like it's really hard work we're going to start to resent it and that's not a great place to be making change from. So maybe park that thing. Like I talked about the plastic in your shopping, park that thing for a bit and have a look around and see if there's something else that you can do.

So this is where it becomes a bit quotetastic. This is my adaptation of this quote from En-Mari the Zero-waste chef. So 'We don't need a handful of people doing sustainable living perfectly. We need millions of us doing it imperfectly'. There's another great quote that I saw 'What if 8 billion people believe they could make a difference?' What if we all believe that our individual actions, the little things we were doing every day made a difference than wow, what an absolutely amazing impact we could make'. This is another great one I love 'We don't have to engage in grand heroic actions to participate in change. Small acts when multiplied by millions of people can transform the world'. So it can be very easy as I said at the beginning to feel like we need to be a Greta or we need to be David Attenborough, or we need to be a person of influence to be making a difference, and we absolutely don't. We can be making a difference in our own household, in our own family and in our own communities as well.

Remember that Venn diagram, the vast majority of us will work or we will be involved with other people in some capacity. So again, you've got this amazing day going on here at The Open University. So maybe find out how you can get involved with the Go Green team, what help they need, what things you can be doing to encourage it. Then also let your friends and family know that you've come to this amazing day today and maybe if there's an action that you've decided to take you share that on social media. Sometimes we share stuff on social media and it can feel like it's tumbleweed, nobody reacts, But we just never know what people will have taken from the stuff that we're sharing and the stuff that we're posting.

I'm very guilty of shying away from having these kinds of conversations in person with friends and family because I don't want to be 'that' person that they're all rolling their eyes at. But maybe we can just say, 'Oh my God, I went to this seminar, and they suggested changing energy and I've done that and you know what, it saved me some money and it was really easy.' and there are some really nice, easy conversation starters that we can do. So we can absolutely maybe not transform the world as individuals, but we can transform our world, and we can help to shape the changes that are going on around us. Because everybody is an individual. Trump is an individual, can you imagine if he was on board with this. Boris Johnson is an individual. The head of Coca-Cola is an individual. Can you imagine if they just decided that actually they were going to create real meaningful change around this. We can all do that in our own workplaces as well.

But my caveat behind that is without action nothing changes. Nothing changes if nothing changes. So what I would absolutely love to come out of today, and I'm sure that Lucy and the rest of the Go Green team would love as well, is for you guys to all have 1 thing that you've decided to change, because otherwise it's just been a lovely way to spend a day. I love coming and doing these talks, and

I love coming and chatting to people, but unless something changes, it's been a nice way to spend an hour and for you guys to spend a day, but we really need action for these things to change.

So my invitation to you would be, I don't know if you're going to have some kind of pledge wall or something to come out of this at the end, but that you have 1 thing that you're going to change, and you're going to change maybe in the next week or so to give yourself a bit of a deadline, because it's very easy to read a book or to come to a day like this and to leave feeling really inspired. Then suddenly you're back at work and you're trying to occupy the kids as well or whatever and it becomes very difficult to make this thing happen. So 1 thing, it doesn't matter how small, but give yourself a deadline to try and actually make it happen as well.

So that's my invitation to you. What will you change today or what will you change over the next week? I know I haven't given you lots of hints and tips and things in this talk because I know that you've got loads of that coming up today. What I really wanted to do as this introduction is this reassurance that no change is too small. This reassurance that it's okay to do things and to get them wrong. This reassurance that it's okay to do things imperfectly. I'll give you a great example. If you read any kind of zero-waste blog they say the easiest change you can make is soap. Switch from your shower gel or your handwash to soap.

Right okay I thought I'm going to do that. So I actually even learnt how to make soap, I made my own soap and had it all there. The kids just didn't wash their hands and my husband moaned about he didn't really like the way it made his skin feel and we had loads of soap scum around the shower and the sinks. I was trying a shampoo bar and it made my hair feel revolting and we tried for about a year. In the end, I just went, 'This really isn't working for any of us'. So we came up with, it's not a plastic-free solution but it's a plastic-free(ish) solution.

That's that we buy big 5 litre bottles of Faith in Nature shower gel, and we use that to refill our own and we use it for the handwash and things as well. That's our compromise. It's not perfect, but it's what works for us right now. It might be that when the kids leave home maybe we'll have another go at soap or something like that. But it's all about finding what works for you and that is absolutely okay. So that is my invitation to you to ask you what will you change today or in the next 7 days as a result of this amazing series of talks because yes it's okay to do it imperfectly, but we do absolutely need to do something. So I think that's me.