

What Have We Learned?

Lessons from COVID-19

During this time of global crisis, dramatic improvements have been seen in global emissions as cars sit in driveways and airports are relatively empty due to quarantine. In fact, these remarkable changes to the environment can be seen from space (Sci Tech). This leads us to the question: How do we make these changes more permanent? What can we take away from COVID-19 that will help us for decades to come?

Limiting Daily Commutes

Commutes, whether to close or far-off destinations, are a key factor in our negative impact on the environment. "Driving and aviation are key contributors to emissions from transport, contributing 72% and 11% of the transport sector's greenhouse gas emissions respectively." (BBC) While some are working from home temporarily, our perspective of the necessity to drive to work may be positively affected going forward. Working from home for one or more days a week may have little effect on productivity while decreasing

Virtual Meetings

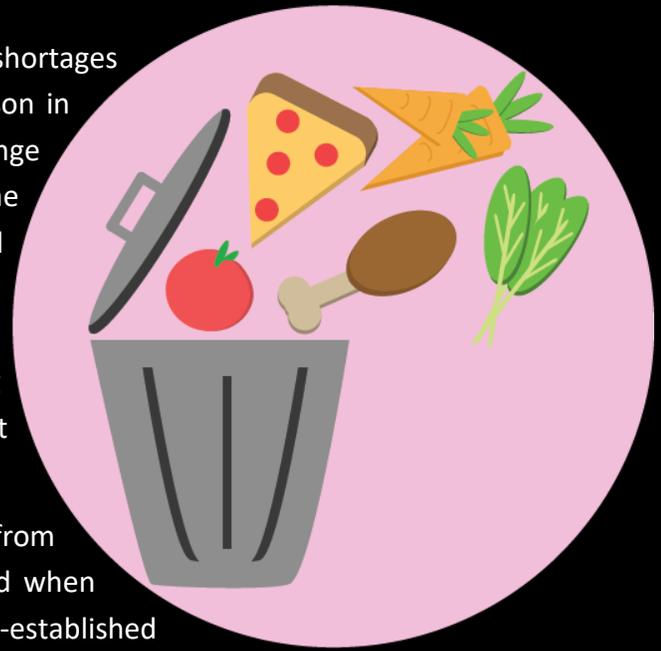
A lesson many have been imparted during this time is the value of meeting virtually, which allows people to share ideas from all over the world without the need for expensive, environmentally unsustainable travel. Even after travel is unrestricted, altering previously in-person meetings can yield many benefits. Business expenses for travel can cost a heavy toll, while employees lose time in the transition and can become stressed due to family absence. Stopping to ask if a meeting truly necessitates in-person contact could save valuable time and money for everyone involved while removing the need to mitigate the impact of flight.



Cutting Down on Food Waste

Finally, the inability to frequent grocery stores and the shortages resulting from panic buying have taught many a valuable lesson in the realm of food wastage. This is important as, “Times of change can lead to the introduction of lasting habits. During the coronavirus outbreak, those habits that are coincidentally good for the climate [include] cutting down on food waste as we experience shortages due to stockpiling.” (BBC) Previous flyers have covered strategies for decreasing food waste, including meal planning to use what you have and being careful to eat leftovers.

In summation, there is a lot we can glean in our personal lives from this crisis: “We are learning how quickly humans can respond when faced with a common enemy, be it a novel virus or the well-established physics of climate change. Let us examine these lessons, reflect on our new respect for the natural world, and consider what enabled us to adjust to such profoundly challenging and unfamiliar new norms.” (Forum) Being mindful of what we have learned during these times can inform a better, more sustainable future long after COVID-19 has ceased being in the forefront of collective consciousness.



Works Cited

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