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Month of May for education and awareness of environmental sensitivities/multiple chemical sensitivities

Going Green - The 3RE Theory Part 2 - A Second Concept

In reference to part 1: From the Earth Day network, the 3RE theory is a set of actions (reduce, reuse, recycle, enhance) that you can apply every day in order to restore our planet. The first concept of this theory is related, for example, to refusing things you don't need and limiting the overpackaging of products. In this article, I will write about a second principle of this theory, recycling, and a notion that is strongly related to it, the sorting of waste.

In the 3RE theory, recycling is the third step in the waste pyramid. According to its dictionary definition, this concept means 'to treat or transform (used or waste materials) in such a way as to make them suitable for reuse'. The recyclability of a material depends on its ability to reacquire the properties it had in its pristine or original state. Recycling is an alternative to the conventional



waste disposal that safeguards materials and helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It can also prevent the waste of potentially useful materials and reduce the consumption of fresh raw materials, thereby reducing energy use and pollution of air (from incineration) and water (from landfilling).

Several materials are accepted in municipal recycling: unstained paper and cardboard,

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metal containers that have been previously rinsed (to prevent the transmission of pathogens during waste sorting). The case of plastics is special: because of their composition and manufacture, not all of them are accepted in municipal recycling. Classified into seven categories, you can find their numbers inside the international recycling logo (a triangle consisting of three tracking arrows)

printed or embossed on the object.

Here are two other important recycling categories you need to know about:

- E-waste recycling, which involves the recycling of discarded electronic equipment such as computers, monitors and other electronic devices. Typically, these devices are disassembled, shredded into about four-inch (ten-centimetre) pieces and manually inspected to segregate toxic batteries and capacitors containing toxic metals (such as ferrous or precious metals).
- Hazardous materials which correspond to substances (liquids, solids, gases or a mixture of these states) whose properties make them dangerous or capable of having harmful effects on human health and the environment. Defined with the exposure of specific characteristics (toxicity, flammability or infectiousness), these types of waste will be treated or recycled with specific methods.

To conclude this part, I return to a notion mentioned earlier in this article. For better recycling, it is important to make a good segregation of the waste you will produce. These segregation actions consist of providing several recycling bins in the categories of waste you wish to dispose of. Here are some facts about recycling in North America:

- According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and of the 292.4 million tons of waste generated by Americans in 2018, half were buried in landfills while 32 percent were recycled or composted.



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- The rate of recycling and composting in the United States has more than doubled over the past three decades. However, the number of available landfills has shrunk by about 74% over the same period.
- According to information gathered by the CBC, the contamination rate of recyclables ranges from 3% to 26%.

In the next article, you can read about two other concepts in this 3RE theory; specifically, you can read about reuse and enhance. To learn more about this topic, you are invited to check out the following links. Please note that more links will be added to other parts of this topic in the following newsletters.

Online links:

- Plastic by the number, Plastic action center, Recycling Council of Ontario, copyright 2021, <https://plasticactioncentre.ca/directory/plastic-by-the-numbers/>
- Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA), several pages viewed, Copyright in 2021, <https://swana.org/>
- Hazardous waste, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, last made on February 25, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hazardous_waste
- Local hazards grow as American churn out more garbage, by Jacqueline Davalos, Energy and Science, Bloomberg Green, published February 26, 2021, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-26/local-hazards-grow-as-u-s-garbage-overflow-is-shipped-out-of-state?cmpid=BBD022621_GREENDAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_term=210226&utm_campaign=greendaily
- Waste sorting, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, last made on March 3, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waste_sorting
- Recycling, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, last made on March 11, 2021, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recycling>
- Definition of Recycle at Dictionary.com, consulted on March 14th 2021, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/recycle?s=t>