



Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec  
Environmental Health Association of Québec

## ECO-JOURNAL

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### Reflections from 2021 and Going Forward to 2022

With 2021 coming to a close, now is the time to reflect on the past year. With next month being the start of a new year, now is a great time to think and reflect on the past year and the actions that we have taken to try to become more sustainable. Next month, we will set a sustainability challenge for 1 new activity to try every month of the year in order to help you consistently implement new sustainable practices in your daily lives.

With global warming and climate change a looming reality, it is more important now than ever to take stock and reflect on what we have done this year to respect the planet. While reflecting on our past actions it is important to remember that being an environmentalist is not a game of all or nothing. It can be challenging to make some changes in our lives depending on our circumstances. Nonetheless, being an imperfect environmentalist is so much better than not trying at all.

#### Reflecting on 2021:

1. Did you implement eco-friendly changes in 2021?

If you haven't adopted eco-friendly changes in the last year, what has held you back? Whether it is energy, time, money, or access to alternatives, some domains can be more challenging than others to implement. There are so many different ways to be sustainable, and many of them only require a little effort. Does your home have compost pickup so you can limit the waste that goes to landfill? Could you reduce the amount of new and fast fashion clothes you buy every year? Could you keep a reusable mug or water bottle in your bag when you leave the house?

There's still one more month left to try to implement some new eco-friendly, and healthy habits.

If you have done so already, great! What do you think allowed you to be successful? How can you carry this momentum forward into the next year?



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2. Did you want to improve in a certain area but were unsuccessful?

While we can try to implement changes in our daily lives sometimes we can falter. That is perfectly ok, as it is always better to try than to not try at all. Even if your attempts to be more sustainable took the form of thinking about change, instead of actually implementing those changes, we always have time to reflect on why we couldn't make those changes and how we can do them moving forward. How can you help yourself next year to turn thoughts into action and make those changes in your life? Is there another domain that you can make changes in first that may be easier? Or could you break your goal up into more manageable parts? For example, if you want to live zero waste, you can focus on transitioning one item. Make a list of things that you will have to change to be zero waste, for example, focus on one room of the house at a time. Start with the bathroom and get alternatives to each of the products you use daily. As you run out of your products, switch to waste-free, compostable or recyclable options. Achieving these goals can be much more manageable if we make smaller changes at first.

**What to bring into 2022:**

3. In what areas could you still improve?

There are so many different ways that we can change our environmental footprint. From diet, to product usage, to waste production, to the clothes we wear, all of these areas might require us to make adjustments to achieve a sustainable lifestyle. Which one can you focus on this year to help you achieve your sustainability goals?

4. What are some goals that you can commit to for next year to prioritize your health and the environment?

It can sometimes be challenging to think of new goals but once you have determined one or more areas that you would like to improve you can start to implement some smaller changes that can lead to bigger ones. For example, if you want to make your diet more sustainable try to eat plant-based meals at least 1 time per week. From there you will learn how to cook some great recipes that you will be able to eat more frequently than just once every week. Additionally, for folks who already eat a plant-based diet, where are your ingredients coming from? Could you find local options to substitute some of your staples that have travelled a longer distance?

Some ideas to inspire you in creating these goals can be least toxic, zero waste, compostable, natural, or locally made and produced.



While reflecting and planning for the coming year are very important, it is also important to think about what a new year means for each of us. Is it really a resolution that we should have to carry at the end of each year, or a renewed commitment to live better with less, to give and share more, and be more aware of our connection to our community and our environment. It can be challenging to set a resolution that we can't keep, so sometimes we just have to reflect and try to carry our values forward no matter what time of the year we are reflecting.