

Spreading the Recycling Bug

If you're reading this column, I'm going to guess you're a recycler (call me psychic). And if you ARE a recycler, I'm going to take another leap and guess that you've had the experience of trying to take your recycling practices with you everywhere you go—to work, to school, to organizational meetings, etc.—and found that it can be challenging to get others to join you in your recycling zeal...or even to simply toss their used materials in the right bin. Changing habits of others can be tricky, but there are a few keys to success that can help you be the catalyst in creating a successful recycling system, making sure all participants—from family members to roommates to co-workers—are on the same (recycled) page.

Probably the easiest starting point to improving your recycling routine is at home. After you've set up and fine tuned your successful recycling model, you can make slight adjustments to apply the same model to your workplace and request the same for the public and community places you frequent.

Step One: Know your recyclables

First you'll need to know what can be recycled and where. We are fortunate to live in a community that provides its residents with a community recycling drop-off center. The Eco-Cycle/Broomfield Recycling Center, located at 225 Commerce St., is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Guidelines of what's accepted and how to prepare your recyclables at home can be found online at <http://ecocycle.org/centers/broomfield.cfm>, by calling 303-404-2839 or by stopping by the Broomfield Recycling Education Center and picking up a recycling guide. Posting these guidelines next to recycling bins helps everyone know precisely what can and cannot be included. You can always call us at 303-404-2839 to ask more about removing all plastic lids and recycling plastic bags, for starters. There is also an upcoming Recycling 101 workshop on Thursday, March 8th from 6-7:30 p.m. for a complete rundown of guidelines. Your trash company might also offer recycling collection services for an additional charge. Contact them to find out what materials they accept.

Step Two: Location, location, location

Locate every single trash can in your home. Place a container(s) next to the trash so you can immediately and easily separate out the recyclable from the non-recyclable items. Place recycling collection containers in convenient, well-traveled areas like the bedroom, the office/study, the kitchen, etc. Take it a step further and make folks walk to the garage or basement to throw something away! Have fun with some artistic and fun labels. This is where the kids can pitch in. Pictorial labels can help with quick and easy recognition (just check in that everyone involved understands the labels), as do labels with what to keep out. It will be much easier to drop off materials at the drop-off center or the curb if they are already pre-sorted, rather than trying to figure it all out in the parking lot.

Step Three: What's left?

Spot-check your recycling bins and trash cans with your household members to clear up any confusion about what goes where. Be open to feedback – you'll know they're

participating and interested in making your program better with their suggestions and personal experiences. Then, talk about how to avoid what's in the trash can by setting intentions through your purchasing practices. Looking for products in recyclable containers and buying in bulk are just a few ways you can keep that trash can from filling up and probably save yourself some money, too. But don't stop there. Keep in mind that even the most successful recycling programs need continuous re-evaluation, improvement and a periodic revamping. With a little determination, creativity and dedication, you'll not only stop sending valuable resources to the landfill, you'll also be taking the first steps towards a Zero Waste lifestyle. Once you have your successful recycling program in place at home, you can take your recycling bug to your office and get your co-workers on board. At the same time you can be thinking about how to take another step towards Zero Waste by getting those biodegradables out of your trash can and into a composting bin!

Genevieve George is Eco-Cycle's Broomfield Outreach Coordinator. To learn more about recycling or the Eco-Cycle/Broomfield Recycling Center, call (303)404-2839 or e-mail genevieve@ecocycle.org