

5 ideas to reduce plastic waste at home

Plastic pollution is a significant environmental concern. Small actions are part of creating big change. You can start by reducing your plastic waste at home.

- **Choose products with plastic-free packaging.** Making purchasing decisions based on the type of packaging sends a message to retailers and producers that consumers want more sustainable options.
- **Switch from bottled hand soap to bars.**
- **Don't use plastic produce bags. Bring your own mesh bags** (making these can be a great DIY project and gift if you're crafty!). Or, don't bag the produce – you will wash it thoroughly at home.
- **Wash and chop your own lettuce, spinach and other greens.** Prewashed and packaged greens are convenient but not necessary.
- **Use beeswax food wrap and other non-plastic options.** Various reusable food storage options exist.

How to be a changemaker: advice from a career activist

Many of us want to create change in our communities and beyond, but we get stuck on the how. The issues seem too big. Systems are too confusing. And cynicism feels rampant.

But there's a path forward. The following considerations are from Dave Meslin, best-selling author of *Teardown: Rebuilding Democracy from the Ground Up*, who offered guidance to RTOERO members and guests as part of the Vibrant Voices advocacy webinar series.



Change is possible and takes time. Throughout history, humans have imagined what's possible and pushed for change. You can, too.

Start local - Municipal change can be a catalyst for provincial and federal change.

Narrow your focus and make sure you care about the issue. Advocacy is a marathon, not a sprint. Focus on something you're passionate about.

Start small and build an inventory of victories. "Take on something that seems small and winnable. Win that. And then do something more ambitious."

Make it fun. The best way to harness people power is to make sure it's fun.

Watch Dave cover these five considerations and four more on RTOERO's YouTube: youtu.be/vXoqnoa_YsS

Highlights from the talk are also available on RTOERO's blog at rtoero.ca/how-to-be-a-changemaker-advice-from-a-career-activist. The full webinar recording is available on RTOERO Learning: rtolearning.rtoero.ca

Beware of “porch pirates” this holiday season

You're not alone if you've had a package stolen off your porch.

According to a 2022 survey by FedEx Canada, one in four Canadians have. And 69 per cent are worried about package theft. The holiday season is a prime time for porch theft because of increased online ordering. If shopping online, try to be home to receive your packages or have them sent to a secure pickup location. It may be less convenient, but it'll save you the worry.



Indigenous healing: My journey

Written for RTOERO by Shaneeka Forrester, Cree artist, mother and advocate from Brunswick House First Nation, planting roots in Simcoe County, Ontario.

Indigenous healing has been a recurring theme for me in the past few months. I have noticed healing from generational trauma can sometimes present itself in unique or unexpected ways.

Recently, I had the opportunity to have my children participate in an activity that paid tribute to residential school survivors. I felt weary leading up to it—I worried the event may be triggering to me or other participants.

Initially, when I saw my children come out dressed in clothing that residential school children would have worn, I felt a pit in my stomach. However, as the day progressed and we watched the children play, and the families connect, I felt at peace. I felt connected to the space and event. I felt as though it had become a unique opportunity to connect with my ancestors' stories and strength.

After the event, I began reflecting on what generational healing is and what it can look like. I reflected on the many therapists, counsellors, healing circles, elders and other trained professionals I had seen throughout my life. I tried to quantify their time with my progress and vice versa. If I were to be given a report card on healing from intergenerational trauma, would I receive a passing grade?

Then I thought about the event some more. I thought about how opportunities for healing can sometimes come at the most unexpected times in the most unexpected places. I do not want to dismiss or discredit the work done by the professionals I have seen on this journey. Their efforts have influenced the process as a whole, but I think we often forget how impactful simple acts can be as well.

As I continue on this healing journey, I want to continue to embrace the little moments. We never know what type of growth can happen unless we make space for it.

RTOERO Foundation donor-funded grant focuses on mentally healthy living in the later years

The RTOERO Foundation is thrilled to announce the results of a donor-funded grant, *Mentally Healthy Living After Social Distancing—A Study of Older Canadians*, which are now available as a free download for all RTOERO members. This project was carried out by the Living Well Research Team and led by Dr. Gail Low, associate professor of nursing at the University of Alberta.

Funded solely by the RTOERO Foundation, *Cooking up calm* was designed to promote mentally healthy living in the later years. The booklet highlights findings from the team's research study and pairs the results with easy-to-make, nutritional recipes to support good physical and mental health.

Included in the cookbook:

- Overview of the study
- Benefits of cooking beyond nutrition
- Five easy-to-make recipes
- Actionable tips based on the six most effective mentally healthy living strategies to emerge from the study
- Quotations from study participants
- Guidance for accessing more help when needed

As part of a follow-up research study, the Living Well Research Team will be surveying RTOERO members to gather their feedback on the booklet. So, make sure to download and share the cookbook with family and friends today - rtoero.ca/mentally-healthy-living.

In an effort to achieve our mission of a society in which all seniors live with dignity and respect, the projects the Foundation funds address the complex needs of older adults. Projects supported by the Foundation are made possible by the generosity of our donors, many of whom are RTOERO members. For more information about the RTOERO Foundation's granting program, please visit our website – rtoerofoundation.ca – or email Deanna Byrtus at dbyrtus@rtoero.ca.