

In honour of Plastic Free July, I went plastic free for 48-hour and here's what happened

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Hong Jie's profession may sound straight forward to many of us, however there is more to his role than meets the eye.

Having to oversee the environment, health and safety of the occupiers in 4.5 million square feet of office spaces across Marina Bay Financial Centre and One Raffles Quay, and close to 180,000 square feet of retail space at Marina Bay Link Mall is not an easy feat. It is more than just about having energy saving lights for economic and environment benefits. A significant and meaningful part of his job is leveraging on his profession to connect with the By The Bay community to educate and influence the awareness of the impact of one's daily carbon footprint on the environment.

In honour of Plastic Free July, Hong Jie walks the talk and went on a 48-hour plastic free challenge and pen down what happened and his thoughts.



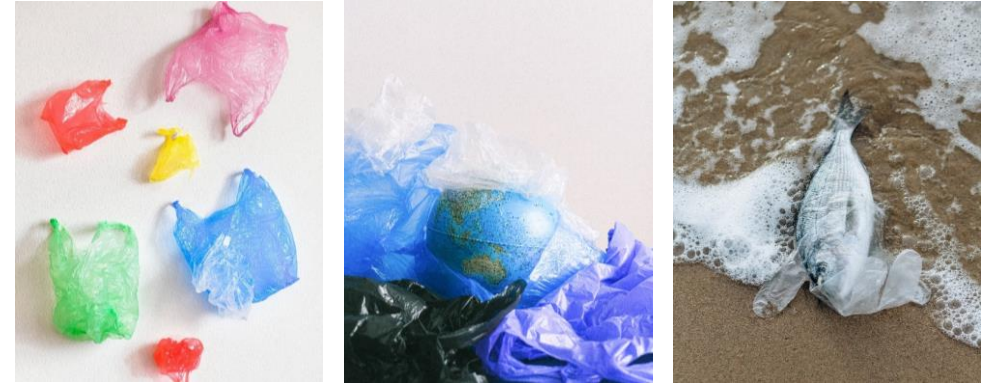
Plastic. One of the highest trending words in recent years on the back of a world that is increasingly placing a spotlight on achieving heightened standards and awareness on “Sustainability” for our next generations. Based on World Bank waste data in 2018, of the 2 billion tonnes of waste generated globally, 12% is plastic waste¹.

In fact, disposable plastic bags was brought up in the [Singapore Parliament Sitting held on 10 May 2021](#), following a [Singapore-wide study to embark on a charging model for disposable carrier bags in the supermarkets](#). A whopping 15.6 million plastic bag was saved since [NTUC FairPrice started a year-long plastic bag charge scheme trial](#) at 25 selected stores that kicked off in November 2019.

We all know at the back of our mind that plastic waste is bad for our planet, but why does our love-hate relationship with plastic continues? That was the question that came to my mind when I was unpacking my online groceries delivery - it was like the Matryoshka Dolls aka Russian Nesting Dolls, finally getting to my “baby” after getting through through the layers of plastic.

Due to the nature of my work, I have witnessed the amount of plastic waste we generate on a daily basis and am compelled to do more on the upstream. I connect regularly with office and mall tenants and it is no surprise that the number one green priority based tenants’ feedback is to combat single-use plastic. Ironically, the fight against tackling plastic waste has taken a back seat with the world still battling with Covid-19. We are more hygiene conscious these days. The tin of cookies that used to sit in your office pantry has probably been replaced with individually packed ones. And let’s not forget the takeaway boxes that we are all guilty as charged simply because it’s more convenient.

So to experience the plastic free living lifestyle, I took a personal 48-hour plastic free challenge and here’s what happened.



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¹<https://datatopics.worldbank.org/what-a-waste/>

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Plastic waste from the single-serving coffee packet



Reused plastic container at my local bakery



Some household brands are not available in refillable packaging



Recycling & reusing in my household, needs more effort in reducing

Day 1

Let's just say it did not start off well on the first morning. Barely 10 minutes in and I've already failed my challenge. Many of us run on caffeine, that single-serving coffee packet that I just ripped opened, it's plastic. The morning buns that my family bought? Of course it's packed in a single-use plastic. I ponder if I should count myself responsible for plastic that is beyond my control and I think the answer is yes. Otherwise, it makes no difference where I make my coffee at.

Getting through lunch without plastic was a breeze. I brought along my reusable container and

bag for takeaway, which is something that I've also been practicing for a while now. I popped by the bakery to pick up breakfast for tomorrow morning, this time with my reusable container, to my delight, the cashier thanked me for saving plastic and that felt great!

It's been a long day at work and my family decided to get food delivery for dinner. Although we can opt for no cutlery, the waste really comes from the plastic containers. Though we will always wash and reuse these containers, I just really wanted my first day to end with lesser plastic than I intended to generate.

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Day 2

Second day was a new adventure. It was more controlled when it comes the meals time as I have pre-plan and decided to cook for the day, which would mean no extra plastic containers from surprise food delivery.

However, I find myself refilling the dishwashing liquid and hand soap more often. As much as we always opt for refillable package which uses less plastic, there are certain brands that we prefer that do not come in refillable package. Just thinking of all the other household and shampoo bottles that we use and multiply that per year - that’s a lot of plastic. And to add on to the plastic waste accumulated for the day, the cake that my lovely neighbour shared with us was wrapped in the mighty cling wrap.

My takeaway from the humble 2-day experience is that “plastic free” does not literally mean it. Let’s face it, plastic has many important uses, but I think the most sustainable way is to use as little plastic as possible.

Although I have been practicing recycling and reusing for many years now, it’s the reducing that I need to put more effort in. I find that by planning and preparing ahead, I was able to generate lesser plastic waste.

I will level up on a few realistic actionable such as shopping at eco-friendly stores more often, swap plastic cling wrap with reusable silicone toppers and beeswax wrap, reject plastic straws and use stainless steel metal straw and lastly, to encourage my family member by engaging this as an all year round family activity.



Shop more often at eco-friendly stores



Use stainless steel metal straw instead of plastic ones



Cultivate eco-friendly practice as a family activity

Sustainability is in RQAM's DNA. We try to do something to make a positive contribution, whether big or small to make an impact.

Starting with our tenants' desire to support single use plastic, By The Bay recently partnered with Muuse, a Singapore based company that aims at saving single-use waste from F&B packaging. Remember during our grandparent's days how every household have their own "Tingkat" aka Tiffin Carrier? Instead of having to bring your own the next time you takeaway, you can borrow Muuse's reusable container / cup. And when you are done, simply drop it back to any participating retailers. All these is done via the app using QR-based system. Besides, you can also opt for Muuse on food delivery platform. I think it's easy and a practical way to start for many.

We all know the power of cumulative effort. With Plastic Free July coming up, I would encourage you to make some adaptive changes in your lifestyle. Nothing is too small.

To help you kick start your journey and to thank you for making our planet a better place, Muuse will be sponsoring one winner a free 1-month of Muuse Pro membership!

Simply [email](#) your answer to this question to win!

What does Muuse stands for?



Fun fact: Muuse literally stands for Multiple Use!