



The Story of Stuff

Professional organizer Marie Kondo ushered in a worldwide interest in decluttering – but what happens with all the clothing, tech, and household items we no longer want or need? How do we end up with so much stuff in the first place, and what are the environmental impacts? Join a discussion on the life cycle of the things we buy, use, and discard.

Conversation Questions

1. What influences our beliefs about how much stuff we need?
2. Why and when did our society start prioritizing replacing items rather than repairing them?

Key Definitions

- *Planned Obsolescence* – the practice of making or designing something in such a way that it will only be usable for a short time (from *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*)
- *Sustainable* – a: a method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged
b: of or relating to a lifestyle involving the use of sustainable methods (from *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*)

Listen

“The Fast World of Fast Fashion”

<https://n.pr/2wzdyJB>

This NPR special series focuses on the environmental impact of fast fashion.

Read

“We Are All Accumulating Mountains of Things” by Alana Semuels

<https://bit.ly/2MGWHy4>

Alana Semuels, staff writer at *The Atlantic*, explores how the advent of online shopping has created a society of mass





consumers, and what happens to those products after little or no use.

“AirPods Are a Tragedy” by Caroline Haskins

<https://bit.ly/2ZYMPUd>

Journalist Caroline Haskins discusses the seemingly innocuous, but highly unrecyclable and unrepairable AirPods in the Future Relics column featured in the award-winning Vice magazine.

“Is Planned Obsolescence A Viable Model For You?”

by Stephan Zoder

<https://bit.ly/2wxs3NY>

Informatica industry strategist and *Forbes* contributor Stephan Zoder deconstructs the pros and cons of planned obsolescence where tech companies knowingly design a product that is only usable for a short time.

Watch

“For The Price of a Cup of Coffee”

<https://skokielibrary.bibliocommons.com/item/show/2801141133>

This film illustrates how the convenience of everyday products has substantial environmental consequences.

Explore

The Story of Stuff Project

<https://storyofstuff.org/>

This comprehensive website provides a plethora of resources concerning product production and consumption. Users have access to mini-movies, teaching tools, podcasts, civic participation opportunities, and much more!

