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| Speak Up – Kōrerotia  Conscious gift giving  16 November 2022 | |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana,  E ngā reo,  E ngā hau e whā  Tēnā koutou katoa  Nau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”.    Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.  Ko “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” tēnei, ko Sally Carlton ahau. I’m really excited about today’s topic. Christmas is approaching and with it, the joy and the goodwill and the family times, the whānau times, all the great things that happen with Christmas. But at the same time we all know that Christmas can bring pressures and stresses as well, not least in terms of the finances and the financial side of buying presents for everybody, buying food for everybody, and also that pressure of having to see people maybe that you don’t necessarily want to catch up with all the time, all that kind of family time, having to prepare everything looking beautifully, all these sorts of things that can add stress to people’s lives and it’s shown in research that Christmas can be very stressful for some people.  So today we’re going to be thinking about how we might relieve at least one element of this stress and this pressure and this is through conscious gift giving. How is it that we can amend, adapt, our gift giving practices to make ourselves feel better and also benefit the environment at the same time. This is something that I’m really passionate about so I’m super excited about today’s show.  What we’re going to be thinking about is three different ways, I think, that we can re-frame gift giving. One is if you’re going to be buying items, how can you buy items that are both environmentally and socially conscious. Also we’re going to be thinking about presents that need not necessarily be bought and these might be presents that are upcycled or recycled or regifted or whatever you want to do. That might be for example plants or making something homemade, these sorts of things. And the other one we’re going to be thinking about is gifts that aren’t necessarily tangible objects but might be an experience or a donation or a sponsorship, these sorts of things.  We’ve got three guests with us today and they will all bring different perspectives to this. You all sort of fall into that first category in many ways - gifts that you can purchase but that are environmentally and socially conscious - but I’m sure we’ve got heaps to talk about in the other sense as well. I’d love to hear from you please a little bit about yourselves and about your organisations as well. Helen, you’re with me in the studio so we’ll start with you today. |
| Helen | Thanks for having us in today. My name is Helen Townsend, I’m co-founder of Sustained Fun which is a toy company that focuses on developing toys that reduce rubbish, encourage love for the environment and address climate anxiety in kids. Our first product that we released last year is EcoSplat reusable water balloons which provide kids endless water fights because you can keep re-using them with no rubbish to pick up. |
| Sally | Very cool and I hear about it all the time so…. |
| Helen | Cool. |
| Sally | Yeah exactly so I’m hoping it’s been really successful. Emma, how about you? |
| Emma | Yeah so my name is Emma and I’m the director of the Waste Free Celebrations and I started two years ago just making re-usable gift bags out of Christmas fabric to get rid of the wrapping paper and it wasn’t a conscious decision to start a business, I’d just been using bags for years because with five kids, all the wrapping just did my head in and the rubbish just did my head in. And then in 2020 when you know, it was Covid and we were living in Wānaka and my husband lost his job and I was jobless.  So I said oh why don’t we just make bags and sell them at the local Wānaka market and I launched, you know, the world’s worst website just for friends and family to order them but it somehow went viral and ended up hiring… I think it was about twelve women over the space of two weeks to try and meet the demand… I didn’t even set inventory on my website because I thought no one will buy them. So what happens when you don’t set inventory, it just keeps selling and I’m like, ‘Oh my god, I have to actually now sew all these’ and I realised then that there was actually a market for this and then it kind of just grew from there.  Two things about, as you say gift giving and Christmas: I think that makes it particularly special is that firstly it’s tradition and we hold our traditions extremely closely and letting go of favoured loved traditions is very, very hard. So the grinches who say, ‘Oh stop buying gifts and just don’t have Christmas’ - I completely do not identify with that and I do think they’re a minority and it’s not a view that I agree with at all because I love to preserve tradition.  But also gift giving is one of the five love languages. To give a gift or to receive a gift is how you say I love you. So to simply cancel Christmas and cancel giving of a gift, also doesn’t work because for some people it’s a very special memento and expression of how much you love someone. So with both of those things in mind, it’s just a matter of well how do we do it better. So we’ve got the wrapping and the gift tags and the tissue to keep it environmentally sound and then you know, what you put in that gift also needs to be carefully curated in terms of its footprint. I want to keep the joy and tradition alive, just do it better. |
| Sally | Yes, that sounds a great motto. |
| Emma | Yes. |
| Sally | And finally we’ve got Sarah. |
| Sarah | Kia ora my name is Sarah Kelleher and I work for Trade Aid, I’m the communications manager at Trade Aid, and one of the key things that it is that I do is campaigns that educate New Zealanders on trade justice issues. I also do campaigns that are really focused in on our values as a brand. So recent campaigns that we’ve done is a modern slavery campaign where we’ve petitioned alongside World Vision to bring in modern slavery legislation into New Zealand. I also do things like International Women’s Day or more recently a collaboration that we did with Garden to Table, a cool wee not-for-profit here in New Zealand.  And Trade Aid, if you don’t know who we are, is a social enterprise that was set up in 1973 by a group of activists. Essentially what it is that we do is educate on trade justice and social justice issues, but also we aim to create a model of trade that is more fair for everyone in that relationship. Equity is really at the heart of what it is that we do. A lot of trading models, you know, the people at the end aren’t necessarily thought about or valued as much as they should be and so at Trade Aid we really try to create this more equitable relationship that kind of benefits everyone. |
| Sally | Sounds great and you have some amazing cute and well-crafted goods on offer as well. |
| Sarah | Yes. |
|  | **MUSIC BY MATT NICKLE MUSIC – O HOLY NIGHT** |
| Sally | To set the scene as we get into this conversation today, why are we talking about this issue? Emma, you’ve already touched on the fact that Christmas has a lot of traditions around it and gift giving is one of them and a lot of people hold that tradition very dear. But I guess on the other side of it, there’s a lot of waste that’s produced around Christmas. I saw somewhere that it’s 30% more waste around Christmas than throughout the rest of the year and that’s presumably largely to do with food waste but also wrapping waste, for example. |
| Emma | Packaging, packaging. |
| Sally | All the packaging that comes with the toys and whatnot, yes. It would be great to hear what is it that we are talking about today and why. And this might be a good opportunity to introduce World Sustainable Toy Day, as well. |
| Helen | Yes, the toy industry is a pretty big player when it comes to Christmas obviously, but also a big contributor to climate change and waste. So the toy industry is actually the most plastic intensive industry in the world - which means that for every million dollars of revenue, 40 tonnes of plastic is created and this is the highest out of any other industry and this is because 90% of toys are made from plastic. And because of toy safety standards, which obviously are really good, it’s quite hard to make toys from recycled plastic. Also toys are often… have got lots of components that are joined together and are hard to come apart because you don’t want them breaking and kids eating them.  So this means that most toys are made from virgin plastic and most toys are not recycled. There is a stat that says 80% of toys end up on landfill -but actually they all end up in landfill at some point. So whether you re-use them, give them away, you give them to the op shop, you’re delaying the end of their life. The toy industry is built on a model - a linear model not a circular model - and it’s becoming more built on toys that are cheap and disposable.  And so this is obviously not very good for people’s budgets but also it’s terrible for the environment. So at Sustained Fun we recently founded World Sustainable Toy Day which is to be held this year [2022] on November 18th and World Sustainable Toy Day is a day that can celebrate sustainable toys, we can celebrate what is happening to make the toy industry more sustainable. We can also highlight the fact that at the moment the toy industry is not moving very fast towards sustainability.  So if you want to know more about Sustainable Toy Day, you can look on the website and there’s a bunch of activities there for kids to introduce kids to the concept of sustainability and toys without being the fun police. So for example there’s an activity where kids can go around the room and find the most eco-friendly toys in the way that the toy they play with the most or the toy they’ve had for the longest or the toy that has been repaired, those kinds of things. So it’s not like finger wagging and making kids feel bad about toys, it’s just fun activities really. |
| Sally | I saw some nice examples on the website of people who were sending in photos of dolls, for example, that had been passed down through the generations, that’s sort of what you’re getting at it, isn’t it. That toys can have a life beyond a child. |
| Helen | Yes it’s thinking about… like, when you buy toys for Christmas, what are you going to buy that’s going to still be fun after Boxing Day? And it really is after Boxing Day - like, 30% of toys that are given on Christmas are not at all interesting to kids at the end of January. We’re buying a lot of stuff that kids aren’t even wanting to play with. So thinking about toys that maybe you can play with with other members of the family, you know, because things like… because we’ve got a Monopoly set that we’ve had since I was a kid, it’s still being played with. Things that get kids outside and they can play with a toy in different ways, so it’s not just a one way of playing with a toy. All of those things can mean that the toy is played with for longer. |
| Sarah | It’s so interesting as well, like, for I guess consumers or people who are having to make choices at Christmas time, parents and grandparents and whānau, you know, when you hear stats around how many products are actually kind of sustainable. Like mostly it’s plastic and things like that, that even the act of going into the store and trying to purchase things that you think will have that element to it could even be a challenge. |
| Helen | Oh yeah it’s super hard. I’m not saying that it’s easy. |
| Sarah | It’s so hard, I have used some of those tips that you have suggested which is like things that family can do together, you know, that’s going to have a long life span like games and it might you know, carry on across the generations. Yeah it is tricky. |
| Helen | Yeah it is, it is really hard and I mean that’s why we’re doing what we’re doing with Sustained Fun is so that when we produce a toy, we’re trying to produce other things around it that mean that you can play with it for longer. So like for the EcoSplat reusable water balloons, you can use them as a water fight but you can also use them dry in the winter and you can use them for painting and you can use them for like a bunch of other stuff. |
| Sally | Sensory. |
| Helen | Yeah sensory, you can play with them in the bath, little kids can clean the car with them. Like, we don’t want to just make toys that have one purpose, you know. |
| Emma | That’s why I find costumes and dress-up are fantastic because it creates imaginative play. They do sort of hand me down and you can use them in many different settings and, I don’t know, just with my own kids I’ve noticed that they had a much longer life than a particular toy. Particularly trendy toys that are in and trendy and then you know, your kids collect them and then they may still enjoy them but because they’re no longer trendy, they’re like well I can’t play with those anymore. Just stop the trend that I must have what’s in, that I must have what all the other kids have. That mentality as well, I think we’ve got to nip that in the butt and say you don’t actually have to have what all the other kids have. Sometimes maybe you do have to be the fun police but there are sometimes we do just have to put our foot down and say it’s just no, sorry kids but no. |
| Sarah | I suppose it depends on the age group that you’re working with but I think kids are savvy you know, like if you actually explain the big picture and you give them some insight into some of these elements that we are thinking about as parents or whānau or whatever, they do get it. You know, like how you were saying before Helen about you know, that sort of educational piece with going into your room and looking at what is eco or not. I mean I feel like if you bring that lens into it too, I think even if it doesn’t feel like it’s making a difference because you know, they might just want the novelty LOL doll or whatever it’s called, I reckon long term it would if you bring in that educational piece around like climate change or sustainability, being environmentally aware. |
| Helen | I think also setting expectations early about the number of presents that your family gives; you don’t want to get into a situation where you have to give more and more presents every year. |
| Emma | I mean - not plugging my own business, but I will! - but that’s what we love about the sets of gift bags that we’ve got. And a lot of mothers have commented on this, that if they buy the six pack or the ten pack and that’s it and each kid gets their own fabric and a lot of the mums even take them shopping. So once they’re shopping, they’ll put literally what they’ve bought into the bag. When they get home it’s like well the bags are full, I’m done, I don’t need to keep buying, I don’t need to wonder have I got the same for Bob as I have for Sue and it sets a limit that this is what you get, I’m not going to overbuy, all the bags are full, you’ve all got the same number and I’m done. And I’ve had many, many mums comment that it has actually helped them stop overshopping.  I never imagined that to be an upside but I’ve had a lot of mums say that that has been a real blessing in terms of you know, having to stop that consumer thing that I just buy more, buy more, buy more, one more, one more. |
| Sarah | Yes, there is a lot of messaging out there, you know, that almost makes you feel as if whatever you do isn’t quite enough. It really gets your vulnerabilities as a human, you know. I think it’s good to be aware of that too. |
| Helen | I met a woman recently who says that every year for her family’s Christmas, they have a theme and they do things around that theme. So one year for example the theme was tie die and all the presents were white clothes and then they just spent the afternoon tie dying clothes. So there wasn’t a large number of presents but there was a large amount of fun and activity that fills up the day, it wasn’t just a by seven in the morning, you’ve ripped all the paper off and there’s nothing to do except look at the piles of rubbish and cry.  I mean doing things like that is… yeah another way of reducing the consumption while still having more fun and putting more, like, soul back into the day. |
| Sarah | Yes, someone in my office I think has a like a rule thing that they follow, it’s like one book, one key clothing item or something and like a toy or fun thing. |
| Emma | Yes, I think something to play, something to wear, something to read and something to… oh there’s a rhyme. |
| Sarah | Yes, that’s the one. |
| Emma | And it is, if you follow that it’s nice and formulaic. |
| Sally | I’m glad you touched on consumption because one of the things I wanted to raise was SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production. So this is tying exactly into that Sustainable Development Goal and I also want to pick up on something you mentioned, Sarah, which was around children and young people acknowledging or being able to understand the element of environmentalism and sustainability, if it’s being explained to them. And I think, Helen, this comes back to something you mentioned, the reason why you founded the company was around climate anxiety and the fact that so many more children and young people are feeling overwhelmed by what is happening to the planet. |
| Helen | 75% of kids and young people are worried about their future because of climate change which is… it’s horrendous. Kids are being taught at school about the environment and climate change and then we get to Christmas and we’re like oh well, that’s out the window, actually don’t worry about it. Which is really confusing for kids, I think. |
| Sarah | In my role at work I’ve done a lot of research on sort of like Gen Z and what it is that they’re after and a lot of the sort of younger generation are really motivated in their purchasing decisions, making purchasing decisions that are in alignment with their values, that a brand that is doing good. The generation below that, they’re going to have that element to the max. I mean it’s pretty intense for the younger generations, you know 20 to even 40ish and then younger than that, they have climate change looming and it is a part of their every day life and it’s a totally different perspective to have as a person and as someone who purchases. It’ll be interesting to see how things change over the next wee while when it does come to celebrations like Christmas and so forth. |
| Emma | I also think part of that responsible consumption isn’t just environmental but the economic part of it is that buy New Zealand made. It’s very, very simple. Unless it is some amazing project of some women’s collective in Bangladesh or something that is quite intentional in its ethics, buy local in terms of supporting our own economy, supporting people who work in New Zealand and create in New Zealand. If we were to just buy Kiwi made one Christmas and just say no to anything that’s imported, that would be a huge boost for our own economy and that’s another factor. It’s got to be environmentally friendly and socially responsible but where is it made and who is actually going to benefit from this purchase. So looking out for Kiwi brands is also another real key part of what ethical consumption involves. |
| Sally | Sarah, do you have any comments given that Trade Aid is mainly offshore organisations and enterprises? |
| Sarah | We do have elements that are local. So our chocolate is made in a local factory in Christchurch so that’s a fact that lots of people don’t know. Yeah I mean there’s definitely merit in the whole… in that element of buying local, I totally support it and I mean the whole way in which it is that trade is operating tends to not be… while there’s an element of not a lot of ethics, you know. So I think if you’re going to buy offshore, then definitely try to do your research and find organisations and brands that sit in alignment with your values as a person. There’s lots of people who are in desperate need across the world and I think you know, thinking of that is really important. |
| Sally | We might have our song then. |
| Helen | Yes it’s called ‘Society’ by Eddie Vedder and it’s a great song because it’s all about not consuming but how we have set ourselves up in a race, a race to the bottom basically, of buying more stuff and then needing bigger houses to put it in and what would happen if we just didn’t do that. |
|  | **MUSIC BY EDDIE VEDDER – SOCIETY** |
| Sally | This is Speak Up – Kōrerotia and we’re thinking about conscious gift giving. We’ve talked a lot already about the kinds of ways that you might be able to think about what you’re buying and being conscious in your consumption and your purchasing. I’d like to think now a wee bit more about giving gifts that are still products or items, tangible things, but what other ways could we do it that are both environmentally and socially conscious. I’m thinking here homemade gifts, upcycled gifts, these sorts of things. |
| Emma | Yes can I also say… I mean it may ruin the surprise but actually getting what someone wants would be a great step and the amount of gifts… you know, it’s like, ‘Thank you, it’s thoughtful but I don’t want it, I don’t need it’ and there’s your first step towards waste. So do your research first before you buy a gift or create a gift of any sort and actually make sure that the person actually wants it, sort of step number one – is it wanted and desire. |
| Sarah | Yes I think that one has had a bit of a bad rap, hasn’t it? |
| Emma | Takes the magic out of it. |
| Sarah | Yes, but I think we need to change that conversation. |
| Emma | You could still give broad parameters and then surprise them with some of the finer details. On my kids, when they get presents from people that they don’t really know and they’re kind of like, ‘Thaaannks’ and then they get home and it’s just chucked in the corner and never touched. And not just Christmas but kids’ parties is a big one. I make it a habit now when my kids to a party to contact the mum first and say can you give me some gift ideas of what your kid actually wants so that we can get it right. Whilst it might seem a bit pedantic, I can’t see the point of going out and spending money on more junk that they don’t even want. So just from a party point of view, ask first and get some good advice from the parents as to what those kids want. That’s one way of just targeting it, that can sort of help the excess of stuff that just ends up in landfill. |
| Sarah | Yes, totally. |
| Sally | Emma, I noted on the website of Waste Free Celebrations that you also have employed a group of Afghani women in Auckland to do some of your sewing and also with Sarah and possibly with EcoSplat as well, the kind of the social element to all your organisations and the fact that very often environmentally conscious organisations have a really strong social conscious or ethical dimension as well. I’d be keen to hear about the projects that you’re supporting. |
| Emma | Yes so just to give context, I was an aid worker in Afghanistan for three years so that was back in 2004/5/6 so I was very connected to the Afghan community and then worked for various aid agencies after that. When I started this and needed more women sewing, one thing led to another and there were all these Afghan women who have a lot of barriers to entering the workforce because they don’t speak English and they have children at home, they don’t know how to use a computer, some of them are not overly literate and so you know, for them to go out and get a job was going to be really, really difficult.  But a lot of them are fantastic craftswomen and sewing is something that they can do. So we were very lucky to be sponsored by a few different companies who paid for industrial sewing machines and overlockers to be put into their homes so that they could sew at home. We sort of started that last year but we were in Wānaka and they were in Auckland and sort of freighting of fabric up and down and that was just ugh… it was a disaster, not to mention very expensive.  But now that we’ve moved back to Auckland, I’ve got ten Afghans, former refugees, who are sewing for me. One of them, last year, she was sewing here in Auckland then she drove into our new premises here this year in her car and she got out and she tapped her car and she said this is what I bought last year with the money I earnt sewing for you. She said now I can drive all of my family around and you know, off to university and tech and English classes and then this year, she’s actually opened her own little sewing business in Royal Oak and so we sort of lent her some money to help secure the premises to get her going and she’s got the machines and sort of watching her fly has been really amazing.  She’s in there with her mum and her sisters sewing, designing women’s clothing, and that has been really awesome to sort of see well that worked, the whole thing of you give a fish or you know teach them to fish, you know, which one is going to be more sustainable in the long run. And that’s been really incredible. A lot of my ladies who are sewing for me now are actually sending their income back to Afghanistan because of the fall over there and the incredibly dire economic situation over there. So at least now they’ve got some disposable income to help their families.  We’ve had quite a few different companies come and ask us, you know, can my ladies sew for them when they’re not sewing for me. So we’re working on a few different projects now that will have them sewing year round because mine is very up and down in terms of production. It’s been a really rewarding little project that’s got a much bigger life than just sewing Christmas items. |
| Sally | Really lovely, that’s quite a nice linkage there as well with Muslim sewing Christmas gift bags as well. |
| Emma | Yes exactly and NFACT - which is the New Settlers Family and Community Trust that we partnered with - one of their core pillars is interfaith harmony and that has been really fantastic that these Muslim women are like, ‘Oh we love Christmas, we love the lights’ and just watching them enjoy Christmas as new Kiwis. They’re obviously not signing up to any of the theology behind it but as a celebration, they’re like merry Christmas and we join in and we’re like ‘Eid Mubarak’ to them and everyone just sort of respects each other and joins in on each other’s celebrations and that’s been really valuable as well. |
| Sarah | There’s obviously two elements with Trade Aid: the development space and operating under fair trade principles and fair trade values and all of the elements that happen there globally, and then there’s the educational piece as well here in New Zealand. So we’re obviously trying to educate New Zealanders and New Zealand consumers about making better purchasing decisions. For us, we’re really active in that space and we really work towards building that level of understanding around those fair trade principles so that New Zealanders are moving towards you know, and brands like yourselves, Helen and Emma, you know that’s a big part of what it is that we do as a business. You know, like, we spent a lot of energy and time working towards getting that modern slavery legislation here because New Zealand doesn’t currently have a modern slavery legislation. |
| Helen | You know when I worked for World Vision back in 2006/7 and I was working on that legislation, that is how long it’s been sitting there just dragging heels. Why is it so hard to make modern slavery illegal and here it is - what, 2022?! - and you’re still working on it. |
| Sarah | Yeah but we’ve had some quite good headway actually so cross fingers. Even educating around the fact that there’s, I think, 50 million people in modern slavery at the moment which is the highest amount the world has ever had, I believe. And getting people to understand that when they are making that purchasing decision, they’ve got that product there, have they thought about where it is that it comes from or is the brand that they’re buying from giving transparent information about their products and all that. So yeah, equipping New Zealanders with some of those skills. Big job. |
| Helen | We take a really big picture approach to social issues which is that climate change has mainly been caused by rich people in rich countries but the effects of climate change are on poorer people in developing countries and if we want to have an impact, reduce the effects of climate change, then that will reduce the effects on people whose houses have been flooded and forests cut down and all of those environmental things that come from that and come from climate change. So if we can encourage kids to love the environment and grow up to be people who want to take action on climate change and the environment then that will have a flow-on effect to hopefully improving the lives of other people. |
| Sally | Education is just so key, isn’t it, to all of this and not least those sort of massive fundamental shifts like trying to change consumer culture. |
| Helen | Yeah that’s a pretty big beast. |
| Sarah | You know it’s sort of like, I guess, a little bit of a side step but something that came up before Emma, I think it was you talking about trends. Something that I’ve noticed that I find just gives me the heebie jeebies basically is there seems to be a really big trend towards like people creating birthdays and celebrations like for their kids where, you know pretty much everything has a single use element and it seems as if it’s like this - I don’t know, this is just me sort of spitballing an idea here - but it kind of hooks into this sort of Instagram-worthy trend thing. So like people are posting you know, these really sort of perfect birthday party pictures on Instagram and sharing it, yeah. |
| Emma | It’s all got to be on the colour palette that’s in right now, even if it was reusable then it wouldn’t be because it’s the trendy colours go in and out and oh I know and they’ve got the confetti and the balloons and the… just… it’s… I look at those carefully curated Instagram pictures and I don’t… I actually don’t like them at all, I’m like you’re not doing a great job. It looks pretty but that’s it, that’s it, that’s all you’ve done, you’ve created something pretty. |
| Sarah | It worries me, you know the impact of that sort of trend and what that means. It’s almost like the bar keeps getting higher and higher and higher for what it is that you have to show or give off or be perceived as, they’re actually just driving you to buy more stuff. |
| Helen | Trends are going faster and faster as well which means they’re impossible to keep up with and also I think creating a lot of anxiety because you’ve got continual fear of missing out, continually being shown that your life is not as good, your presents are not as good, nothing is as good as what is online and then that has changed in like a week’s time. My daughter has gone through four ideal shoe brands in the last six months, like can you buy me this one and I’m like no and then two weeks later she’s like oh can you buy this one and it’s no! I’m not buying you any of those trendy shoe brands because you don’t want them, you don’t need them and two weeks later you’ll be onto something else. Emma is right, we need to step outside of the trend and into something with more substance. |
| Sally | I feel like there is a trend though that is around sustainability and conscious consumerism and I feel like that is a trend. But you guys are much more involved in this space than I am, do you get that sense as well? |
| Helen | Hopefully we could say it’s like a systemic change and not a trend. Am I just like playing with words?! |
| Sally | Well no that sounds greater, doesn’t it?! |
| Emma | Birds of a feather flock together. So people who are environmentally minded would often know other people who are and so then it can give you an inflated sense of how systemic your change actually is as opposed to sort of stepping back and sort of saying well as a percentage, how big is this particular movement and unfortunately I don’t think it’s big enough. I do think it is growing, I do think people are more conscious of it but I’m very aware that people like me who are my friends, will be making often the same kind of decisions but we do have a lot of work to go to make it across more of society. |
| Sally | That’s called group bias. |
| Emma | Yes, the group bias, absolutely. |
| Helen | I mean I think we just need to look at the toy industry as a whole and you can see that it’s not sustainable. I mean that’s the thing is we can’t carry on like this so it’s going to end and so it’s kind of like do we want to make the choice to change or do we want to like explode in a toy apocalypse. That’s not very cheery to say, is it?! We have to choose something different while keeping the things that we really like, not keeping the things that we think we should do. |
| Sally | That seems like a great place for our waiata and then we’re going to come back and think about gifts that might not be things and also kind of wrap up this kōrero. |
|  | **MUSIC BY KOOL & THE GANG – CELEBRATION** |
| Sally | This is Speak Up – Kōrerotia and we’re talking about conscious gift giving with Emma Conyngham from Waste Free Celebrations, Sarah Kelleher from Trade Aid and Helen Townsend from EcoSplat. Just to wrap up in our final segment now, I’d like to think about gift giving that doesn’t involve actual objects or items. We’ve spoken a lot about how we can try and reframe or rethink about the things that we give but there’s a lot of gift giving that doesn’t actually involve giving of things at all. So if we can just chat about that a wee bit and then we’ll wrap up our kōrero today. Open up to anyone who would like to kick it off. |
| Emma | Yup this year I’ve got my husband this big voucher for massages at the local massage place because he’s always got a sore back, he’s a builder. No actual gift involved, something that he loves, yeah what can I say, we’re over stuff, over things. There’s many, many experiences and things that you can get and do that don’t involve buying tangible actual products. |
| Sally | And a lot of those experiences have that benefit you were talking about earlier, Emma, of supporting local as well. |
| Emma | Yes absolutely, absolutely. And we’ve got a small house, we just can’t take more stuff as well. You know as you say the more stuff you have, the more storage you need and you know, what if we just got rid of it all and didn’t have the clutter. Ten massage voucher pack and I think he’s going to love it. |
| Sarah | Earlier on, Emma, you were talking about love languages, I’m pretty sure another one is quality time, you know time-poor society and maybe where we just purchase things as a gift. Actually giving your time, like going out for dinner together, going to a café, doing a rock climbing experience or something like that is actually a really beautiful way to nurture relationships and put aside that time which is really special. |
| Emma | Yes, absolutely I think that’s a fantastic idea. |
| Helen | I’m actually not very good at… I’m terrible at gift giving and gift giving is definitely not my love language, it’s probably the least so I’m not bothered about receiving them and I’m terrible at giving them. But I have friends and family who it is their love language and so it is quite stressful. |
| Emma | Yeah I think it comes down to what I said before, about knowing who you are buying for and finding out what they really want. Someone for whom gifts is not a love language then yeah, taking them out for a meal or something maybe exactly what they want. So know the person that you’re buying for and show some thought by actually what they want and it might not be an actual present. |
| Helen | For people’s birthdays, I tend to just make them a cake, I find it easy and it’s nice. |
| Sally | It shows you’ve taken some time as well to produce something for them. |
| Helen | Yes, and I post them to people if they’re not in the same place. |
| Sarah | Cool idea. |
| Sally | Rather than experiences and spending time with people, how about the kinds of gifts that are around sponsoring children or sponsoring endangered animals, acreages of rainforest, these sorts of things as well. |
| Helen | I gift people trees from Trees that Count quite often. |
| Emma | Yeah Oxfam, World Vision, give a goat or for someone who you just don’t know what to get them who, as you say, you know for whom presents and gifts are just not their love language and they really don’t care and nor do they need anything then yeah, giving a sponsorship of some sort whether it be environmental or social is a fantastic way. A few years ago in our family - we have a big extended family with all my brothers and sisters and all their kids - there was so many presents and we just stopped and now we draw one name out of the hat and we buy a present for that one person and then the money that you’ve saved by not having to buy everybody else presents, you can sort of choose an amount and it goes into a fund and we sort of choose each year which organisation is going to receive it. There’s many ways to make it work for your family but you know, even if you just had a place under the tree where donations go and they become gifts themselves and you open them on Christmas morning and you choose an organisation that’s going to get them but it is still part of the Christmas tradition. |
| Sally | That’s exactly what I was thinking as you were talking was that’s almost making a new Christmas tradition, isn’t it? And as much as we might like to hold onto the traditions that are traditional, Christmas and celebration and life is all about rolling with the times to some degree and building new traditions at the same time. |
| Sarah | Yes and I think there’s a nice element of teaching kids as well that it’s not just about receiving gifts, it’s also about giving. I quite like the concept of getting kids to make gifts and things like that so that Christmas isn’t just about getting heaps of stuff. So whether you have some sort of tradition around that donation element or creating things for other people or giving something to other children, I think is a nice element to have in your Christmas tradition. |
| Sally | And as we wrap up, what would you all like to see happen? |
| Helen | Are we talking big picture or this year? I think we know what we’d all like to happen but we’re sitting here thinking about imagine if there was no rubbish and imagine if everyone could do Christmas in their financial budget without pressure from society to do more. I imagine that’d be quite nice, that’s quite big isn’t it?! |
| Sally | Just a little bit. |
| Emma | That’s a tough one because it’s such a broad picture. |
| Sarah | I do love Christmas I’ve got to say, like I love spending time with family and I do enjoy getting people gifts and I don’t know, there’s just something really nice about it but also in the lead-up to Christmas, I do get quite… I have a level of sort of this anxiety or something where it’s… but it’s not about the actual Christmas, it’s about purchasing stuff that I feel might not be used or knowing that we’re going to create heaps of waste and that there’s going to be implications of the celebration that maybe aren’t super in alignment with my values or what I would hope that Christmas would be. And so for me I think that let’s keep the celebration and let’s keep the day and let’s keep the values around what it is and offers, but it would be great if it kind of went through a little bit more of a sustainability filter so that when we go to purchase or we go to create the day, that we’re thinking about it with a sustainability lens. Reducing waste, buying more sustainable products, thinking about how it is that we’re purchasing, where we’re purchasing from, and I think that sort of revamp of our celebrations could be a good way forward. |
| Helen | Yes, if I could pick one thing to sort of an end of, I think to go back to what we were saying before is trends and the need to buy what’s in right now. If there was one thing I’d want to get rid of, I think starting there because it can release you from the financial burden of that, the consumerism behind it, the plastic load behind it, completely ditch that entire mentality. So when you see those lists of you know, the hottest toys this summer, just move on, scroll on, delete, don’t read it, don’t pay it any attention. Just get rid of the list, it’s not helpful. |
| Sally | You’ve come up with some really concrete suggestions so I’m hoping that any listeners who are wondering about how they might begin this journey towards slightly more sustainable and conscious gift giving can actually think about a lot of the practical suggestions you’ve given today, so thank you very much for that. Kia ora, thank you very much all of you for taking the time to come on and share your experiences today. This show is going to air about a month before Christmas, so just as it gets into that pressure to start piling up the Christmas presents. So yes, hopefully anyone listening will have a wee bit of a think about what they’re doing this Christmas. |
| Helen | Nice to see you both. |
| Sarah | Great thank you. |
| Emma | Thank you. |