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THE EAR HUSTLE TRASH CHALLENGE

If there's one thing the Ear Hustle team loves (other than snacks), it's a challenge. We also love listener participation, so we're inviting you behind the scenes to learn more about our recent seven-day Trash Challenge.

Check it out! And if it sparks your curiosity, think about starting your own challenge — or even a challenge *group* so that you have folks to share the experience with. Trash is a great conversation starter, and you might be surprised by how much you learn about yourself and others.

And please share your results with us, so that we can post it on our socials!

Details

The Ear Hustle Team & Seven Days of Trash

The average American produces 1,609 pounds of garbage a year, almost 4.5 pounds a day! That means five percent of the world's population produces 40 percent of the world's waste. This challenge is not solely about making us aware of the waste we produce; it is also about getting us to look at something ubiquitous, something we all produce and spend little time thinking about. Every day, we leave behind evidence of our existence, in the form of our waste. What does that say about what we need versus what we want? Do you have any idea about what makes up your garbage? What can you learn about yourself, your

interests, struggles, intentions, successes, and failures by looking at the things you discard? This will also be a comparison between the trash produced by those inside prison and those outside.

For this project, you are going to save SEVEN days' worth of garbage. Remember: You have to save *everything*, so you will need to carry a collection bag with you. If someone gives you a piece of candy, you'll save the wrapper. If you dry your hands with a paper towel, you save it. If you floss your teeth, yes, you have to save that, too. Anything that would normally be thrown out, you save.

You might want to do what the Ear Hustle team did, and keep an audio journal. Here are some prompts to help:

- **Day 1:** How does it feel to collect your garbage? Are you embarrassed, intrigued, disgusted? Are you keeping this a secret or telling people about it?
- **Day 2:** Talk about one piece of trash you saved. What's a story or association you have with it?
- **Day 3:** Have you forgotten, or decided to *not* keep a piece of garbage? If so, talk about that.
- **Day 4:** You're halfway done! How does it feel? Annoying? Fun? Silly? Intriguing?
- **Day 5:** From looking at your trash, what's something you are realizing about yourself?
- **Day 6:** From looking at your trash, what's something you are learning about your environment?
- **Day 7:** What is one takeaway you have from participating in this project? Or, what's one thing you have learned that you're excited to share with someone?

Now that you're done collecting, what's next?

At the end of the week, your task is to spread out all that garbage and inventory it. Look at it objectively. What do you see? What clues are there that speak to who you are, how you engage in the world, and what you value?

Possible post-inventory activities:

- Photograph your complete pile of garbage.
- Photograph items that grab your attention.
- Put items in categories and discover the kinds of associations you have with them.
- If you are doing this solo, sit quietly with your final archive and write out a description of who you are based on what you throw out.
- If you are doing this with a group, have each person present their collection and talk about what they learned.
- Within your group, look for commonalities and differences and use this as a starting point for further conversation.

If you would like other ideas for seven-day challenges, check out this [video](#) that SFMOMA made about Nigel Poor and her various challenges. Ideas specifically about The Trash Challenge start around the 3:10 mark.