

Video Transcript: "What is Sustainability"

<https://youtu.be/zx04Kl8y4dE>

FEMALE_1: [MUSIC] What is sustainability? One of the more common definitions of sustainability used worldwide is from the UN Brundtland Commission. They say sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Put simply, sustainability is about our kids and our grandkids.

How do we live today so that they can thrive and future generations can also have a good life? Our planet has many resources that we depend on for food, for housing, and many of those resources can replenish. You can cut down a tree and grow new trees. You can catch fish and there will be more fish. But that only works if you do it at a rate that these systems can replenish. We call that the replacement rate. You can think of it as a bathtub and you're draining the bathtub and filling the bathtub at the same rate. If you do that, then the level of the water should be able to stay stable. [00:01:00] We call that equilibrium. It's not that you're not using any resources you are, but you're doing it at a rate that the systems are able to stay somewhat steady.

Right now and over the past few decades, what we're seeing is that we are consuming resources much faster than the replacement rate. The result of that, draining the bathtub faster than filling it is that those levels are going down. We're seeing fisheries disappearing and other ocean life, we're seeing forests disappearing. Of course, everyone is familiar with the impacts of climate change and other impacts of this level of consumption, plastics in the ocean. All of these problems.

Ultimately, sustainability is about understanding how all of this is connected. Understanding that when you make a decision to buy a smartphone, you are impacting someone's life on the other side of the planet who's involved in mining the materials to put in that smartphone. Sustainability is about systems thinking. One of the other [00:02:00] big frameworks that we use to talk about sustainability is the three E's. In business, we call that the triple bottom line. Some people call it the three legs of a stool. That's environment, economy, and equity. It's not just about understanding that we need to manage all of those. It's understanding how they're connected. If you only look at short term economic profit, then you're not going to end up with a thriving economy in the long term. If you're only conserving the environment without thinking about economics and understanding how people are making their livelihood, you also may not end up with a thriving society. If you aren't looking at equity, you're going to end up with a few people that have most of the resources and many people who are hungry and not living a good life. That's not really a successful human society either. Sustainability is really about addressing all of those and understanding the connections between them. [MUSIC]