



TEN
out of
TEN

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WHEN YOU SEE a piece of rubbish fluttering in the breeze, do you stop what you are doing and pick it up? What about those little pieces of plastic hidden in sand castles made by happy kids, dirty cigarette butts that dot our coastal pathways, or the hundreds of takeaway coffee cups spilling from bins – do you reach down and scoop them up?

Because Alison Foley does. In fact, she's picked up thousands of little pieces of rubbish and it all started with a measly 10.

"My family and I were at Noosa Main Beach one day. It was hot. My kids and I were getting tired and cranky; they were whinging for the long-promised ice-cream," Alison says. "So, while I packed up the beach kit, I said to my kids that an ice-cream would cost them 10 little pieces of rubbish. To my astonishment, they returned to me with three bags full of cans, bottles, straws, food wrappers and cigarette butts.

"I thought that was pretty crazy. But even stranger was when we got the ice-cream and my son Liam decided to get a cone because he didn't want the little plastic spoon that came with the cup," she laughs. "I remember thinking, wow, if my six-year-old can connect the dots between what he consumes and what could end up on the beach just through picking up litter, what could I do to help other children, and adults, do the same?" she says.

"So, in an effort to think globally by acting locally, Ten Little Pieces was born."

Ten Little Pieces, which kicked off after that fateful day at the beach and very humble beginnings two years ago, is an empowerment movement turned not-for-profit organisation, geared towards encouraging ordinary folk to make a big difference to the places they love by collecting 10 little pieces of rubbish, anytime, anywhere.

"The beauty of the Ten Little Pieces philosophy is in its simplicity of anytime, anywhere," says Alison. "And then this simple action, especially when kids are involved, really opens up conversations around environmental impact and stewardship, rethinking our concept of waste, and regenerative concepts.

"At the core of the movement is empowering children and that is exactly what sparked the next phase of Ten Little Pieces, which was bringing educational programs to schools and day-cares."

Alison wants to take the initiative even further in 2021 with the addition of teacher-training modules.

"Our education programs are engaging, entertaining and impactful, and basically we designed them to encourage solution-based thinking so the students can take action and even teach their parents a thing or two," Alison says. "The beauty about children is that they are very powerful in their ability to change their own behaviour, to influence not only their own families, but their school communities and wider society too."

The environment has always been a point of concern for Alison, who even as a child felt the calling to make a change. "I've always had a deep respect for the ocean. Growing up in Tasmania, the island state, I always wondered what adventures lay over the horizon," she says. "Eventually I gave into my



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THE SCARY STATS

- Every year more than eight million metric tonnes of debris enters our oceans and 80 per cent of that comes from land.
- There has been a 60 per cent reduction in global biodiversity in the past 35 years with enormous loss of habitat both at sea and on land.
- Every species of sea turtle has ingested plastic.
- Plastic doesn't break down, it only breaks up.
- Once debris leaves land, it accumulates in oceanic gyres, the largest of which is known as the Great Pacific garbage patch, a 1.6 million-square kilometre area of swirling plastic soup in the North Pacific.

HOW CAN WE MAKE A CHANGE?

- Pick up 10 little pieces of rubbish each time you're out and about.
- Talk to your kids about the environment and lead by example.
- Minimise single-use plastics by investing in reusable coffee cups, water bottles, straws and containers.
- Join local clean-ups.
- Get to know the rules of recycling.
- Avoid plastic bags.

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wanderlust and joined my first superyacht cruising the Great Barrier Reef. I had so much fun. I then spent the next eight years onboard superyachts travelling the globe and was fortunate enough to see some of the world's most beautiful places both above and below the water. It was just phenomenal.”

It was this immense love of the sea that motivated Alison's passion for researching the things that hurt it. “Unfortunately though, the more I researched and studied the issue of ocean plastics, ineffectual waste management systems, circular economic theory and regenerative concepts, the more I realised that the wonderful experiences I'd had travelling the globe as a young woman, seeing pristine, fragile, remote and vibrant habitats, this was all a privilege that my children, and yours, will likely never have.

“So now, I suppose you can say that my love for the ocean continues but there is a shift in my awareness towards addressing the impact of plastic pollution on them.”

Despite the scary statistics on climate change, pollution and waste, Alison and her team continue to fight for Mother Earth, and in January this year they had a big win, taking out a Sunshine Coast Council Australia Day Award in the Environment and Sustainability category.

“It was a huge achievement for us and something that will help our cause grow here on the Coast and afar,” Alison says.

Speaking of “afar”, Alison will be taking her show on the

road, or more accurately, the sea, when she joins eXXpedition Round The World 2019-2021, a pioneering two-year ocean sailing mission. The goal is to circumnavigate the globe researching, raising awareness of and advocating for solutions to the devastating environmental and health impacts of plastics and toxics in our oceans.

“The mission will be crewed by 300 female scientists, artists, activists, educators, media experts, mothers and change-makers from all over the world, connected by a passion to protect our shared oceans from plastic pollution,” Alison says.

Alison will join the crew for leg 11, which travels from Tonga to Fiji in May, covering 500 nautical miles through waters and islands afflicted by the debris that's accumulating in the Southern Pacific Gyre.

“I know that this experience will be life changing for me and I'll return to my role as director of Ten Little Pieces with a focus and clarity on using my skills and knowledge as a catalyst for cultural and societal shifts in consumption patterns and the encouragement of closed-loop systems. Our oceans and all that live there are in peril, as are we, but there's still hope. And I'm so excited to be part of it,” she says.

You can follow Alison's voyage via exxpedition.com and the Ten Little Pieces social channels on Facebook and Instagram. 