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| Speak Up - Kōrerotia  The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and learning through play  15 April 2020 | |
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| Male | This programme was first broadcast on Canterbury’s community access radio station Plains FM 96.9 and was made with the assistance of New Zealand on Air. |
| 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.  Today’s Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” show is looking at the Sustainable Development Goals or the SDGs and we’re going to be talking about ‘Learning about the SDGs through play.’ Now, in 2015, following the success of the Millennium Development Goals (the MDGs), all the UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.  This has been described as “A shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people on the planet now and into the future.” So it’s aspirational as well as looking at what’s going to be happening right at the moment. The 2030 Agenda is underpinned by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (the SDGs) - and this is kind of a call to action to achieve the Agenda - and there’s 169 targets within those goals.  So the UN has stated that, “In order for the goals to be achieved, everyone has got to do their part and that is governments, the private sector, civil society and people like you.” With this idea in mind, today we’re going to be talking about initiatives that encourage *people like you* to get involved with the SDGs and live them out in their own lives. We have three guests on today’s show, they’re all involved in diverse projects which try to inspire people to put the SDGs into action, firstly by helping people gain an increased understanding of the SDGs and secondly by helping people look critically at their own actions, choices and world views in relation to the SDGs.  These initiatives are all underpinned by a pedagogy of transformative learning through doing - and in our case more particularly, learning through play. Perhaps we’ll start with you James, if you could introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about why you’re involved in today’s show. |
| James | Sure. So I’m a Kiwi who lives in Hong Kong and I’ve been there for 20 years but I’ve actually lived overseas for more than 30 and I run a couple of training companies, mostly working with corporates, NGOs, charities and the likes. And a year ago I got heavily involved in a game that helps to explore how the SDGs are interconnected and how we might be interconnected to them as well and it brought together my three big passions which is game-based learning, facilitation and sustainability. And the more I explored what the game was doing and the clients I was meeting with, I realised more than ever now this type of approach is really useful for just getting people to find common ground and have a conversation about it. |
| Sally | We’re going to learn a lot more about your SDG Game as we go on. |
| James | Sure. |
| Bridget | Kia ora, I’m Bridget. My involvement with the SDGs started when I made a necklace and then everything changed. So I run a social enterprise called Bead and Proceed and Bead and Proceed exist to educate people about the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals and to inspire action towards them through creativity. And the idea is really simple, we bring people together to each make a five-beaded necklace, keyring and soon to be bracelet which represents the individual’s top five SDGs that they want to work on.  So the necklace or keyring or bracelet serves as not only a physical reminder of the person’s commitment to their chosen SDGs but also as a conversation starter to help spread awareness and to just take some time to think about what SDGs are important to them, what can they do - because it’s going to require creativity to solve these massive issues. |
| Sally | Perfect thank you very much. And our final guest. |
| Sophia | Kia ora, my name is Sophia White. I’m a Sustainability Advisor for Toitū Envirocare and I first actually knew the MDGs, I kind of was like fully passionate about them in school and so when the SDGs came along I was like awesome, this is great, this is what we need. Because I work in sustainability from the… since 2015 I’ve really tried to integrate them into my work and Toitū Envirocare has been working in a programme that supports businesses in taking a good hard look at their current activities and their impacts and working with their stakeholders to begin to strategically align with the SDGs and work towards achieving them within their own context. So at the moment I’m supporting businesses in taking on the SDGs. |
| Sally | And I think you’re going to be quite an interesting voice in this idea of ‘play’ given you are working with businesses. We might start off the discussion then: What are the 17 SDGs? Without sort of listing them. |
| Bridget | Where to start! |
| Sophia | The 17 SDGs, you could almost imagine them as being kind of like three levels: goals looking at the economy which are then nested in goals that look at society, which are then nested in goals that really look at our environment and they’re all kind of tied together by the final goal which is partnerships which acknowledges the no one person/organisation/country can actually achieve these goals for everyone. We’re all going to have to do them. |
| Bridget | Yeah this is the thing, it’s such a loaded question because the SDGs – at the surface they look quite fluffy, right? Like, they solve… or they address really big issues like climate action, gender inequality, good health and wellbeing, no poverty, zero hunger - like, these massive, massive things - but they’re actually really complex.  We can get super nerdy with it, I guess I would say that the SDGs, while they are a framework within themselves, they are also a framework that supports the 2030 Agenda so all 193 member states adopt it. So the SDGs is the framework to put the Agenda into action and for the period it’s a commitment…a 15-year commitment so we have until 2030 to achieve the SDGs and now it’s more important than ever as we are starting 2020 which is the Decade of Action - that’s what the United Nations is coining it - we have ten years to achieve the SDGs. So the time to learn about them and action them is now or else we won’t achieve them. |
| James | For me, I always think the SDGs are a bit like a school exam in that half the kids will study really hard months before the exam and others will cram the night before. |
| Bridget | I love that. |
| James | You know what I mean? And so even though we’re sort of halfway through this period that the SDGs were around, everyone is like, “Oh, I better start practicing for this, I better start studying this or who can I study with?” You know, it’s just hardwired into us the way we work. And those goals that were set out you know, with 2030 in mind. Have we gone past that point for some of them and so I always feel the weight of time pressing on me. I think, like all of us here, we’re sort of in a bit of a hurry and it’s like pushing up against a bus with the brakes on and say come on, let’s go. |
| Sophia | Even some of the targets, those 169 targets - they are actually set for 2020 and so actually when you know we’re actually failing some of the targets now it’s almost that other push of like OK, there is a bit of urgency about them and so that’s why I think a lot of people are starting to wake up and say right, OK, we’ve got to do this. |
| Sally | So you do think there’s a bit of momentum at the moment? |
| Sophia | Oh 100%. I think a lot of things have kind of come to a head and it’s not just about climate change and it’s not just about human rights, it’s actually… I think everyone is starting to realise how everything is holistically lined together. Like climate change itself is a symptom of a very unjust and unequal world and I think that’s why everyone is looking at the SDGs and saying OK, there’s something we can do here that will make a big impact on all other things that we don’t necessarily focus on. |
| Bridget | And I think the beautiful thing about the SDGs is not only is it the largest globally recognised framework for sustainability but as you touched on Sophia, addresses the economy, the environment and society. So typically sustainability has always been seen as this green environmental issue but now the SDGs are getting the attention of corporates and businesses and people who care about the economy and care about innovation and infrastructure and consumption. So it’s this beautiful framework that touches on everyone’s interest and values. I’ve never met anyone who doesn’t connect with the SDGs on some level. |
| James | And I think all of us are discovering that even with all this weight of evidence and a wonderful framework to guide it, facts don’t really matter. I’ve just had a family holiday and we’ve had some very interesting points of view that talk about it and they’re kind of a cross section of what happens to society as well. Look what happens in politics and other countries - or in here for that matter - but I think it’s a starting point. And for me as a facilitator, I try to be as neutral as possible. I may have a point of view but I’ve got to bury that and stay neutral because people are looking for a safe place to have that conversation.  I think what’s easy enough… I mean, for all those who use Facebook, you get in this algorithmic bubble echo chamber where it’s like yes, everyone believes the same thing and then you find this other voice in a room and it’s like oh, people think differently. |
| Sophia | Yes or you think everyone has voted the same way you do and you’re like what?! |
| Sally | We’ve already touched on some of them - you’ve mentioned poverty and sustainability, gender equality. What are some of the other main ones, for people who may not be familiar with them? |
| Bridget | We could go through all of them. |
| Sophia | Yeah I think they’re all pretty important. |
| Bridget | I would say climate action is a huge one. |
| Sophia | It’s a very popular one at the minute as is sustainable cities I think; a lot of people are thinking about how can we make cities more sustainable. I think what was it… like, I think 2015 more people lived in cities than anywhere rural which was a big change in demographics. |
| Bridget | Peace justice, strong institutions. There’s life below water, there’s life on land, there’s reduced inequalities in general so that’s like bigger than just… So there’s gender equality which is SDG5 but then there’s inequality in general which is SDG10. It’s interesting, though, because although the SDGs are not in order of importance, according to the 2030 Agenda no poverty is actually pride in place and that’s because of the follow-through from the MDGs because the MDGs focused on poverty. So what the MDGs started, the SDGs will finish. So although there isn’t like a favourite SDG, according to the 2030 Agenda there is actually one and that’s no poverty. |
| James | If you can fix that, if you can cure… you know, take this on everything else will follow. But of course nothing else will follow unless you start with all of them as well so they’re all so interconnected but it shows us that by focusing on this it will have a ripple effect. Just you might have to reverse engineer through the other SDGs in the process. |
| Bridget | And actually adding to that, that’s a reason why the MDGs also had a bit of criticism because yes, they were focused on reducing poverty and they made some massive milestones around… but at the expense of the environment so it’s about looking at things… sustainability from all perspectives. |
| Sally | I’m interested to see, Bridget, when people do your Bead and Proceed workshop they choose their five SDGs that mean the most to them. How do you guys feel about that? Is it difficult for people to choose just five or is it hard for them to choose five total? Do they just want two or three? |
| Bridget | Yeah it’s different for everyone. Some people know their five and they’ll choose them that conveniently all connect together. I’ve never come across a situation where they say I only care about one, I’m going to paint them all that colour because that’s the beautiful thing about the SDGs, they’re all connected. There’s a reason why it is five and it really comes down to you can’t achieve all 17 and going back to that, they are all connected. So if you choose two then there will be a ripple effect on three or four and there’s definitely those that… I notice people coming back to the same SDGs. Like there’s popular SDGs as well. |
| Sophia | In the work that I do we encourage businesses to align to around five as well and for that same reason, that it’s not saying that all 17 aren’t of equal importance but it’s just recognising your own context and the ability you have to have an impact on certain areas. And so we really encourage businesses to think about if you’ve got this pot of money that you can possibly spend on sustainability initiatives, don’t spread it too thin trying to think oh we’ll do this, this and this. Let’s have a real look and where could everyone that you work with say OK, what can we achieve in the next five years and what do we really need to do and that’s kind of how you get your priority ones. It’s not saying that you don’t have second tier ones or third tier ones but I think having priority goals really focuses efforts and that’s where you’ll make the biggest leaps. |
| James | For the companies I work with in Asia - and although I’m based in Hong Kong we bounce around the region doing work - a lot of them are starting to morph from this sort of CSR (corporate social responsibility) 1.0 to 4.0. This whole idea that oh it’s a nice idea, let’s do some green washing, let’s plant a tree, that’ll be great for our new hires but people are starting to realise and KPMG put out this report a few years ago talking about transitioning from CSR 1.0 to 4.0 where they are fully integrated in everything from recruitment to how we hire, how we promote, how we align our strategic goals to everything are now starting to weave into it. And of course what I love about the SDGs, it gives us a much more detailed framework, almost a blueprint to support that. So companies are looking for goals that they can connect with that are more relevant. For example, I’m working with a private bank shall we say and they want to do work in China - what’s their speciality? So they realise they can run financial literacy classes for migrant workers’ children in Shanghai. So it’s very specific, they’ve got a natural crossover of their skillset to that as well and of course there’s other things they can do but you’ve got to start somewhere. |
| Sally | That seems like a fantastic point to have our first song: You’ve got to start somewhere. Sophia, you’ve chosen a song called ‘We Love the SDGs’ which obviously sounds hugely appropriate. |
| Bridget | It’s a banger, I love it. |
| Sophia | I think I heard it a while ago and thought this is so funny and it’s never made it into the charts so now maybe it will. It’s a bit old, it’s coming into vintage but… |
|  | **MUSIC BY ALAN ATKISSON – WE LOVE THE SDGs** |
| Sally | Nau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. We’re talking about learning through play and the Sustainable Development Goals with Sophia White, Bridget Williams and James Bishop. Now, you’re all involved in various initiatives about the SDGs and we’re particularly talking today about learning through play. But if we’re thinking about the various initiatives that you’re involved in, what is the theory or the pedagogy behind creativity, games and the SDGs? |
| Bridget | I love creativity, it’s sort of my jam. So the other thing, too, that I do, I also work with businesses as well and we do… they’re called Bead and Proceed Epic. So they’re workshops for businesses or organisations to take their SDG learning to the next level and creativity is super important to that space, right? Because somewhere along in our lives, society told us we can’t touch paint anymore and we can’t play and we can’t take time to be creative and I see it all the time when I work with businesses. As soon as I put the kits in front of them they’re like where do I start. Like how do I mix these colours. Then you get back into the flow of it and then suddenly they feel like they’re in this safe environment to have fun and come up with other interesting ideas because creativity sparks creativity, right? If we want to come up with innovative and alternative solutions to these SDGs… because if we had thought of them already then would we have these SDGs, right? So it’s about fostering a safe environment to have authentic discussion about these really important issues but not being afraid to think about out-of-the-box solutions and I think creativity serves such a great tool for that. That’s the philosophy of Bead and Proceed. |
| Sophia | Completely agree with that, creativity is going to be needed for the solutions. That we’re going to have to, like, to disrupt the way we’ve been doing the economy mostly and in the workshops that I run because the programme we do is like a series of workshops. We have senior management and CEO level and we get them out of their comfort zone and really thinking about personal levels of what is sustainability to you and getting them to think and connect with it on a personal level so that then they can think of ideas that aren’t just about oh my department is all my responsibility. It’s kind of getting them to be out of the box and immersed through… we do like a little bit of games, a little bit of icebreaker stuff. |
| James | We encourage our clients to fail as often as they can because they’ve stopped failing by the time they get to teenage years because if you fail when you’re a teenager then you’ll lose your partner or I’ll fail an exam and before you know it you’re at university trying to run through to a test and then you’re working and there’s no way I’m going to make a mistake because you’ll get sacked or you’ll lose your partner again and all this sort of stuff. I encourage - as you talked about - this safe space for them to play and work in.  I remember once I brought playdoh into a meeting, these very senior executives, very seasoned, and they were like why is this playdoh in front of us and I was like well let me give you an example. I took the lid off the playdoh, stuck it under one of their noses and the look on their face because the smell triggered a memory from their childhood and I’ve done that several times… It’s only backfired once because that person had a bad childhood experience with playdoh but we don’t talk about that one.  So the whole idea… I mean, we do a lot of work with Lego serious play method for example and at its simplest level people think oh it’s just playing with bricks but actually because you’re activating the senses in your hands to parts of your brain that didn’t realise they are part of the decision making process, a creative process. The Lego serious play method is designed to unearth questions that are not yet asked and to explore solutions that they didn’t even know were there before. So I love the collisions of possibilities that play brings. |
| Bridget | Especially with the stuff that I do. I’ll be working with law firms or consultancies, people in suits, right?, and when I tell them what I do, that we’re going to be painting beads, they get uncomfortable. But the thing is, they love it once they’re in it. But at the time I’m trying to organise a workshop, I’ll always get oh look do you think like… Is there an alternative to the bead thing, like I love it but you know I’m not sure how comfortable the people will be making them? I always say well it is about getting out of your comfort zone and if we can’t take the time to paint beads, right, like, if that’s too uncomfortable, then how are we going to solve some complex problems? How are we going to solve the SDGs if a bit of paint and bead-making scares you? But it’s the metaphor of the beads and it’s having that tangible thing afterwards, that’s why we do it. |
| Sophia | The real thing is actually the process of them sitting down to paint the bead whilst really considering the SDG and that’s what’s needed - is people to just take some time to really think. |
| Bridget | It’s distraction therapy as well, right, there’s just something about being creative - whether it’s playdoh or whether it’s icebreakers or whether it’s games - and just being in a different space to think about these things. Because we’ve got to make time to think about them. |
| James | In a sense, game-based learning or playing through learning allows us to access parts of our memories and brain that perhaps are laying dormant for some time and if you want to disrupt, if you want to be creative, then you have to get out of that box. Of course you have to get back into the box that you’ve come from, as well, but you can rebuild a better box. In fact, one of the programmes we did is called thinking in and out of the box where you actually physically build the boundaries of your mind - how you present yourself, the outward side of yourself, how you want to be seen and the inside of the box that you create is exploring your filters. That which positively and negatively charges you. Your unconscious bias, your limiting self beliefs, we use it for diversity and inclusion, for strategic planning and a thousand other tools. But it’s about stretching what’s possible and not being afraid to give it a go as well - even if you wear a suit and a tie. |
| Bridget | I’m always surprised by how many guys opt for the necklace; I love it. I think it sparks more conversation. |
| Sally | So they’d wear it? |
| Bridget | Yeah they do, yeah, yeah. My parents messaged me saying we just saw some guy walk past in Hagley Park wearing his necklace. Did you get a photo? But alas. |
| Sally | So that’s another question that I’m really interested in, who is taking part in your workshops? I mean, I guess when you’re organising them someone from HR says we want to do a teambuilding type event; hey we’ll get you guys along. But who is taking those initial steps and making contact? |
| Bridget | It’s a range. General managers, they find out about it because they make the call. If it’s a team bonding activity and they’re looking for something different but with a meaning. Yeah, so it’s HR, it’s general managers, it’s teachers who are passionate about these things, it’s friends of friends, it’s everyone. As the global goal is connect with everyone. |
| James | I think one of the strongest things we’re all sharing here is this Goal 17 - partnership for the goals - and for us we are hubs of other hubs and other networks, that’s the powerful thing. So we’re able to stream in all these other tools and processes.  So the sort of groups I work with primarily it’s corporate throughout Asia, I mean a third of my work is delivered in Hong Kong, a third in Asia and a third split evenly between North America and Europe but I’ve shifted a lot in the last year. I made a decision a year and a half ago to be a much more sustainable husband, father, therefore a much more sustainable business and therefore how can we help others to be more sustainable in all its forms. And so now we’re weaving sustainability into all my programmes, it’s often great for them to work on a project that isn’t necessarily directly linked to the actual company’s primary purpose and I’m very transparent with companies: You know what I’m trying to do don’t you? I’m trying to get you to rethink your entire strategy. |
| Sophia | I’ve seen that in a range of businesses. I mean they’re all businesses, they are all mostly corporates but the businesses that we’ve worked with have ranged from Wellington Zoo Trust to one of the biggest employers in New Zealand which is Auckland District Health Board and now Manaaki Whenua. No matter what area you are in, people are recognising that you’ve got a responsibility to take action. |
| James | Do you have any more fun impact with corporates or local government and high levels of government as well - where are you getting the most traction? |
| Sophia | It’s a good question. I think Auckland District Health Board have been really passionate and that’s because the people we’ve worked with are so driven and so wanting to disrupt the health industry and recognise that that area actually has a big role to play. If you look at SDG3 you can actually frame all of the SDGs with a good health and wellbeing focus because that actually links to a lot of them and they recognise that. So we’re getting a lot of traction with the district health boards and I’d say, like, just a lot of businesses are kind of thinking yeah we want to do something but the impact so far has probably been with ADHB just because they’re the biggest employer. |
| Sally | You mentioned you think there was an increase in momentum, do you know why now? |
| Sophia | From the area of work that I’m in which is climate change and sustainable businesses, there was a lot of legislation coming in and I think unfortunately for the ones that aren’t the early adopters that is a big push - you don’t want to be the ones that actually haven’t changed your policies and the policy comes in and you’re actually doing something that’s illegal. So I think risk is a big thing at the minute but also businesses who are the early adopters type and recognise the importance of being innovative and trying new things in order to keep your business afloat in the next ten years. Opportunity is another big driver. |
| James | The stock exchanges around the world are saying that if you want to be on the stock exchange, let me see your SDG reporting which is of course driven at another range of businesses which are helping people who are reporting. But then it becomes a box-checking exercise and we are starting to work with a lot of these SDG reporting companies because a lot of their workshops are very much ok, let me just go through death by PowerPoint, are you still with me, right, check that box. It’s about making real change by finding what motivates the individual, the team, the organisation, the country and that’s why, I think, there’s been a real change away from beyond just the box-ticking exercises or even the greenwashing exercises that are out there. |
| Bridget | I mean, I think it also comes back to awareness is building around the SDGs. It’s taken some time. The SDGs, while they aren’t owned by the United Nations, regardless they’re still the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. But the SDGs have taken a life of their own. More businesses, big businesses, corporates, are being made an example of how you can incorporate the SDGs into your sustainability reporting which of course… when you see the big dogs doing it, it inspires small and medium businesses to do it as well but also at an individual level too. |
| Sophia | Businesses who are already adopting the SDGs and being really strategic are also getting a lot more return on investment. I think one of the only kind of stock indexes [*inaudible*] years are the ones that are super sustainable and the UN Global Compact which is a kind of organisation of mostly businesses, estimated if we achieve the SDGs by the year 2030, it’s actually $12 trillion opportunity and it will create something like 130 million jobs and it just seems like a kind of no brainer for businesses, doesn’t it? |
| James | Sure if you were in a country that was focused on coal mining and you had 50,000 jobs related to it, you know, just saying no to coal is not enough, it’s got to be, OK so what is the alternative, what’s the business case? And I think we all know that just saying it’s going to save the planet for the next generation sadly is not a strong enough story. You’ve got to show us the numbers, you’ve got to show us the business case for it. But there is enough data there, we have to get better I think, people like us, at trying to… not to push that but to show that in a way that people can digest and go, “Hmm OK.” And just create those little small shifts so that we can have those conversations and move it forward a little bit faster.  That’s the frustration I find, I think, is that even with all this wealth and weight of information that’s out there, it’s like really? All this is still going on. Like yourselves, we work with different groups, whether it’s a group of 12 year olds or whether it’s a group of seasoned CEOs from across the planet coming together to think about what is our business, what does it really mean? And the smart ones realise it’s not just about saving the planet - which you can do as well - but rather if I get ahead well then the investors will then move to our business. They’ll choose those businesses that are making better choices so I think you’re right, there is a momentum, there is a change, a sea change coming. Let’s hope it’s the right kind of sea change. |
| Bridget | And let’s hope it’s authentic, too, because that’s the other issue, the SDGs are getting… More awareness is building but that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s, like, effective awareness, right? There’s still going to be a bit of greenwashing in here and that’s when you run the risk of companies playing… like, SDG bingo, like, they’re just attaching what SDGs they do already and being like well, we have a green team already so that connects with SDG13, you know. But actually it’s about challenging yourself to the SDGs and going that step further, not just picking what you’re conveniently doing and that’s also why I think that comes back to also understanding the targets. If you’re going to report on the SDGs, we need to know how to measure them and that comes back to knowing what exactly is the target so we know what achieving that SDG looks like. |
| Sophia | And for businesses as well, it is really easy for them to do that whole tick-box exercise which is just like shoehorning everything you’re doing already and actually a really good exercise is to set the SDGs in the context of what their business is and the community they’re in and therefore setting their own targets related to the targets but actually just making it really applicable to them which is being authentic. As long as they actually do take some action. |
| Sally | James, in your SDG games that you run, what kind of people volunteer to take part? |
| James | Well a lot of them pay to take part as well because it’s a social enterprise and this is this whole idea that money is not evil and money makes it work. 150,000 people have played the game in the last three-and-a-half years, primarily in Japan in the early days where it began, but we’ve started going global with it. So we charge different amounts based on who we are working with. If I’m in Uganda, a team of people in Uganda, it’s a very different experience from Tokyo and so we charge different amounts. In Hong Kong where I am, I charge very little for local schools and charities and NGOs but for corporates I charge like a wounded bull and I’m very transparent with that. They said why and I said, “Well, you’ve got the money, they don’t’ let’s leverage that.” And so the people taking part are quite a wide variety. We might have a very focused programme with an organisation, they’re using the game as a kickstart for the conversation that we can start weaving sustainability into their high potential development programme and their mentoring programme with some output.  I work with two main groups; corporates - I’m getting them to hold onto the planet long enough till the next generation comes along - and I work with young kids because well, in 12 or 15 years, I really hope they’re the decision-makers helping to take the baton from us and carry on. |
| Sally | Is that similar to you Bridget, with your workshops? |
| Bridget | Yeah very similar. Because, I mean, obviously painting beads is also attractive for kids as well. I work with schools, youth groups, organisations, charities, corporates as well. I think yeah James, you’ve hit the nail on the head. The reason why you’ve got to focus on corporates not only because you yourself have to be sustainable so you can maximise your impact, but it also comes back… sustainability is about our economy and our environment being on a collision course, right? So if we want to address the issues with our economy then the big players is the commercial… the private sector. So they have a massive role to play and what they do impacts on consumers. So you can see how, if we really want to address the issues around the economy to make sure it’s not abusing the environment, then we have to get corporates on board. So corporates but also the younger generation as well because these SDGs are going to be affecting them most of all. |
| Sally | A very, very general question here: What are your observations from running these workshops? |
| James | I love the public programme ones I run. So it’s not an intact group of people from a particular bubble because you’re going to get a whole range of viewpoints but more importantly, people start looking around and going oh, you’re a teacher, you’re an economist, you’re a student and it’s like actually, what a levelling conversation it is. And I actually thoroughly enjoy those ones the most because it’s this diversity that people start to embrace. Because the SDGs are about how interconnected they are but the more diverse group you have, they realise actually we are a group of people who can take action. But for me the game, and what’s changed over the last year of me running it, I’ve moved away from being very action-oriented to more having an internal transformation that takes place because the name of the goals is actually transforming the world and you can’t do that unless you transform your own way of thinking, your own way of being.  The MDGs, the Millennial Development Goals, were about we, the developed nations, looking at the developing nations and saying let’s fix them. But of course the SDGs are more about embedding ourselves deeper within it and saying ah, you mean we’re the problem *and* the solution. And that’s a real oohh… mind blowing experience for a lot of people, even though it’s there and logically we can work through it. And that’s why we use games as a way for people to go on an emotional rollercoaster if they choose to, so that they can see that kind of transformation. |
| Sally | I think that’s a really critical point that is worth highlighting, though, it’s that it’s not just about learning about the SDGs but you’ve got to look at yourself as well. |
| Sophia | I’ve had some really interesting experiences where I’ve been invited into businesses and sat with some of the senior leadership team and I’ll say so you haven’t looked at sustainability yet, what triggered you to decide now to look at sustainability? and at least four or five times it’s been. “My grandchildren have been on School Strike for Climate and we realise we’ve actually… I actually have the ability to make change” and I was like so that’s great. So I think it’s amazing the kids can actually influence a business that they might not even know exists just because their grandad is able to say actually guys, we want to hire in some experts to help us become more sustainable. |
| Sally | I would imagine that if we’re talking about momentum building, School Strike for Climate has got to be playing a role in there somewhere just in terms of raising people’s awareness. |
| Sophia | Sure. And giving people that time to have that real personal connection and that transformed experience of saying, “God my family of young kids aren’t playing, they’re actually on strike asking for change, what can I do?” |
| James | If we could just get everyone to look over their fence at the neighbour, the literal neighbour as well as the one across the ditch or further afield. I mean, a lot of these things that you see in the news, we’ve become so immune to it - oh yes, another million refugees - because it’s not immediately affecting us, yes? But of course it does, it does have a ripple effect as well and so I’m 52 and I left New Zealand when I was 19 and as I journey around the planet and then come back again and the news I keep hearing, New Zealand keeps popping up in the radar in every news cycle of doing something unique, having an influence. There’s what 4 million New Zealanders in New Zealand, another million scattered across the planet. We sort of punch above our weight, Kiwis. Those who become Kiwis are on the way, even the Liverpudlian sitting here as well. I think it’s really cool, the influence. You know one ponytailed Scandinavian girl sitting outside her parliament and now a year later a million kids striking, it just shows the power of one person. I know it sounds all exciting and it fits into the news well but just really powerful stories - and I meet so many kids who are like I’m not going to have kids, I just don’t know why I bother, just go through my paces - and so now hearing these voices of optimism amongst all this other gloom and doom, it’s really nice to see.  You know we keep saying we’re at a tipping point. I just… we’re all just trying to push that tipping point off a little bit further so that we do start having an effect. It’s not too late. That’s the message I think all of us want to say is, it’s not too late. |
| Sophia | I actually love that about the SDG Game, was when whilst we were all playing it got to the point where you recognise that with the cards you had, you couldn’t actually do that much. You were looking at every other team and just like, how could I help you? I think that’s the sort of mentality that the world definitely needs now. |
| Bridget | I guess the other thing to mention, too, we can wrap our arms around a problem sometimes. It feels like that in New Zealand because we are this unique island but at the same time we can’t sugar-coat it. Like we’re number eleven on the SDG Global Rank which sounds pretty good but actually through the….The SDG report came out from SDG Solutions Network and it said that there… it’s super grim basically, no state is on track for achieving the SDGs by 2030. So while we might be number eleven, none of us are on track for it. But I would like to see New Zealand make more of a commitment around the SDGs and then if we are…James, as you say, this awesome example which I feel like we can be, then let’s show that this is also something we care about and we champion the SDGs too. Things are changing which is awesome but also they need to change now. We’re in this Decade of Action but it’s only ten years to make these massive, massive changes. |
| James | It’s not an arbitrary date saying oh 2030, it’s OK, we can miss it. There’s a reason those dates have been chosen. |
| Sally | Why did they choose 2030, other than it’s a nice 15 years after 2015? |
| James | Well partly that as well because in the human consciousness you’ve got to give them a date that seems just a stretch as well as being achievable and so 15 years is something that is useful for that. As we get closer to that date the news that’s popping up around us, the distractions that are popping up around us as well is quite a scary one. |
| Sophia | I have a bit of faith that the speed of change can be rapid and I think the plastic bag ban in New Zealand is a prime example. In the UK you are charged for plastic bags so actually we always carry a canvas bag and you go to New World and get give a plastic bag and I’ll think oh I could have carried it and now there’s no plastic bags and it was so quick. I just think that is a prime example of, as long as momentum builds in people’s heads that this is wrong and then policy comes into place and then businesses have to act, change is fast. |
| James | If you hit it in the pocket. So my wife is from Taiwan and so 25 years ago, same challenge. How do you transform an entire economy to be plastic free or reduce… you know, recycle, reduce, reuse? And it was as simple as just when you start paying money for your rubbish bags, your recycling bags and everything people go oh… it’s just good business sense. |
| Sally | We might have our second song and I think we’re going to do ‘Let the Sunshine In.’ I thought it kind of fit with this idea of you have to open your minds and embrace new possibilities. |
|  | **MUSIC BY THE FIFTH DIMENSION – AQUARIUS/LET THE SUNSHINE IN** |
| Sally | Welcome back to “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. I’m Sally Carlton and today we’re talking about “The SDGs and learning through play.” We’ve been speaking about the various initiatives that our guests are involved in. Bead in Proceed is Bridget William’s social enterprise, Sophia White works for Toitū talking about helping businesses get on track with sustainability and James Bishop has various roles in the game-based learning space, among other hats.  These are all really fantastic initiatives, the idea is to get people involved, get them thinking about the SDGs, get them reflecting on their own life choices and how those then might relate to the SDGs. A big question for all of you, though, is what happens when people leave the boardroom or the game space? Have you got any sense of whether people action their commitment that they make during these creative processes? |
| James | For a lot of us, we recognise how important it is to measure everything we do. So one of the schools of thought around learning is that 25% of learning happens before an event, a learning event. 25% happens in the workshop but the real learning, 50%, happens afterwards. And so it sort of helps us all to create learning experiences that start before, during and all the way through it after. So it’s that follow-up piece which is great for us and it makes business sense, of course we’d follow up because there’s more business opportunities there.  If we can do a better job of that, we’re then able to take responsibility for measuring and tracking the impact. If we put together an Action Learning Group, did they actually action what they learned immediately after? And so providing coaching every three months with a project team to ensure that they’re on track and making it happen, it’s just business sense. You’re looking for buy-in signals for the next thing we could be doing as well because we’re not charities and even a charity needs to find money somehow and a charity needs a good business case to push that through.  So I think that’s a critical piece that most organisations are not great at measuring impact. We talk about well, they’re more engaged. What does that mean? Well we did a Gallop Survey every two years and we’ve seen the shift from engagement scores from this to that. Yes but what does that mean? And track it, you know. And the SDGs are awesome because there’s all these targets, there’s all these measurements there as well. We now have a framework and a set of tools to line up our work with that of the SDGs and that’s wonderful. |
| Bridget | After we’ve done the Bead and Proceed workshop they have something tangible, something to anchor their learning and the idea behind wearing it is yeah… a little bit of guilt trip, you know. Nah, I’m kidding. It’s actually just to serve as a physical reminder, you know, I wear them on my chest, they’re close to me and any time I’m wearing my necklace I’m always conscious about the choices that I’m making so there’s that way of trying to maintain that energy around keeping aligned to the SDGs so they are achieved.  But the other way, I guess, to measure impact is for every Bead and Proceed kit purchased, we donate another kit to a low decile school or a deserving community organisation. The other way to make impact is we want to be SDG-aligned, too, so our kits are connected to SDG8 and SDG10 because they’re handmade by recycled paper (which is SDG12) by an amazing organisation located in Kolkata, India, called Silence. And Silence gives quality and safe employment to adults who are deaf, mute and/or blind, often a group of people marginalised in Indian society.  Then our paint is from the Natural Paint Company and for every square metre of paint painted, these guys save a square metre of Amazon Rainforest which is connecting to SDG13 and 15. So already if you purchase a kit and you’re doing Bead and Proceed, you’re actually making impact towards the SDGs. |
| Sophia | What we do at Envirocare is actually incredibly good at measuring impact and that’s kind of our bread and butter. We’re really well known for our carbon-reducing environment programmes which are essentially environmentally management systems. But we enable businesses to look at their environmental aspects and set targets against these and we have metrics that we help them use in order to track progress against these targets. Every year we audit them and give them a yearly report and that’s what we’re putting in place with the SDGs is putting in the management systems. So once you’ve got your priority goals, you set them in the context of your business and you come up with some metrics and it is a learning process. So you want to do something in quality education, so you’re going to say we are going to look at how many low decile schools we can volunteer in and have a big impact on those kids. So your first year you might just say let’s just get as many staff as possible volunteering an hour, but that might not actually be having the impact you want because you might get kids just seeing… just having an hour of someone’s time. And then next year you might think actually let’s set up an eight week programme. And it’s kind of that planning, doing, reviewing and then putting in place again and that’s what Toitū does with our clients. We do this yearly process so that you’re constantly having an impact, looking at what you’re doing and being able to report that and communicate back to all your stakeholders and whoever else needs to know. |
| Sally | Also getting back to this idea of learning through play, choosing play as a means of learning - why is that more impactful than other ways of learning that you could choose to adopt? |
| James | There’s so many different learning styles that are out there and I think many of us have gone through forms of rote learning in traditional education in the systems and it’s broken, it doesn’t work. There’s so many better ways out there, project based learning and so the IB programmes have been great at doing this and I think there’s this real shift. Even Singapore, famous for its rather rote learning approach, is going through a revolution and transforming it because it’s most unique thing is its knowledge workers, not its factory workers. There’s a place and time and need for that but of course with robotics and AI, that’ll shift. So game-based learning activates many other parts of the brain that traditional death by PowerPoint learning methodologies just don’t serve and if you can increase the level of engagement in the moment of the learning itself, it’ll stick longer and play has been proven one of the best ways to do that.  This is why boardgames have had a resurgence in the last 15 years from Eurogames, boardgames all the way to computer based games. Look at Card Academy, online learning methodologies as well. It is basic gamification through badges and leader boards but that’s much more than that of course. By tailoring the learning experience and gamifying that learning so people are achieving targets at a fun compelling way.  You talk to any 14-year-old, it’s the game-based learning that activates their minds, it keeps them excited and so I’m really passionate about it because that’s the change that we’re seeing and we need to get ahead of that as well. |
| Sally | Just to finish up then, we’ve touched on this already. 2030 is actually just around the corner in many respects and if we don’t get more action, we’re not going to attain these 17 SDGs. There’s a whole load of reasons for this - the climate and war are two primary ones - but what are we going to need to see if there’s any hope of us reaching them? |
| Bridget | So they say that there are six areas of transformation that we have to make and they range from sustainable cities, quality education and jobs, innovation and creativity. These six transformational efforts are going to require systemic change so changing our mindsets to be like OK, we have to be super committed to these SDGs and actually completely change how we have been using our economy and what we’ve been doing in business and what we’ve been teaching, how we’ve been teaching. A third is it’s going to require money, like it’s going to require a lot of money, to have to make these changes and it’s also going to require long-term commitment. Then the last part is it’s going to require everyone’s effort so that is private sector, individuals, local government, national government. Because the SDGs affect everyone and something that is key to the 2030 Agenda is the notion to leave no one behind and that’s because we need to include and rally everyone together to come back to this goal. Much like what JFK did, right, with the space race. We need to have a collective vision to get us feeling excited, empowered and have this tangible thing we can see at the end and that’s why I think the SDGs are so effective. But it’s going to take those three things mainly, it’s going to take money, time, everyone’s commitment and a changing of the mindsets. |
| James | Which is why it’s such an uphill battle where we think about the landscape we’re in now. But there’s glimmers of hope that are blazing more brightly. I think about some of those economies that are completely changing and that came with a change of leadership. Let’s look at Iceland, Scotland, Finland, New Zealand. What do they have in common? |
| Bridget | Young prime ministers? |
| James | Young, powerful, female prime ministers. I’m not saying that’s the solution for everything but it’s showing the power of that and having them come together the way they are. The South Island nations coming together to have a collective mindset because when you’re just Kiribati on your own it’s hard to do anything but when you gather everyone together, it’s that collective force, that momentum that’s starting to happen. And as we start to make inroads there will be other forces pushing back against that. That’s OK, it just shows we’re on the right track so I’m alright with that as well. But I think for all of us, don’t lose hope, don’t lose sight, just start in your neighbourhood, start with one thing, start in your backyard, go to the next space and the next space. We all have influence. Your influence might be I know how to turn the taps off and not run water when I’m brushing my teeth - fantastic. Or your influence might be I’ve got a friend who works at the World Bank and they’re about to make a decision on some kind of investment - great. Influence big or small, just do something. Don’t slip into apathy. And that’s the danger; doing nothing is almost worse than… yeah at least you’ve got a point of view if you’re pushing back against it. |
| Sophia | Yeah I think you’ve said it perfectly, just do something. We all just need to have compassion for our fellow humans around the world and do what we can. |
| Bridget | I think another point is also do what you can but don’t be afraid to be loud about it. Sustainable development has been an issue since the 1970s, the reason why nothing has happened is because our world leaders just… I don’t think they were brave enough to make those massive changes because they didn’t feel like they had the backing from their people. Now we’re woke enough to understand that these things matter. We’re getting the point now, it’s clicking, so if it is then don’t be afraid to just tell other people. If you see someone doing something that isn’t in line with the SDGs then call them up on it, don’t be ashamed about it. From a New Zealand perspective, the louder we can be about it, we can have that influence on the world stage which will be an example for other states to also be accountable to the SDGs, then yeah, I think we can actually make some real change. Because the SDGs are SMART goals you know - you know what I mean by SMART, like the acronym? - but they are smart as well. They aren’t unachievable, they aren’t impossible, but it’s just going to take a little bit from everyone to achieve them. |
| Sally | There’s also something called the Good Life Goals which might be worth highlighting if people aren’t sure where to take that first step. It sets out the SDGs but in a way that’s really relatable to a lot of people’s day-to-day life. |
| Sophia | I read somewhere that if everybody championed just one issue, it’d only take like 8,000 people per issue to solve everything so perhaps a big key thing is to just choose something that you really care about and are really passionate about and that doesn’t mean that nothing else is important but just choose one thing and just make that your mission. |
| Bridget | So when you look at these goals, you might think, OK climate action is like a really big issue right now, I can’t not choose climate action. Is that what you’re really passionate about and are you working in the space where you could have real tangible impact on that SDG? Because if not then don’t choose it. Do something that you can realistically work on and achieve with. So that’s the other thing too, I would say, just pick one but be smart about how you pick it too. Don’t be hard on yourself if you don’t think that that’s the SDG that is going to have the most impact because they are all important. |
| Sally | Well that seems like a fantastic place to finish up, thank you Bridget for that nice summation and call to arms. |
| Bridget | You’re welcome. |
| Sally | Thank you all very much, kia ora mō te wā.Thanks so much for coming in and sharing your wisdom about the SDGs and how we can hopefully get more on board and kind of more committed to them because yeah, 2030 is really not that far away. |