The Importance of Knowing Your Water Footprint

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A Water Footprint is the calculation of all water usage from either an individual or a group of individuals. This calculation includes Direct Water Use, meaning all of the water that you physically use daily, and Virtual Water, meaning indirect water use, such as the amount of water it takes to produce the food that you eat. All of which helps to result in an accurate Water Footprint based on each individual's, or group of individuals', use of water.

So, why is knowing your Water Footprint important? Well, knowing and understanding the amount of water you use, whether it's direct or indirect, is crucial in understanding the exact impact your water usage has on our planet. It takes a lot of water to manufacture goods, produce food, and make energy. Much more than you would think. For example, one hamburger takes about 660 gallons of water to produce, one egg takes about 52 gallons of water to produce, and one cup of coffee takes about 34 gallons of water to produce. Just think, if you ate one hamburger every day for a week, you would be using around 4,620 gallons of Virtual Water. Crazy, right?

Therefore, it is not only important to know what our water footprint is, but also to know some water-saving practices that we can exercise as GGC college students. Take a few minutes to calculate your own water footprint and explore other resources on the Water Footprint Calculator website using this link: https://watercalculator.org/.

In the meantime, here are some simple things that you can do to help save on your direct and indirect water usage. To save on your Direct Water Use, try keeping your faucet off more than it is on when going about your daily routines. For example, try turning the faucet off in between the processes of washing your face, brushing your teeth, and washing your hands. There is no reason to keep the faucet running when you're not in direct need of it. The same can be said about showering. Turning the water off while you're cleaning your body or washing your hair, rather than letting it continue running, will help you save a lot of water.

To help save on your Virtual Water use, try to avoid highly processed foods, such as packaged snacks and drinks. While they may be delicious, these types of foods take a lot of water to produce. So instead of reaching for these overly processed items, try to eat more fruits, whole grains, and/or vegetables throughout your day to help save on Virtual Water. Additionally, try not to buy and use so much single use plastic. This includes plastic water bottles, plastic shopping bags, and plastic straws, to name a few. Instead of using these items, buy your own reusable water bottle that you can fill and use daily, cloth bags that you can reuse when shopping, and a metal straw that you can carry with you and use in place of a plastic one.

While these examples are just a few small ways that you can save on your water usage, each of these conscious choices that you make to conserve water helps lower your personal water footprint. Which, in turn, helps lessen the strain on our planet, even if only a little. Remember, in order for big changes to happen, there must first be small changes, and this starts on the individual level.