



JANE & ANDY

JANIE

To be honest I find it really hard making what I feel are better 'green' decisions in my home life and then having to settle for less constructive decisions within my business, but I am definitely of the mind-set that making more and more small changes consistently is the way forward and that if enough of us did this then the world would be in a better shape.

Over the last few years we have made quite a few changes at home. We have our milk delivered as I cannot stand the supermarket style 4 litre plastic bottles, even though they are hopefully recyclable. We eat a vegetarian diet and I enjoy cooking and baking so rarely buy pre-made meals that result in lots of plastic or aluminium food packaging waste. We are really lucky to have 2 local independent food stores that do not sell packaged vegetables and when I am in bigger supermarkets, I try to peer inside boxes to see what the packaging looks like before I buy. I endeavor to look out for ingredients like palm oil, quinoa and soya that may have come from 'blacklisted' origins and I attempt to buy things that have a 'British Made' stamp on them so that I have a better chance at tracing the provenance. I also strive to buy fruit and vegetables that are in season and that have not incurred a lot of air miles. We use hand soap and shampoo bars rather than liquid versions (in plastic bottles) and we have recently started to use more and more bathroom and cleaning products that have less of a detrimental effect both in terms of packaging and contamination to water.

These changes have been made gradually over a few years, so that they became second nature. Changing the way we shop in regards to our eating habits and home life has been a good move and there has definitely been a shift in the way that supermarkets and food producers create and package items, which can only be a positive thing, but it can be really hard to make the right decisions in so many other areas. Like thinking about where our clothes come, resisting fast fashion, choosing items for the home and thinking about what effect our chosen form of travel or choice of holiday destination has on the world.

At Janie Crow, making 'green' decisions creates even more of a dilemma than at home. All the yarn we buy at trade arrives packaged in plastic bags. This is regardless of yarn brand and price point although some of the brands (thank you West Yorkshire Spinners!) are now using photo degradable polythene bags. Many of the yarns I choose to design with have a percentage of manmade fibre composition and some, like Superwash wool yarns, contain hidden plastic (Superwash is chlorinated then treated with a polymer resin called Hercosett 125). In regard to packaging, we have used grip-seal style bags for our yarn kits because we hope that you guys reuse them and we currently use mail bags that are made from sugar cane and say they are carbon neutral and fully recyclable. We also try to repurpose as much of the packaging that arrives at Janie Crow as we can, but I am still unhappy about the amount of plastic bags that are used here, so over the next few months we will be introducing cardboard boxes for the Janie Crow kits.

Janie Crow and Just Knots support both Andy and I financially and provides part time employment for Gemma, Sarah and Sue plus our team of trusty crocheters, so I need to be sure that enough money is earned here! When thinking about a new design I need to be aware of the market forces in order to be more confident that a project will be successful. In the world of crochet it is crucial to ensure that a project is pitched to the right

market as (without intending to offend anyone) it is a fact that the majority of crochet consumers are far more likely to purchase economy priced yarns than high end. There are various reasons for this, none of which are particularly relevant here, but it means the market is far more reliant on volume of sales (and therefore less expensive yarn fibre content) than the hand knit market, for example.

One of the reasons I choose to design for the home is that crocheters do not have to take the risk that a garment will fit or suit them. They can make a large item in a kaleidoscope of colours without really having to think about the shades used, or the shape and style. Blankets are rarely washed and are not linked to fashion so are (hopefully) an item that remains in a home for life and may even get passed on as an heirloom piece. Indeed, I still have blankets that were made by my Great Grandmother 50 years ago! I feel that a blanket and items for the home are quite a different entity to a garment that is worn and washed frequently and that may have a short life span.

I am sure I am not alone in battling the dilemmas of my home and business in relation to taking more care of the environment and I do not want to preach about what I think are the right decisions. I am aware that many of my choices are a result of being well off enough to afford to be greener, as well as my location and that my working environment and home life leave me free to use my spare time as I wish. I know from experience how hard it can be to choose 'green' on a shoestring budget. When my kids were small I used to have to add up the cost of the shopping as I went around the supermarket and still have to jiggle finances on a monthly basis.

Let's not beat about the bush, making green choices can be expensive and it is important to keep everything in perspective, but it is a fact that we are all still producing more waste than our planet can cope with and that surely, even if things are recyclable, we should all be looking to create less waste in the first place especially as rubbish collection, sorting and recycling all use added energy and water. Hopefully we are beginning to see a world that is more and more conscious of waste and the effect of plastic on our planet in particular, and where the big guns that sell us stuff are under pressure to make better decisions about packaging and product source.

Fingers Crossed!

ANDY

Jane has covered most of the things that we jointly do at home. I think I am classed as a work in progress! I want to be more green and eco-aware, but I make wrong choices from time to time and it can take me a while to switch from the products I like to more eco-friendly replacements.

We are incredibly lucky to live in a culturally diverse town and I love the fact that we have really good local independent supermarkets where we can buy so much of our food without plastic packaging and at reasonable prices. We have a local health store which sells tea & coffee by the kilo in paper bags, which I love, but then I go and spoil it by nipping into the local Co-Op and buying a couple of items that I can't resist (always wrapped in needless packaging) only to get home and regret my impulse buy. But of course, it goes without saying that there are certain products that you simply cannot get without incurring plastic waste.

Researching the Janie Crow Lifestyle products has helped me a lot. We have spent the last few months testing many eco-friendly items, some of which we now have for sale and others that we just didn't get on with – we felt that we couldn't sell things if we didn't like them! It has been a huge learning curve discovering the number of products that you can purchase that do not come covered in plastic. The most surprising for me being the Scence Deodorant, which comes in a cardboard tube that we expected to disintegrate as we used it, but it stayed good right to the end. It did cost 4 times the amount of our normal deodorant but lasted 4 times longer, so that was a real win!

As Jane has already said, running our companies, Janie Crow & Just Knots, has been a real challenge for us in terms of plastic use. For example, if we pack 10 kits of one of Jane's crochet designs that uses 16 x 100g balls of yarn we will use 36 grip-seal plastic bags. The yarn we use in these kits will have arrived from the supplier in plastic bags, so we will also have 16 of these bags as a waste item, although we do try to reuse these as much as possible. We will also use 10 postal bags - we use bags made from sugar cane, but they do become a waste item nonetheless.

On the bright side, we are now working to pack the kits straight into cardboard boxes which will double up as postage boxes. This will save at least 20 plastic bags for every 10 kits we make up and so our hope is that this will save thousands of bags per year.

I think I will forever be a work in progress, but every little bit helps.

