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Maud: WITE is a community, but most of all it's a movement. The idea is really to make the transition at home in your own way. That's why we wanted to share what we're doing at home.

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Charlotte: BNP Paribas Personal Finance invites you to discover On The Way, the podcast that explores the paths of responsible consumption. Whether entrepreneurs, people from the world of business and researchers, On The Way gives a voice to those who, day after day, are helping to develop more sustainable consumption. Welcome! Enjoy the podcast!

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Violaine: Hello, I'm Violaine Belle-Croix, and along with Maud Zylnik, we founded the Women In Transition Ecologique movement, which is a movement that's about discussing and sharing eco-transition issues on Instagram. Anything to add?

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Maud: Perfect, nothing to add. So, my background: I'm Maud Zylnik. I started my career at Galeries Lafayette, in the marketing department, where I worked for about five years. Then, I created l'Épicerie Générale, which were grocery stores promoting small organic French producers. So it was only direct-from-producer products, with two shops in Paris, an events service, and our own brand. So, I ran those stores for about 10 years, right from the start and up to the end. And now, I've combined my two previous experiences, meaning I'm working in communications consulting, where I'm working with food brands, brands that are focused on food, their brand platforms, and on eco-transition. So I specialise in "sustainable development" and "brand platforms".

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Violaine: Me, I've been working in the media for 17 or 18 years. And more specifically in children's fashion. I started at Milk magazine. Now, I work for Marie Claire Enfant, and more generally I advise brands, I write for brands, and I edit special issues for the Marie-Claire group, with my own particular passion for children's fashion. Because that's where I started out, it's where I like to work.

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Maud: and, in parallel with Violaine, as she said, we founded the WITE movement, so as to really popularise small actions, make them more accessible, and most of all, fun and relaxed. Things clicked for me quite young, I must have been 10 years old, my older sister went to study in Austria, and she came back one day on holiday with the idea of wanting to swap out all the rubbish bins in our house. So overnight, we went from one bin to seven bins. There had to be a bin for paper, a bin for aluminium, a bin for everything. And so we very quickly took onboard this idea of waste being recycled, paying attention to what we bought, and buying better things. We've always had a vegetable garden at home, but it's true that it really made us ask ourselves where what we bought ended up, and what ended up in the rubbish. And then, how are things recycled? Are they even recycled? So that was really when it clicked, and then it became part of my life, since then, since I was 10 years old, and right up until today, it's never left me.

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Violaine: Things clicked for me later on. There was one of my roommates who only wore organic cosmetics. I started thinking: "Oh yeah, maybe it's not so silly to put that on your skin." Then one thing led to another: the bathroom, the kitchen... So, really I came here via cosmetics, to this sort of alternative way of living. And my second click was Maud, who made me think about the state of what we throw away. We throw away too much. And yes, it's recycled. But there's not much behind it. So it happened in two stages. First on a personal level, and then for the planet. Because the eco-transition, it covers all of that, it covers paying more attention to myself, to my health, not using carcinogenic products, etc. etc., and it's also about the planet we're living on, that's suffering so much from so many habits, things that we can re-think. So there you go, you made things click for me.

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Maud: We met at l'Épicerie Générale where I was doing the store launch, because I was in an alternative location, and we had to get ourselves better known, and Violaine can definitely tell the story better, but she'd been invited, and I think first of all she'd seen the logo, and then she got an invite. She came to the launch, and in the end there were a few reporters there. There weren't thousands of people either. But yeah, the most important journalists were there, including Violaine, and then, well, in fact we got on really well straight away, I ended up talking to Violaine the whole night. She was really the most interested in how we'd got there, the story, stories of the producers, the promotion of the producers. And things flowed really easily between us. And so she wasn't there just to come and eat organic French petits fours. But she was really there to hear about our story, and straight away we connected. It was great.

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Violaine: Yeah, one thing led to another in fact, while we were talking I went around, I bought some Gratte Semelle olive oil, which is a producer that Maud loves, and I hung out with her, well, in the end, that's how we made the whole connection. And then after that, we talked and talked and talked, and we got to a point where we were really aware of things, really irritated by our lifestyles, because I thought things weren't moving forward. Maud said, wait. I've already been annoyed by the whole thing. It doesn't help. You have to do things in a fun way, with a positive vibe. Do that, and other people will too. And so I said to Maud: well why don't we do that together? You know, because, making my washing detergent, all alone in my kitchen, it's depressing. And that's how we started to experiment a little bit, started doing things. For me, that was the part I liked. And for Maud, it's more the content. And then she started videoing, making her funny little jokes, all that. And so like that we started sharing it on Instagram. At first it was for just our friends and so on. And in the end, by doing that, we ended up having a small community of people that we didn't always know personally. So, we carried on, and we carried on doing things we liked doing. There was no long-term plan. Year 1, year 2, year 3, etc. It was like: what do you feel like today? Doing what? Well, I'd like to share this thing. I'd like to talk about that. And there you go. There was no... I don't judge what Maud does, and Maud doesn't judge what I do. And I think that's why it's stayed a movement, and not something...

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Maud: Maybe we should?

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Violaine: A company. We should start judging each other? Maybe? Watch out! So that's more or less how WITE got started. Then after that, Maud gave meaning to the WITE formula, WITE means doing things right. You're a WITE, you're not a WITE. A man can also be a WITE, that's important to say, and we started off more or less like that.

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Maud: WITE is a community, but most of all it's a movement. The idea is really to make the transition at home, in your own way. And that's why we wanted to share what we do at home. And if people like what we do, find it funny, or whatever, for a million different reasons, they join in with our transition, the idea, it's really to say: there you go, let's do this together. We share things, we have fun. And above all, it's really, like Violaine says, the whole time, it's about not judging yourself, and not judging other people. It's really about saying, here you are, we do this at home, that's what happens. And some things work, other things don't, we share everything. The hits and the misses. And also, most of all, we go visit other people to see how they do things. Because, really, we do things. We feel like we're doing things, but in the end, you realise that all around us, there are lots of people doing things, but who don't always dare share them. And it's really about fear of judgment, saying to yourself: well what I do, it's nothing special. Anyway, I don't want to talk about it because compared to everything that needs to be done right now, it's really the bare minimum. And really that's not true, because in fact it can be a first step for someone else as well, to say to themselves: well okay, I just swapped out my plastic rubbish bags for paper bags, maybe someone else might be interested, and most of all to tell them, well, yes, for me it was easy to do. So, it's really about going out and seeing other people, see how they do things, and so it's really a community that's all about sharing, without judgment, and most of all, truly it's about having fun, because there are already loads of serious things going on all around us right now. If eco-transition becomes just another burden, or a mental weight, then it gets impossible, it really gets too complex. So, it's about how to change. In any case, you have to adapt, give each other a hand, a helping hand is what you need.

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Violaine: There are some people who find it super easy to compost. And others that find it hard to do without plastic bottles. How do you do it? We swap tips. And in fact people often share, Maud asks quite a lot of questions. It's fun and there are always tips. In fact it's a mine of information, doing it together. It's a bit like Tupperware parties for the eco-transition really, with social media. It's no more pretentious than that, in fact.

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Violaine: The philosophy of WITE is the eco-transition of everyone, for everyone, and by everyone. We're not going to get there all alone anyway. The public authorities are lagging behind, so instead of getting annoyed while we're waiting, and since politics isn't really our thing, not for Maud or for me. Well, maybe for you? In any case, not for me, no, that's for sure. And there you go, that's how we're doing things, in the real world, very much in the real world. Personally, I'm a great pragmatist. As soon as things get abstract, I get bored very, very quickly. I got really bored when I was studying. It wasn't real-world, truly real-world. How do you not drink bottled water? How do you reduce waste products in your rubbish, pay attention to your health, as well as the planet, support the right people, the

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right producers. How do you do it? Where do you shop? What do you buy? What don't you buy? For me, that's what I love about this movement, even I, doing all this with Maud, I still learn loads of things and that helps me. It helps me in my day-to-day life.

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Maud: We learn a huge amount from other people, from the people we interview. It's really great for that, and most of all, really, we believe in the power of small actions. Small actions are hugely criticised, but it turns out that if today, or tomorrow, there are 60 million of us doing small actions, that's still going to change a lot of things. And it's true that it's not a huge effort. And sharing the little things we can do every day. So in the end you see that you can quickly make them part of your routine. And I think if we all make an effort

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Violaine: and in fact, it works against judgements. Yes, because if you try to do everything, me, for example, I can't go to the shops with Tupperware boxes. I just can't do it. And well, I told myself, if there's four of us in the line at the cheese shop with our Tupperware, suddenly, you don't feel judged, but at the moment they're all there: Plastic blah blah, whatever... They're going to look at you like the local middle-class hippy. That's annoying. And that's what I answered the other day to someone who said well yeah, you, the middle-class hippy. Well, if being a middle-class hippy means being a bit more careful about what I throw away, okay, then I'm totally fine with that. It doesn't bother me. Really.

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Maud: We wanted this movement to be free, to reflect the both of us. That's why freedom of speech was really so important. And we didn't want filters either. We didn't want to make something too slick...

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Violaine: where it's only pretty photos, pretty set-pieces. Instagrammable, blah, blah, blah. I can't stand seeing any more white sinks with washing up liquid saying: "homemade washing-up liquid" with a cute little heart. It's totally guilt-inducing. Frankly, my label always gets stuck, it leaks, it's not pretty, in that regard we're really both on the same page. Not that I'm criticising people who make pretty things, good for them. But anyway,

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Maud: it's not us,

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Violaine: it's not us,

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Maud: so there's no point in imposing it on people. And then, once again, it works like, when Violaine posts an image, it's going to look more like her sort of thing, and that's her reality. And me, when I post an image, that's my reality too. And that's what's important. We want it to be a really transparent movement, that's not overwhelming either, and that most of all doesn't discourage people.

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Violaine: No, really, that's the goal, to bring in as many people as possible.

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Maud: Yeah.

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Violaine: The advice that I'd give people who want to start making a change, is first not to change anything, it's about observing, because really the pitfall of "okay, okay, right then, fine, I'll throw everything out, I'm off to the organic store, I'll buy everything." I saw a video once that really shocked me though. I think we talked about, Maud, there's a girl who says that's it, I'm changing my life, I'm changing my life. She comes back with her shopping from the supermarket, she cuts open all the plastic packaging, and empties everything into glass containers. That's not okay at all. We don't care about buying more stuff. Anyway! That's buying even more things. I mean, I'm not saying that I don't buy anything in plastic, but you shouldn't say that just because you put things in a nice glass jar at home, that it changes anything at all. It doesn't change a thing. So, exactly, so as to not to do that kind of thing, you say to yourself, okay, I'll finish up what I have, what I've got in stock, I'll use up everything. I'll use up my last anti-bac. I'll use up the CIF, I'll use everything up. And then, little by little, I'll start off with a small action, then another small action. And I'll start with the things that are easiest for me. For example there are people who can't do without things, I'm always amazed when they say "How do you do without limescale remover?" Well, I don't care at all, I never use it. But you mustn't start with the things that you find important. Me for example, I can't do without toothpaste. I just can't do it. I can't do it at all. I don't like the idea. I love my tube toothpaste. So, there you go. But everyone has to start with the easiest action for them. And after that, you go back, you go a bit further, and gradually... because, frankly, starting off straight away with solid toothpaste, with homemade hair remover, and white vinegar everywhere... I think it's too abrupt. So there you go, starting out, I'd recommend people do nothing, most of all not to go and buy anything, because it's very... "Yes, I'll get the eco-transition pack and all that", no, no, no, you've got to take it easy, little by little, start with small actions. And when it's properly bedded in, the family's okay with it, then great, next action, and off you go. For me, I think that's the way to do it. And having given that advice to lots of my friends, I've noticed it works.

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Maud: Yeah, it's so true that the observation phase is really important at home, observing, and not diving into buying stuff straight away, to solve the problem of plastic.

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Violaine: Because if eco-transition is an excuse to buy more stuff that's going to be useless in 6 months, frankly, that's just silly.

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Maud: But yes, I like to shop, but for other reasons, for good reasons. That's my old experience as a shop owner talking there. I like going to eco-friendly shops, ones that are trying to do things differently, carrying new products, and because I think it's really important. And even more so right now, we're seeing how we need shops to be open.

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Violaine: to support them

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Maud: and be eco-friendly while in your own street. And it's true that, well, I've got less patience than Violaine, there's a load of stuff we got wrong we could tell you about, if you like,

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Violaine: there's one thing that we both truly screwed up.

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Maud: Ah yes, there's one thing we screwed up.

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Violaine: That one, that was really a classic.

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Maud: Go on, you tell it, because it was special

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Violaine: so it was just before the first lockdown. Is that the one you mean?

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Maud: Ah no, maybe it was another one.

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Violaine: There you go, we've got loads of examples anyway. Just before the first lockdown, we decided we'd do a hair removal tutorial, and that it wouldn't be all that complicated. So, we get our recipe. I don't know what with, with sugar, honey... Basically, you make a kind of jam.

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Maud: Something sticky, you know?

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Violaine: Something sticky, and we said we'd use some old tea towels, well, maybe not so old. We had a few complaints, so we cut up some strips, you know... And so there we were ready, we filmed it all. With Maud behind the camera. I had the strips, and also, I've always dreamed of being a beautician. It's true, I have to admit it. I'd have loved to have done it super fast. Bish, bash, bosh: so I applied my little strip, I'm about to do the before-and-after thing, and then there all these hairs left, everywhere, covered in sugar, we couldn't stop giggling. We didn't try it again, honestly, such a huge screw-up.

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Maud: So yeah, there's a ton of them, there's one, well, poor thing, my husband, he's the one who's had to try out all my experiments first. So that, as Violaine says, is why I also try to do the same as her, in her observation stage, because I tried to do a lot of things quite quickly. A bit too quickly, really. And one of the first things I had to do at home was doing our washing detergent. And, it has to be said, there were a fair few screw-ups.

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Violaine: Without a blender, more specifically.

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Maud: it's true, without a blender,

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Violaine: because, with a blender, it works fine,

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Maud: there you go.

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Maud: And, well, without a blender there were a few mess-ups. It made a few globules, it made blobs. It wasn't super liquid. One time it was really liquid. The next time there were blobs. Personally I get annoyed pretty quickly when things don't work, I tell myself it's fine, it's okay, it'll still work. And so, I made washing detergent. And then, I carried using the detergent with these blobs that never quite dissolved, but that still managed to find their way into the machine and which ended up on my husband's shirt. A rather fat blob of soap. All that. And so, I got the clothes out, I wasn't paying attention, the shirt dried out, obviously. And then the shirt got ironed with all these big blobs of fat all over it. And so one day, I hear him screaming in the bedroom, "damn it, I can't take any more of your crazy experiments!" And sure enough, he ended up with at least four or five shirts that still had big fat stains somewhere on them. And then they'd been ironed. It was a total screw-up, end of. Now I'm delighted to have discovered the brand La Lessive de Paris, which has been a real lifesaver.

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Violaine: I tested L'Alchimiste, that's also really good. The same sort of thing. You mix up a small sachet with hot water, and this small sachet is already well prepared. And there aren't too many blobs. It's fine.

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Maud: But yes, that's your thing. For me, La Lessive de Paris gets the job done. It comes in returnable bottles.

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Violaine: and it smells nice!

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Maud: It smells nice, it works, it does the job. And then, when the bottles are empty, they come and collect them. It's ideal, it's really ideal.

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Violaine: Everyone has to find their own thing. There you go, that's why it's also good that WITE is hosted by and Maud and me, because for me, there are things I find super easy, and I do them. For Maud, there are other things. For example, Maud collects up all the things she has to throw out in her cellar. And she knows they're not recycled. For me, frankly, it's annoying. I'm no good at recycling. The public authorities have to do something. I don't care, I throw my rubbish out in the meantime, I don't like storing it up. So there you are, we're both different, and that's what's good. It's that there are things we both do. And there are things we do differently, and that's why too. I think people identify with us more, because if I was Bree Van de Kamp, all perfect, impeccable, and Maud was the same, that would just be annoying. So that's what really drives us. And there's what we messed up, and we did mess some things up. A body cream that went off after a couple of days. Me, I really got yelled at because I'd put it in the fridge, it stank, it was horrid. So there you go, we mess some stuff

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up, and it's all good, our other halves don't really care that much. But then we did get other things right. And I see the feedback. Through little comments, small things. "It's great what you're doing, it's so nice." "And I've started doing it too." "I've started doing this as well." And okay, so anyway, it's not going to be enough to save the planet. So really, if governments don't do something, we're really going to be in... Well, it's going to be tricky, let's say. But in the meantime, instead of getting angry about doing nothing, well at least we're doing some things we like, with varying degrees of success.

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Maud: That's right. But it's really very important, to share, for the both of us. Really, what works, and what doesn't work, seeing as it's a community, a movement, there's always someone who tells us, "ah yes, I know, but I did it this way, and it works better this way too." If we only shared our successes, that would make people feel really guilty, it would freak everyone out. So, really, the idea is that we find solutions together.

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Violaine: Yes, and then people often improve recipes with, er... "Ah, it's because you didn't use this thing, or you forgot that", and they're usually right. And we pick up the recipes, we get them a bit at random, from here and from there. So for me, I find it really positive to share any negatives, because that turns into a positive.

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Maud: I've got a lot of ambitions for this movement. It's true that, as Violaine explained earlier, I'd like us to be more focused on WITE, because it's really a subject that drives us both, and that we understand each other really well on. So it's great. Now it's a little tricky doing it every day, but ideally I'd love to do it, I don't know, on a WITE channel, an "eco-TF1", I don't know. I'll ask Gilles Pélisson! Violaine could be the 1pm eco-news anchor, I don't know! But whatever, a form of media that's accessible to as many people as possible, where we share an eco-transition that doesn't make you feel guilty, and which doesn't become yet another mental burden,

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Violaine: and to try to keep this collaborative thing. I work a lot for the media, but it's not collaborative. Plenty of people are doing it. Personally I love what I do, but I'll try to find a way to continue to be part of this exchange, which is really valuable, because we don't know any better than anyone else. In fact, being journalists doesn't mean we know any better. Being in a green party doesn't mean we know any better. We're all the same and our grandmothers' tips can help us with some things. All the generations combined, all these profiles can lend a hand together. I'm with Maud on this idea of the media. I'd prefer not to do video, but because I'm more comfortable with writing and all that. But why not? But I would like to continue to keep... We could make a system where they could call us in. You know, for something, for a live program,

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Maud: Change things up a little? You can really have a channel now, really, where you can express yourself on different subjects. Like now.

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Maud: Because in fact it's broad, it covers everything, all areas of society, everyday life,

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everything. It's the eco-transition. I'm still discovering things now. My latest thing is people who don't delete their emails. I'm serious, because emails heat up the servers, I don't know where, in Scandinavia, it's a disaster. So that's my new thing. Really, it's impossible. Oh no, you're not going to give us a hard time about emails and all that. No, but it's nothing. Delete! You've got 2,300 emails, don't tell me you've got 2,300 emails to deal with. If not, you're going to burn-out, it's impossible, and that's my other thing. But right there, I mean, you can look at all the areas of your day-to-day life. And that's what's so fascinating about the eco-transition,

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Maud: that's to say, even the media itself, as Violaine says. It's true that right now, all these data centres consume insane amounts of energy, I mean we may be the new eco-media. But it's true that Netflix today is brilliant, and all these platforms, because there's loads of really interesting content. But storing all this content still means crazy energy consumption. So hopefully Netflix and everyone is thinking about how to reduce the impact of these data centres a little bit.

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Violaine: And there's this kind of mania we have of wanting to keep everything, all our photos, all our emails, but in fact our parents, our grandparents and even, us when we were kids, we didn't always have all our videos all the time. If you lose them, you lose them, you lose a photo then you lose a photo. You don't have to carry everything round with you like a tortoise. And, frankly, we've got the right to forget things from time to time. You know, that video, clearing your history is great. Everything's stored everywhere. It's hellish, and all our silly stuff on... WITE, you know,

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Maud: of course. But, well,

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Violaine: when we're 70 years old, they'll still be wheeling it back out again. Well, again, it's for a good cause. It's all good.

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Maud: The next battle? It's

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Violaine: You've got more?

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Maud: Of course I've got more. It's a subject we're quite agreed on, it's children, that's to say, they're younger. I've got two daughters, 5 years old and 9 months old. And it's true that it's not so easy to impose all our ideas on them. And most of all, I don't want to impose them. I want the path to make itself. So I'd like it to happen for them by itself. So sometimes I crack a little bit, so while I'd like all their toys to be 100% organic wood 100% organic all of the time, all that, but it's true that it's difficult for them. It's clear to me. They want unicorn toys, everything all the other kids have at school.

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Violaine: You have to get perspective from time to time. Especially as our kids are born

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green, I think. In our society, because we've become that. Because I was born in 78. And society wasn't all that green, and we became green. But in contrast, our kids, children, in terms of rubbish, recycling rubbish, respecting the oceans, a whole bunch of things, they're far more comfortable. So I tell myself that from time to time that's worth the occasional pair of Nike for their birthday because they really want the same shoes as the other kids.

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Maud: a pair of Nikes from Vinted!

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Violaine: Yep, on Vinted try and find the pair they want, blah, blah, blah. For me, I find it really hard to impose things on my kids. They say: "Mum, we don't have the same snacks as everyone else." And the poor things don't have snacks in wrappers, that sort of thing. So there you go, sometimes I slip in a Granola bar for a treat. Because you also have to let things go a little bit, I think. And I agree with you, with kids, it's really tricky. And so, kids, that's really an issue. And then there's teenagers, ouch!

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Charlotte: You can find all the episodes of On The Way on your favourite podcast platforms, and on the Personal-finance.BNPParibas website. And if you'd like to take to our microphone, and tell us your story, please contact nicolas.meunier@bnpparibas.com ...see you very soon.