

Our Own Personal Influencers

**Andrew Pace:** Welcome to the Non Toxic Environments podcast. My name is Andrew Pace. Every week, my cohost Jay Watts and I will discuss healthier home improvement, ideas and options. Thank you for finding us and please enjoy the show.

Welcome back to Non Toxic Environments. Jay, this week is a really exciting episode. I know I say this every week too, but they're all exciting I think, but this one I've been looking forward to.

**Jay Watts:** Last week we talked about those things that we felt were mythical in the communication sphere and tried to do a little of our own mythbusting. I thought it made sense that this weekend to kind of book end that and we would share with our listeners, those folks in our world who we have found inspirational, ones that have been leading thought leaders in this arena and give them the credit they're due in terms of their influence on our industry and on us personally as well.

**Andy:** So we have the myths and now the legends.

**Jay:** There you go. Myths and legends.

**Andy:** So when I got into this business in 1992, I had actually been in commercial construction since 1989. We had a project in Milwaukee where many of our own workers are rushed to the hospital due to inhalation complications. I've told this story several times on various episodes over the years. I won't really go deep into it, but what it made me really investigate is the idea

and the science of sick building syndrome, chemical sensitivity, indoor environmental illness, so on and so forth. The very first person, or I'll say couple, that I came across that seemed to understand this years before I, and became well known authors consultants, and really started a movement called the Healthy House Institute, is John Bauer and his wife, Lynn Marie. Those who have chemical sensitivity and have had it for a while, throughout your investigations, you know, back before the internet, we had to go to the library and look up books. Well, John actually wrote a book about building a healthy home for his wife who was chemically sensitive, and he went into great detail of how the home was built and subsequently authored books on the subject, including one called the Healthy House Answer Book. It's a Q and A of about 130-140 of the most popular questions that we still give out here from time to time to clients and I, to this day, I look up to those two as really being those pioneers in the building industry that took a strong viewpoint on how things should be done and started to educate the public about it. Lynn Marie authored a book called the Healthy Household, which is a complete guide for all indoor air quality issues. And they also formed the Healthy House Institute, which still thrives today. John and Lynn Marie are no longer involved. They retired from the business many years ago, but they are still influential today with the books that they've authored, with the Institute they put together, with the thoughts and ideas that were really groundbreaking ideas they had at the time.

**Jay:** You're reminding me too, that John coauthored, a book with Paula Baker LaPorte Prescriptions for a Healthy House, which is like a textbook on the subject of building a wellness sanctuary for yourself. Very influential. When I first got involved in the business and was trying to educate myself on the issues, that was certainly a book that I turned to often and I referred people to it very often. Of course when they wrote that and the other books they published there, wasn't a whole lot out there on the subject. Of course, that kind of reminds me of one of

the people that I think has been most influential in terms of wellness mentality is Dr. Doris Rapp, who was so instrumental in bringing everyone's attention to the challenges that our children face from exposure to chemicals primarily in their schools. She wrote up a book called, *Is This Your Child's World?* It's still in print. For anyone who's listening who has children in school, this is a book that you should probably pick up and take a look at. She goes into very great detail about what can happen to your children's immune systems if they're exposed to chemicals in the school environment in in fact, very demonstrable ways shows how the little immune systems can be disrupted by exposures to the everyday chemicals. What I mean by everyday and the school environment is basically, what's used to clean the cleaning products that are used.

**Andy:** I'm glad you brought her up as one of your influencers. Definitely one of mine, as well. Matter of fact, I probably refer to her research at least once a week with a client. She is the one who- I'm going to really simplify what she did, but essentially what she did was she took a classroom setting of children and purified the air within that classroom and had children sit down and draw whatever picture they want, mountain scenery, horses, kids playing, whatever you want to draw, just draw. What she did was she slowly introduced back into the classroom, just standard what she called "school air" and school air would be, as you said, Jay, the cleaning materials, chalk dust, anything else, basically, she just took away the purified air and allowed the rest of the school air to filter in its place and came up with shocking discoveries of how the kids' demeanor changes rapidly. They go from these happy serene pastures with horses to jagged edges and dark disturbing colors and disturbing images.

**Jay:** It was potent, it was powerful. She also described there, their mood swings too, very erratic mood swings because of those exposures to the school air. It's right there. It's

documented. It's not like we're wondering. There's the before drawing and there's the after drawing. And then the after-after drawing where their little immune systems start to rebalance, because they've been taken away from that exposure. This is something that's very common in the workplace where people are exposed to an occupational chemical and they're starting to react during the day. Then when they leave the environment and they are able to get away from it along, and if their immune system kind of refocus rebalances and they feel okay, and then they go back to work and this back and forth and back and forth. That's a little bit dangerous because our immune systems can only handle so much of that back and forth before then we get to a point where we don't come back as readily as we should. And if it goes beyond that, then we really have a hard time coming back. Your exposure thresholds are so slow or low that you're disrupted by just about anything. That's just the place people don't want to be.

**Andy:** Well, great, great influencer, Dr. Rapp. That's a really good name for the list. So I'll bring up my second influence, actually, my third, because your first was one of mine as well. Somebody who I interviewed for the show, oh boy. Back in April of 2019, I got to interview Debra Lynn Dadd. Now, Debra has been a figure in the business. Somebody who, I think everybody recognizes the name, they certainly would recognize one of her books that she's authored or website is extremely powerful. A lot of Q and A on it. Debra Lynn Dadd got into this back in the early 80s. Once again, here I was coming up in the business in the early nineties and she had a good 10-15 years of research on me and she authored several books on the household toxins, the household dangers. So I really looked to her as one of my influences because, yes, I had her on the show and that's great. I'm really happy I had her on the show, but I would look at her publication all the time for tips and tricks for my customers, right? I mean, she knew how to break down a question from somebody. Then I think to her credit, she knew how to do research, unlike anybody I've ever met before.

**Jay:** These are still connections you can make. Now, of course, maybe not in person have conversations or counsel with these folks, but their publications are available and their websites are available to you. So just to follow up on the idea here from last week, we were talking about myth-busting. Now we're wanting to give you another path to follow, right. That we feel very, very confident and comfortable with. And these are people that we would suggest that if you're interested in any of this, I'm sure you are because you're listening to us. If you're interested in this, these will be connections you can put on your list of people to look to as we have done in our past, look to them for answers, for questions, you may have. Andy that's a good one. That's a very good one. Debra Lynn Dadd,

Kind of in the same vein and kind of in the same timeframe. You're going to know this one. We got to put our hands up and say praise to Dr. William Rea. The doctors passed on last 2018 I think it was, he passed on. Dr. Rea was one of the founding physicians for the American Environmental Health Clinic in Dallas, Texas. We've mentioned it before. This is where folks who were immune system challenged with chemical sensitivity issues could actually visit the clinic in Dallas where they would go through an analysis, and I'm simplifying this cause much more complex, but they'd be able to go to the clinic for an analysis to figure out what exactly they were reacting to. Dr. Rea came to the clinic with a credible background in medicine, a well-respected honored physician in his field and has had, and still does because the clinic is still operational has had a huge impact on the wellness industry and understanding chemical sensitivity. He actually published two big volumes on this very scholarly volumes and probably a little rich and dense for most layman to read. But certainly I would say kind of the guide book for other physicians to understand other environmental physicians, which at the time when the clinic was started, the field of environmental medicine was pretty much unknown, right? There weren't a lot of doctors that understood that. So his groundbreaking work and the publications

that he did were able to kind of open the door to the field now. So there are physicians now that deal with environmental illness. So it's kind of a new realm in the medical world and one that obviously is so important now.

**Andy:** Well, Dr. Rea was a huge influence on our business in that I can't tell you how many of my customers and clients over the years actually visited his clinic in Texas to heal. And at the time, I had a customer would do that, they'd come back and kind of give me a report on how it all went. Dr. Rea, he's one of these uber intelligent people. It was sometimes difficult to sort of follow his train of thought. I had a chance to hear him a couple of times at conferences. Matter of fact, before he passed, he and I started working on a new publication and hopefully someday down the road, I'll be able to finish it. In any event, he had a way of having people go through detox that obviously works. I mean, look, we had the the great Dr. Nag on a few weeks ago and Dr. Nag actually was one of his patients. She's gone through his protocol and so forth, and now she's doing the same thing at her clinic up in new England. I know the clinic down in Texas is still going.

**Jay:** It is. This is another name that you'll know a Carolyn Gorman.

**Andy:** Yes.

**Jay:** I spoke to Carolyn, she's been at the clinic for many, many years, and well-respected a clinician and a counselor on these issues. She and I spoke yesterday. She had a question for me and she told me that actually the clinic is going to move out of Dallas. They're going to move to Richardson, Texas, which is just North of Dallas. So yeah, they're still going, they're still helping people figure it out. And that's all good.

**Andy:** That's great. Because my worry is over the last 15 years or 20 years now, we've we lost Dr. Randolph a while back and he was also one of those individuals who really coined the term of chemical sensitivity and Dr. Rea was just such a large figure in this. And I'm so happy to know that it's being carried on by others. I fear that traditional mainstream health doesn't really want to deal with this. So I know that from in the alt-health community, this is something that is being taken on now, and it's going into all sorts of realms of how to address chemical sensitivity. So it's just really good to hear that the clinic still lives and hopefully will still be influential.

**Jay:** Yeah, I think so. Who's your next guru?

**Andy:** Well, my next influencer in my career is going into the realm of commercial work. Back when I started my long career in construction, I actually started in the commercial industry. I use to do large trade shows and it was my job to work with architectural firms across the country and to work with them and making sure they specified the correct materials for certain projects. I had the real excitement of working with an architect named Bill McDonough, Bill McDonough you know, if you know the name, you know, the name. I mean, here's somebody who is just a giant in the industry when it comes to sustainable design. He literally wrote the book on cradle to cradle. He was a commercial architect that was involved in monumental projects, like the Gap headquarters, like the Ford motor company, River Rouge Rebuild. Oh boy, I mean, how many other large projects you can think of Jay that he's been involved in? Environmental Defense Fund?

**Jay:** Oh yeah. There's so many. You can't even name them Andy. Real quickly, tell our listeners what cradle to cradle means.

**Andy:** Well, everybody knows the term cradle to grave. Basically what happens to a product, what's called a life cycle. The product is created. That's the cradle. The product is eventually past its useful lifespan. It's reached its full life cycle and now it gets put to the grave. And in years past that meant going to a landfill. Bill McDonough really coined the term cradle to cradle. What happens to that product after it's useful life? Can we turn it into something else and now give it a new life? Now, everybody knew the term reduce, reuse, recycle. But he took it to a different level that got the commercial industry to take notice.

**Jay:** The first people I think of is Interface Carpeting.

**Andy:** Exactly. Ray Anderson at Interface. Bill McDonough was monumental in all aspects of green building, sustainable design, LEED building was for the most part created based upon his ideas and his thoughts. And so I had the chance to actually meet him one-on-one for the first time. I was at a trade show in Milwaukee and he was the keynote speaker.

**Jay:** He's a good speaker too.

**Andy:** Yeah. It's just riveting- really sucks you in. So he was speaking at a show here in Milwaukee. I had a small trade show booth that I was probably introducing people to Safecoat paint. This is probably 1993-1994. This is where Bill McDonough really started. He was a God in the industry. Well, he gave the keynote address, immediately jumps into his vehicle, has to run to the airport to go speak at night at another event. I really wanted to meet him after the



presentation, but I understood he didn't have enough time. About 15 minutes later, I'm standing at my booth and talking to people about Safecoat paint, and here walks Bill McDonough and he comes right up to me at the booth. He puts out his hand and said, I want to introduce myself, I was told you guys were here. I had to come back and say, thank you because Safecoat makes paint that I can use on my projects. If it wasn't for your technology, I wouldn't be able to do some of the things that I need to do. And so that's my claim to fame.

**Jay:** Yeah. That's a good one.

**Andy:** It was great. It was great.

**Jay:** And by the way, folks cradle a cradle is like a certification program now that companies can aspire to. You can go onto their website and learn all about that. If you're interested in those kinds of things. Well, you know, kind of in a similar tack, Andy, my next guru, I don't know if you've crossed paths with him, I've crossed paths with him a couple of times. I guess I'd bring him up because I've been so impressed that two times I saw him were at conferences. One was a remodelers conference in the Bay area. And then I also saw him again at one of the green building shows and what I liked, and this is by the way, I'm speaking about David Johnston, David Johnston has got a business called What's Working out of, I think he was originally in Colorado. I'm not sure where he is. He still may be in Colorado, but on a personal note, what I liked about him is he's really he suffers no fools and he is unabashed at about his ideas about sustainability and green building. He basically says it like it is. I found that kind of refreshing in an interesting way. I felt like here's the real deal, the guys delivering the goods. So basically he has been instrumental in developing these programs. He's written some books, he got a book called Green from the Ground Up, which I think he did in 2009. And it really was a

guide for builders to how to think about green construction. In green remodeling, another book called Green Remodeling, which was, I think the byline was Changing the World One Room at a Time.

**Andy:** Yeah. That seems correct. One Room at a Time.

**Jay:** And he basically, his work in Colorado, of course he got kudos for his sustainability. He got an excellent award for sustainability to development from the, I think it was University of Colorado. They named him the environmental of 2005 or 2004 or something like that. So he's got all of these kind of acknowledgements that his ideas about green building and how to figure it out, how to walk through it. It reminds me of the Degree of Green program in the sense that it's kind of a template for making important decisions about how to build safely and in his particular field, it's about using all those available tools in the tool box. Certainly the indoor air quality stuff, which is what we focus on in the Non Toxic Environments podcast, but all the other facets that are involved. In fact, I think David was pretty much a part of the whole development of LEED. I think he was instrumental in kind of developing the LEED program. He was on that early leadership team that sat around the table and said, okay, what are we going to prioritize here and how we were going to qualify what LEED means, Leadership and Environmental and Energy Design. And so I liked him because of that. He's another one I want to get on the show because I think he'll burn some ears, so people are listening. They go, whoa that guy is pretty outspoken. Fine with me.

**Andy:** I know him from NARI, the National Association of the Remodeling Industry. Many years ago, I led the study course here at the local NARI chapter on their certified green remodeler program. And the manual that was used for the study course was written by David Johnston.

**Jay:** There you go.

**Andy:** The guy has a wealth of knowledge, just a wealth of knowledge. You have to understand building before even diving into one of his books.

**Jay:** Yeah. You do. You have to have some background.

**Andy:** If you do have that background, boy, you'll really enjoy what he has to say.

**Jay:** No kidding. So who's left anybody else.

**Andy:** Well, you know, I wanted to limit it to three influencers, however, I've got a wild card. Maybe you do too. I wanted to give us all a contemporary. The folks we've talked about so far have all been somewhat pioneers or have been pioneers in the industry. Contemporary, I want to talk about is Matt Risinger. He's been a custom home builder for over 20 years. He's based in Fort Worth Texas or not. Excuse me, Austin, Texas. Matt, what I love about Matt is he's a building science guy. He really into the intricacies of the scientific way to build a high performance home, but he does it predominantly through his YouTube channel. And he's got hundreds of videos that get millions of views. This guy is harvesting the power of the internet in the way we should be. He has fantastic videos. He's well-spoken, but he doesn't speak over your head. He speaks the way you're talking to him on a job site. He brings on his panel of experts. If he's talking about using zip balls for a project here, we're using them on a project and this is what we ran into. He likes to do these six minute videos where it's not too long, it's not going too deep into the weeds. He's got that too. But these YouTube videos have really

been fantastic. I think anybody who wants to learn about building or remodeling and using new technologies and making sure you use them properly, Matt's YouTube channels.

**Jay:** You know, I didn't know about Matt, Andy. I have to admit that. I didn't know. And now you've got me so excited about checking him out.

**Andy:** You will not step away from your computer this weekend. I'm serious. He talks about so many topics that I'm thrilled to hear things about, instant hot water heaters and blower door tests and job costs coating if you're a contractor, I mean, there's so many things he talks about. He's such a wealth of information. And if he doesn't know himself, he brings in an expert to talk about it so that he's not confusing his listeners.

**Jay:** I'm thinking of the other Matt, several episodes ago. We did an interview with Matt Grocoff. And so when you said Matt Risinger and I thought Matt Grocoff, and that'd be an episode folks you may want to check out. Do you remember what episode that was called Andy or when it was?

**Andy:** Well, we had them on back in January episode Electrify Everything.

**Jay:** Matt Grocoff has got a project that he's working on in Michigan and folks, it's an exciting project. And if you're interested in what Andy and I believe is kind of a coming wave of healthy building Matt is one of the people that are on the forefront of that, and we've got some other folks we've talked to, they're doing a similar thing. Well, Andy, there's so many more people we could tip our hat to. But I think in this episode, I think we've done a pretty good job of naming some of the real influencers for us.

**Andy:** For sure. And if we didn't mention any of your favorites, folks, please reach out to us and let us know. I'd love to get some emails from our listeners. Let us know who your influencers have been over the years. Who do you look up to? What websites or what YouTube channels do you go to learn about any of these topics? We'd love to learn feedback, love to get that feedback. Excellent. And folks as always, please leave us a rating and a review. We'd love to hear how you think we're doing. Jay and I are always looking for topics for upcoming shows. Although we have a list of topics of our own that are just in waiting, we'd like to know what you'd like to hear from us, so let us know. You can email [andy@thedegreeofgreen.com](mailto:andy@thedegreeofgreen.com) and look forward to getting your feedback. We'll be back again next week with another episode of Non Toxic Environments.