

The BEST of 2020

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.

Hello folks. Welcome back to Non Toxic Environments. You know, Jay and I were talking earlier this week about what we wanted to discuss in this last episode of the year and we were kind of joking saying, this has been a lousy year and we really look forward to 2021, but you know, Jay podcast-wise, it's been a great year.

Jay Watts: It's been a great year. I think we've had so many good conversations. We've had some really informative interviews with some of the people we think are game changers in our industry. Certainly it's been a great year for podcasts. As our discussion, we were wondering why don't we just kind of step back into time for the year and take a look at some of the podcasts we felt were really some of the finer ones. You and I kind of made a short list of those. Let's go back in time Andy.

Andy: That's the thing. We made a short list but we can pretty much touch on every single episode this year. I really feel good about all the episodes we've done. Let's face it folks, 2020 was a challenge for all of us. As somebody who owns and operates a business and likes to do this podcast on a weekly basis, that kind of got away from us this year. We only had maybe three or four months this year where we did an episode every week. That's not really the way that Jay and I want to operate. We want to do this once a week. Heck I've even talked about doing a second podcast once a week as well, but this was a challenging year between business

shutdowns, people getting ill, friends and family. It was really tough, but out of all the episodes we've done let's talk about some of the highlights. My first highlight Jay was back in March, we did a show called Strengthening our Home's Immune System. If you remember that one. So this is right at the beginning of the 15 days to stop the spread sort of thing. We didn't really know which direction to go to. Matter of fact, the following week we interviewed Dr. Lisa Nagy. She's a world renowned expert and she had a plethora of information for us. But this episode Strengthening our Home's Immune System was wonderful. How do we help ourselves by helping our home and preparing our home to be that place of healing for us?

Jay: I think it was a nice idea to combine our personal wellness, our personal immune system with the home. We've talked about how we can reference our interiors, like our bodies. I've said that. We think of these walls and ceilings and the floors and all this inside as a part of the skin of your home, your body. So we've talked about that, but I think it was a really nice episode. And I know we'll pull some excerpts folks out of these episodes. So if you don't remember, if you didn't listen to them, man. If you did listen to them it'll refresh your memory, if you didn't listen to them, you can always go to the NTE site and listen to the full episode.

Andy: Yeah. What I'll be doing is I'll be linking all the episodes we talk about today in the notes of this episode. So speaking of that, let's go to a clip from the March episode, Strengthening our Home's Immune System.

"HVAC systems- it's always been something that we talk about at length when we discuss new homes or whole house remodeling. It's extremely, extremely important to make sure you have a good purification system for the whole home attached to the furnace AC and blower unit. I like portable air purifiers. I think they're very good for

what they do. When it comes to purifying the air throughout the home there's nothing like having a good high quality purification system.”

All right, Jay. So the next episode that comes to mind is an episode that we did in May. That was called Making Lemonade out of Lemons.

Jay: And I think where we were going there is that things can things happen, right? And you can't predict what's going to happen. Contractors ignore your advice or your directive, or they can't come to a project because some other projects going on. So you have these issues. I think the whole episode was being able to manage that kind of rocky road that happens when you have a little disruption when you've got a lemon and you need to turn it into lemonade.

Andy: And that's it. Let's face it, as the description will say, it's not a question of what if a problem happens. It's a question of when and how will you remedy the situation? So here's a clip from making Making Lemonade out of Lemons.

“What happened on this project? Well, they got a bunch of rain. They got about 10 to 15 inches of rain over about a two week period. All of the framing in the house, not just the exterior framing, Jay, all of the interior framing, every stick of wooden, the home starts to grow mold.

It literally breaks my heart for a family who is specifically building a home to avoid the mold problems they're running into this. I can't blame the contractor by any means, and it's not his fault that it started to rain so hard. So what do you do? Honestly, the first thing you can do, folks, if you are a contractor or if you're hiring a contractor for a

project, whenever there's a problem on the job sites, no matter what it is, stop. Stop where you're at, stop what you're doing. Put down the tool, put down the material and make a phone call or two."

Andy: All right. Jay, in June, we did a show called Whole House Air Purification Methods. I know you remember this one vividly, I know I do. We interviewed the VP of training for a company called Dynamic Air Quality. They make the RS4 systems that we sell.

Jay: Steve Morris.

Andy: Right, right. That episode, I can't tell you how many phone calls I got from that episode, because it really answered a lot of questions that people had about air quality systems, but it actually it generated a lot more questions about things we may not have touched on that we actually worked on in other parts of other episodes down the road.

Jay: Yeah, Steve was a wealth of information too. It's one of those categories of products and the interest our clients have about how to manage their indoor air. We talk about how to fix things, how to fix a problem. If you've got an off gassing problem, of course, from the AFM standpoint, we can do that with sealers, but sometimes you can only do so much. Then you have to think we have to have other methods here that help us keep this air as clean as possible and healthy as possible. And that's why this episode I thought was really, really informative. No doubt people were interested in it because it's on the top of everyone's minds. You know what's the whole program I can use? I'm going to use and find safer products. Then once I've those installed, what else can I do? How can I take it to another level? And I think this podcast really nailed it.

Andy: It was spot on. One of the top 10 questions that I get on an annual basis is why would I buy X, Y, Z brand of air filter versus A, B, C brand of filter. Steve did a great job of describing the three main methods of air purification and how they can work together. Anyway, folks, June, Whole House Air Purification Methods:

“Steve Morris: You know, it's not just buying something off the shelf. We like to say there's four things involved in technology. There's the science behind it, there's the logic behind it, then there's the testing. I'll explain more of this as we go along. And there's also the marketing aspect of it. A lot of product today is designed by, or I shouldn't say designed by, but led by marketing people, just say it does this so we can market it and so we'll use some testing to make sure it works. With that said, there's a lot of smoke and mirrors out there today. I'd love to be on this podcast today and say Dynamic's got the only product it works. We don't. We've got some actually we've got some great competitors and we can even talk about a few of those. We do have some unique technology that that's not only unique to the industry, but it's also unique when homeowners go out and searching for different products. Usually what they end up with is some type of a room air cleaner. Some of this stuff that's out there today, Pure Air and Molecule and the old breeze, let's say they all worked. That's not the science behind it. But if they did all work, they only work in one room. What you guys talk about, and when we stress is his whole house air cleaning.”

All right, Jay. So in July, just a couple of weeks after the last show was with Steve. We did an episode where we interviewed a man by the name of Trevor Mullins. Trevor, his family, actually his father Gordon started a company called Deodoroc many, many years ago up in Canada.

They produce a natural mineral air purification system. I've known them for about 25 years or so. And it was just really great to have Trevor on, to talk about his family business and to talk about how zeolites, a natural odor reduction product. Actually that's the name of the show Using Zeolites for Natural Odor Reduction.

Jay: I never heard of Deodoroc before. So I was hearing of all this for the first time and it was so informative. Andy's, and folks may not know this, Andy's business is a family business. He comes from a history of being in a family in the construction field. The AFM company is a family business for the most part. So to hear Trevor talk about his history, because we're all about history and we've shared our histories, Andy shared history, and I've shared my history, the company's history. So having these histories and these great stories to tell about how our thinking went and how we evolved our products and what the reason was for us to be in business. I mean, Trevor shares that with us about his experience. It's nice to hear, we need stories like this.

Andy: We do. As you say, as somebody I work with my family and I have for many, many years. It's nice for me to work with other family owned businesses. I know the struggles. I know the drama, but I also know the reward of doing that, and it's nice to have other vendors that I work with in the same position. So here here's a little something from Trevor.

“Andy: How on earth did, did something like this come about?”

Trevor Mullins: Yeah, well, it's got a long, long story. My father, as you recall, was a very colorful character. So there's no end of entertaining stories that could be related to the development of the product, but maybe what I should do first, Andy and I think it will,

I'll just describe the product initially, just to give the listeners an idea of what we're talking about. Deodoroc is an eco-friendly odor absorber. And what it does is it attracts and absorbs any type of odor from any item or any area and where it's different than like activated charcoal or the baking sodas. It observes a full spectrum of odors because of pH levels. Some odors aren't attracted as well by baking soda as they are by charcoal and things like that. So it's good that way. But what it does is when it's put into an environment where there is an odor, it will react with the oxygen that's in the area and set up what they call a negative charge to it by going through an ion axion exchange system. Effectively, what it does is it turns into a negatively charged end of a magnet. And coincidence to that any odor, how it reaches your nose or anybody's nose, is that the molecule of the odor piggybacks onto a molecule of oxygen. It finds its way through air currents to your nose, and you get the sensation of a smell. What's nice about it piggybacking on oxygen is that it takes on a positive charge. We all remember the grade school negative attracts positive. So that's what happens. What's of particular importance to that is that Deodoroc doesn't just absorb the orders that are in the air, it'll attract them. When it's closer to an item that's being saturated with odors, it will actually go into that product, like wood is a really good example. Everybody's had the experience of a cat urine on a floor. You wipe it up, clean it up two days later, it starts to stink again because of the odors is percolating out of the wood. What this does is it will actually draw it out of the wood."

Andy: A couple of weeks after talking with Trevor, we had our good friends Jen and Rusty with JS2 Partners down in Texas. We did an episode called Confessions of a Healthy Home Builder.

Jay: Ooh, yeah.

Andy: Great name for the episode. Actually it was interesting to hear from them to talk about what it's like for them working in the COVID era, having to protect their own workers, protect their customers, how things have changed, and how things have stayed the same, of course. It's always nice for you and I to both to hear from them and to hear all the exciting things going on with them.

Jay: They're apart of a growing trend of builders who are thinking about building healthy homes and Jen and Rusty have really focused their whole practice. Again, a family business. They focus their whole practice on doing exactly that. You'll hear in the episode, Jen comes to the table with her experience as being a severely chemically sensitive person and how she took herself from illness to wellness and the whole path that was involved in that. This of course was the impetus for them to partner up, she and her husband, Rusty to do JS2 Partners. They recognized there's a whole lot of demand out there for healthy homes, whether you're chemically sensitive or not. Especially if you're chemically sensitive or you have allergies.

Andy: Exactly, exactly. Right.

Jay: So there'll be some great excerpts out of that one. Yep.

Andy: Let's hear a little bit from Jen and Rusty right here:

"Rusty: You know, a good custom home builder they're all going to be able to build a nice home. Some have strengths in areas. Some have weaknesses in areas, but all in all a good quality builder is going to build you the home. What it boils down to is do our

personalities mesh with this person for probably a year of my life and they're going to be spending a lot of my money. So that's kinda what it comes down to. So after that phone conversation, if we take it to the next step, it's really getting down to the nuts and bolts. That's where Jen comes in with her product knowledge, working with you guys during that process. But the silver bullet that we have is my wife, Jen. I kind of liken what we do... we build these houses for these people, but it's also how we live our life. We're not just some hokey company riding a gimmick. This is really how we live. It's almost like the Hair Club for Men. Not only am I the precedent, but you know, I have to live this way too. So Jen is really the secret sauce there.

Jen: Thanks Rusty. You're making me blush.

Jay: I think that's pretty crucial when you're trying to build confidence with a client, they need to know that you have a, and I say this in both ways, physically and mentally, emotionally, you have to have a sensitivity to the client's needs. That can mean being able to listen really well to what they're having to say. Probably situations where the client's talking and maybe the listening on the other end isn't as good as it could be. And I'm sure Jen, what you bring to the plate and Rusty knows that, you're really good at listening."

Andy: All right, Jay, now we're into fall of the year. We did an episode with a world renowned interior designer, furniture expert, and a Lyme disease survivor. Her name was Sarah Walker. This episode was called Beautiful Healthy Design. Personally, for me, really one of my favorite episodes of the year, because it's always exciting for me to talk to another professional in the

industry who has taken their own personal stories and history and modified their business so they can use that experience to their advantage and help others.

Jay: Right. It's interesting to think about how all the past years in our history has been. We weren't really mainstream. We were more of a new idea. People maybe don't understand it. We're trying to learn about it. It was novel. There was some skepticism. It's really nice to see this new generation of designers that are coming forward saying, Hey, guess what? We're changing. We're changing the paradigm here, folks. And Sarah really brings all of that to bear here. Very articulate as you said, interior designer, she's a furniture expert, she's a stylist. And just on top of that, she survived Lyme disease. So you start to see all these things kind of coalesce into a message. It's so exciting. It's just so exciting.

Andy: It is. And so let's hear from Sarah:

"Sarah Walker: So I've been an interior designer for about 15 years, and I still remember the carpet supplier who said, you're like the canary in the mine. When can walk into trade showrooms and have these intuitive and quite physical reactions to products that had hidden toxins in them. So I would get dizzy and nauseous or have an instant headache or have joint muscle pain, extreme fatigue would hit me and my body became this really accurate barometer of unhealthy products. And of course, that led me to do further research and low and behold, I discovered what you both know very well, which is that just like the beauty industry, the construction and design industries are not well-regulated to guard and protect our health. And so there are tons of products that we're putting into our homes that are filled with hidden toxins that are compromising our health.

So that really led me organically down this path to becoming an expert in healthy interiors and sustainable design. And if I fast forward a little bit into my story to about five years ago, when I was diagnosed with Lyme disease, it all suddenly made sense because as you may know, Lyme disease produces a lot of biotoxins in the body. So essentially my toxic load was really high and my body was just waving the white flag and asking me not to expose myself to anything further. And in a way it was a hidden gift because it allowed me to become an expert in a space that now empowers me to help my clients design homes that are as healthy as they are beautiful.”

Andy: Right after the episode we did with Sarah we actually took a week off. And the next episode is one called Convincing the Skeptics. I love that we did these two episodes back to back like this. Listening to Sarah talk about beautiful healthy design, it was just so easy, light and happy. And then we do a show called Convincing the Skeptics. And it's about how you and I have to deal with contractors or spouses. Basically fighting with their spouse or their customer about the healthy home choices you want to make.

Jay: I think one of the techniques that we've employed in this regard is to be able to come to the table with a lot of common sense ideas. I know you use that term all the time and frankly, it's indisputable. I don't think there's very many people that would say, ah, common sense, no, I'm not interested in common sense. There's a lot of management on many fronts when you're talking about skepticism and denial. It's really interesting, and you're right. Coming off the Sarah Walker interview where it was all up and great and everything's fantastic and we're taking it, we're charging on here. And then all of a sudden, woo that put on the brakes. We need that break sound effect right now.

Andy: Maybe I can dub that in. It was a car crash. But honestly, folks, this is what we all deal with. We all deal with the skeptics. How do I convince the skeptics? And actually, as you'll hear in this next clip, it's not necessarily about convincing them with a hammer, with a cudgel, it's convincing them with logic. So let's hear about this.

“Jay: Some contractors are willing to listen. They're willing to follow directions and they're willing to learn. I always say, Hey man, learn how to do something different. You know why? Because then you'll have something else you can sell.

Andy: Right. Right. And this particular project specifically, I can tell you that I've offered, I can't tell you how many times here's my phone number. Here's my email. Please have the contractor call me. He refuses to call me. He doesn't want to learn.

Jay: Ego is in a way, he's got a big ego it's in the way.

Andy: And why should he learn something new like this? When it's in his mind, I'm never going to have anybody asks me for this again. Well, it comes down to I guess maybe what point in your career you are. If he's in the tail end of his career, maybe he doesn't care.

Jay: He doesn't care.

Andy: Now this brings up the larger topic though, of working with a contractor at the outset, you kind of have to set the table correctly. I believe that, and I've said this

before and I know it's not the nicest thing to say, but you kind of have to fib a little bit with contractors. We have a chemical sensitivity, there's certainly nothing wrong with telling somebody I'm chemically sensitive. I can't use these products. There's nothing to be ashamed about. There's no harm in anybody's pride by saying that. I believe that when you're dealing with somebody who generally doesn't know what that means and who instantly puts up their guard, when they hear chemical sensitivities and I don't like this. I don't like smells and I don't like chemicals and so forth. I'm telling my customers, okay, don't bring up chemical sensitivity. Don't say that. Just say somebody in the household has some very, very difficult health issues and they can't be around certain toxins and materials. And so we have to accommodate for that."

Andy: All right, Jay, to wrap things up for the best episodes of 2020, I think in November, yes, it was November. We did a show called Natural vs Unnatural. From a tactical standpoint, somebody like me who was kind of geeky about the about the technical aspects of building materials and chemistry and so forth. This was, again, one of my favorites. It's all about when you're choosing building materials, does it matter if it's natural or can it be synthetic or the opposite, which one's better. And I think this one was a really good answer to that question.

Jay: Yeah. It was, there's two camps of thought, right? There's the camp that says I want natural and only want natural. The other side of that is there are the synthetic products that are out there. And so there's a camp there that says, I don't really care, naturals is fine. Will it work? You know, we've always had that kind of discussion and it's not so much anymore, but back in the early days it's like, Hey, these products you make, do they really work? Are they as good as the old stuff out there? Of course we've debunked that whole thing, and those products

are as good or better than they ever have been. I think it was a good episode to talk about those differences.

Andy: We get this coming to us all the time. I'll give you one good example and then we'll listen to a clip. But the good example I'd have is somebody who is looking for an eco-friendly sustainable, healthy carpeting. And I used all those terms for a reason. There's still to this day, there is a head to head argument between the natural wool carpet, some supporters and manufacturers, and the recycled nylon supporters and manufacturers. Wool comes from sheep. You can buy carpet made here in the US from a company called Earth Weave that makes wool that's not treated with any pesticides and chemical dyes. The backing is natural hemp and jute, and is held together using natural latex. Completely synthetic free carpeting. At the end of its useful lifespan, which might be 60 or 80 years, you can literally grounded grind it up and put it in a farm field and it'll act as a food.

Yeah. Well then on the flip side, you've got the recycled content and recyclable nylon carpets where you're taking carpets that were used for 20 years. You're recycling it, respinning the fiber and making a new carpet that'll be good for the next 20 years. So between those two, what's more eco-friendly, what's more sustainable, what's healthier. Obviously from our standpoint, we would say the wool carpet is healthier, but from a sustainability standpoint, there's a lot of argument that I would say that the nylon carpet is more sustainable. In this episode, we talked about things like that. So here's an example right here:

"Andy: Safecoat paint is a synthetic, acrylic based paint, happens to be free of HAPS, hazardous ingredients. Happens to be free of chemical off gassing, happens to be the same product that's been made since 1980 that's helped hundreds of thousands of

people worldwide to be able to decorate their homes and live in it. But there's a faction of people, maybe it's 5%, that can't tolerate Safecoat. And that's not surprising. And there's also a large segment of the population who says, I just don't want to surround myself with plastics in my house if I can get away with it. So you developed the Naturals paint many years ago,

Jay: We realized that we needed it. You're speaking to the people who are wanting to stay away from the quote/unquote synthetic petrochemical. We said petrochemical world. They want to move to something that they feel is more natural, more sustainably sourced, et cetera.

Andy: Then the question comes from our customers. Well, why shouldn't I just use that if it's just as good, which it is. Great product Goes was on great. So forth. My whole house is the AFM Naturals. That's my preferred product of the two. But that all said, why wouldn't I want to use it? Well, let's remember the conversation: natural versus unnatural. The Safecoat Naturals paint actually contains natural plant oils like linseed oil, right? Linseed oil has a definitive aroma to it. Think of it like woodworking materials or even more so natural linoleum flooring, you know, Marmoleum. If you've ever been around Marmoleum, you know that it's got a very strong linseed oil smell. It is natural. It is non-toxic, but linseed oil could be a trigger either for allergies, or if you have a sensitivity to aromas, be it natural or unnatural, it could actually trigger a response."

Andy: Well Jay, you and I could talk about these episodes probably for another hour. This year we were lucky enough that we're able to get down 33, 34 episodes. We wish it would have been more folks. Honestly, it was a heck of a year, but 2021 we will be back. We're finally going

to be launching the video podcast series. With COVID and with the holidays now we've got some time to work on the infrastructure for that. Jay and I were both so excited about this.

Jay: Folks where we just want to wish you happy holidays and take care of one another out there. We're looking forward to the next year. We're going to have a lot of exciting interviews and podcasts. We hope you'll stay with us throughout the whole year. Andy's going to encourage you as I will too, was write us. We love to hear from you, throw us any difficult questions, or if you're in a position where you don't have an answer and you're looking for some help, that's what we love to do. Andy, tell them how they do that.

Andy: Well, first you can go to iTunes and go to our show Non Toxic Environments, and please take a few minutes to leave us a rating and a review. It would mean the world to us. We are actually coming up on, if you can believe it, season four Jay. I was looking at our fourth year of this podcast.

Jay: It goes by so fast.

Andy: I know, but folks, the only reason why we do this, it's fun and we love the interaction we get from our listeners. That tell us that they get a lot out of it and they enjoy it. They enjoy the conversation and folks, if you're one of those people that enjoy this and you enjoy the conversation, the only thing I can ask is if you can go to iTunes and leave us a rating and review it would do us a world of good.

We are still the most popular, healthy home show on the iTunes platform, but the healthy home segment is not very large. So while it sounds good to say, we're still a really small show and

every rating and review we get that are five star ratings and a nice review that actually helps to bump our show up on the charts so that people can see it. There's 800,000 podcasts on the iTunes platform right now. And unless you know what you're looking for, it's hard to see a show. The shows that are top rated are focused on. If our show can get up to one of those top ratings, which has been in the past, it helps people find the show and then they can pass along to their friends. So, we asked that as a personal favor for Jay and I, if you could do that, we greatly appreciate it.

Jay: We talk about family. We talked about family today, and this is what we're trying to do with trying to grow our family of listeners and people that we can count on each other for information.

Andy: You've got it. It has been an absolute pleasure to be with you all this year. Jay, it's a pleasure to have you on the podcast as co-hosts of this wonderful show

Jay: Couldn't do without you Andy!

Andy: You bet, my pleasure. Couldn't do it without you. It's been fun. It's going to continue to be so, all right, folks, we will be back with you in 2021. Take care everybody, so long everyone.