

Giving Thanks

Andy: Food on our table, a roof over our heads, and surrounded by family and friends. Of course, we're all thankful for this during this time of the year and always. This week on Non Toxic Environments, Jay and I talk about all the things we're thankful for; being in this business, in this industry, and for the customers and clients that we have.

Andy: Welcome back to Nontoxic Environments, this is Andy Pace. Jay, as always, you're with me this week and this is going to be a nice one, a little bit different for us. We wanted to, we want to give thanks, it's Thanksgiving week.

Jay: Indeed it is and we have a lot to be thankful for. I know you have probably a long, long list. It's almost like Christmastime. You make a list of the things you want for Christmas and I think at this point, at Thanksgiving time, it's nice for us to think about the folks that have mentored us along the way, situations and such that have helped us develop and grow in terms of our understanding and knowledge. Probably the most important thing is to be able to give back. These things are about giving gifts, both receiving and giving, and you and I have both gotten a lot of gifts over the years from our clients, from our vendors, from people who we trust and people who we respect. For us to be able to now kind of acknowledge that and say thank you back I think is a really nice thing to do at this time of the year.

Andy: You know it's ... Every year I find myself kind of taking stock in what happened the previous months of the year, and from year to year. As people have heard me say a hundred times already, I've been doing this for 27 years.

Jay: Yeah. You and I have been kind of on the same track here for a long time.

Andy: Exactly, and so there is a lot that I'm thankful for and I don't always get a chance to tell everybody so I'm excited about today's episode.

Jay: Yeah. I think a daily gratitude meditation is really a good thing for people to think about doing. It's as simple as waking up in the morning and just pick out somebody, I usually use a person in my morning meditation. I use that in the morning and I think about one person and I

just say, I say it to myself, thank you, thank you for whatever that person's given you. It's really ... In a way, your immune system gets fortified when you do that. When you show gratitude, at least that's what I've discovered, when I show gratitude for whatever it might be I know I get a little immune system boost and I can feel it. I can feel it. It's just like, a little bit of a glow that happens. I guess the hope is that we can maintain the glow as long as possible through the day. I know it's kind of difficult with the challenges come forward, but, starting off the day with a bit of gratitude and ending the day with a bit of gratitude is always important.

Jay: I'm going to start by saying first I'm really thankful for all these people who we've worked with over the years who are what we have called the canaries in the coal mine. These are all the chemically sensitive people, who, way back when, Andy, I know we told this story, people have heard it before. Way way back, going back to those early days, chemical sensitivity and suffering from chemical sensitivity was a mystery. It was a mystery to the medical profession, it was a mystery to the people that had it. What is making me sick? How do I get away from it?

Those people have been able to kind of give us a vision of how products should be developed. Here's the truth, folks. Everyone is chemically sensitive. People say, "I'm not chemically sensitive." Well you're not reacting to a stimuli but your body can become sensitized, that's why I say everyone is chemical sensitive. The idea is, let's not over sensitize ourselves by exposure to whatever we're exposed to.

Just that little caveat about this, that's my first thank you. Thank you everyone whose helped us gain a better understanding of the challenges of indoor air quality and how it effects our health, and the ramifications of not protecting our good health. We should all be thankful for the fact that we are blessed with good health.

Andy: Everyone wants to maintain that. You know, I think it will be fun on this podcast, Jay, a little back and forth on this. You know, obviously you and I are going to have very similar things to talk about and so, when you say thankful for canaries in the mineshaft, I also agree with that, and to this day that's who I turn to to get information about what would be a proper product to actually recommend to somebody.

Where the whole industry looks at Green Guard and Green Seal and LEED, and all these other certification programs, the gatekeepers, as we've talked about before. Who do we look at? We look at our customers.

Jay: Yeah, it's just, those other metrics just aren't personal enough, are they?

Andy: Not at all. Look at, if I need to recommend a product to a certain situation, I flip back through the encyclopedia in my head, and I say, over the last so many years, most people who I've worked with were able to use this particular product because of these reasons. I know this, not because of some scientific study, what we may have on some of the product. I know this because the most sensitive people that I've ever worked with were able to tolerate this, and that's why it's better for everybody. I, too, am thankful for having that knowledge base at our disposal.

Jay: Yeah. I'm going to also include in this group, not the chemically sensitive, obviously, but I'm going to include all the people who have discovered that eco home, healthy home building makes so much sense. That would be the interior designers of the world, the architects of the world. Any of the specifiers who have had the vision to understand how important healthy home, healthy office, healthy, you name it, building is to everyone.

Andy: This is a group that's becoming larger on an annual basis. For the first part of this industry, the infancy stages of it, the architects and builders and designers kind of, not only ignored it, but they sold against it because they didn't see the value. That is changing rapidly, we're finally getting professionals that understand that there is a difference between green and healthy. They're becoming some of our biggest advocates.

Jay: Right. Let's put a thank you out to some of the contractors that have adopted the processes. We've talked about the contracting world and how at times, they seem like they're a little stuck in the mud when it comes to embracing these ideas, but there are more and more of the contractors now who are seeing the light, recognizing this is a smart way to go. Hopefully, not that we expect them to 100% adopt what we talk about, at least have it as a part of the discussion when they're working with their clients. We've said this before, if they do that, there's a couple good things going on with that idea. One, they're going to be able to get

business that they might not be able to get, or they would lose to someone else who is paying attention to these issues. Secondly, this is personal, just for their own personal health. To be able to have longevity in what they're doing, because they've now decided that they're not going to expose themselves to whatever they've been building with. For those contractors who have seen the light, we're thankful for that.

Andy: And I would say, add this to that, Jay. The contractors who have embraced this... at least on a job-to-job basis, or fully, what that does is that adds legitimacy to what we're doing. Contractors are the ones who are in peoples' homes, they're the ones disrupting the life of our customers. They're the ones that consumers look to as the experts. Whether they are or they aren't in product, they are certainly in what they do. If a contractor puts their stamp of approval on this, then it adds legitimacy to the entire industry.

Jay: It completely does, and that's really important because they do have a very powerful position in front of a client. They've come in with this whole resume, I've been working for 30 years, I know that I'm doing. I'm an expert here and I'm an expert there. The client's buying that. Okay, I'm going to trust what you tell me what you're going to do, and that you'll follow through with what you're going to do. Yeah, they're in a very powerful position.

Andy: I look at Jen and Russ down in Texas with JS2 partners. Our healthy home builders down in Texas. That adds legitimacy. People see that a mainstream construction company is now promoting and building healthy homes? It's one thing to have Jay and Andy from Non Toxic Environments talk about this, but to have a legitimate construction company making this their mission now? Huge huge improvement.

Jay: How about our folks who are going to build in Florida?

Andy: Oh, exactly. To see that ...

Jay: Healthy Vacation Club.

Andy: Yeah, Emily and Ben. They're going to be building healthy rental, vacation rentals. Again, adding legitimacy, not only to our industry but to the reasonings of why we actually need this.

Jay: And by the way folks, just mentioning those two projects, we're going to have a whole lot to talk about in the coming year as these projects unfold. You'll want to stay tuned for those, because it's some exciting things going on.

Andy: Oh, for sure.

Jay: We're hoping that this is just the beginning of a whole lot of exciting projects across the country.

Andy: Exactly. I want to piggyback to your theme so far of these 'thank you's'. You're thanking a lot of people. You know who I want to thank is, I want to thank some of the pioneers in this industry. I want to thank those who really brought attention to chemical sensitivity, to sick building syndrome, then to the solutions to these issues. People like Dr. Rea down in Texas, who, folks, if you didn't know Dr. Rea ... and he just passed this past fall. Just a huge huge loss to our world ... his personality and his knowledge is going to be very difficult to replace. He was with the American Environmental Health Foundation down in Dallas, Texas. Dr. Rea ... Theron Randolph in Illinois many years ago was one of the early physicians to promote the idea of chemical sensitivities. Then you have people like Cedar Rose out in Colorado who started a company called Building for Health back in 1985. I have had the pleasure of knowing her and working with her and carrying her name on with our GDC Building for Health, now that she's retired. Tommy Lyle in, what is it, Nashville?

Jay: Yeah, he was in Tennessee. Knoxville. He was in Knoxville, Tennessee. He and his wife.

Andy: Yep, so their company was called Allergy Relief Shop. Stephen Kopacki, right? Stephen Kopacki up in Michigan. Traverse City.. Michigan, Energy and Environmental Concepts.

Jay: Correct. Correct.

Andy: What are some other ...

Jay: These are all standard bearers for the whole movement, everybody. I'm thinking some of our published friends like Paula Baker Laporte and John Bower. The other one I've really been impacted by is Dr. Doris Rapp. She's a pediatrician, everybody. She's really built her reputation around trying to help us understand how we can protect our children in schools and at home. She's a real visionary there. I'm thinking of, there's a fellow in Colorado ... well I don't know if he's in Colorado now, but I've crossed paths with him several times during the course of the years and I've always been impressed by his vision and his ability to articulate. That's David Johnson from West Working.

Andy: I thought you'd bring him up, yep.

Jay: Yeah, talk about someone who's no nonsense and clear-eyed about it and able to articulate it in a very common sense way. Andy and I are very big on the whole two word common sense idea. There's a lot of common sense coming out of what's working with David Johnson.

Andy: Yeah, he's fantastic. Folks, we'll have show notes on this and I'll put some links in there to a lot of the books that these individuals have written. Paula Baker Laporte, David Johnson, John Bower. I have the pleasure of knowing John Bower, he's a customer of mine. He reached out a couple years ago to buy some product for a project and he's still with us. He actually owns a photography studio in Indiana and it always ... John Bowers was one of the best visionaries from my standpoint, from the fact that John found a problem, which was his wife had extreme chemical sensitivities, and he decided to build a house for her.

It worked out so well that he wrote a book and he decided to help others do the same thing. He's no longer in the business but I can't tell you the impact that he had for somebody like me. I came from commercial construction and found that there was a problem with the toxins found in traditional building materials. That's when I found people like John Bower and Paula Baker Laporte, and others who are really ... I'm so thankful for that these are the true visionaries in our industry.

Jay: Yes, I want to say a thank you to all the folks that ... all the product folks that provide these products. There's hundreds of products. Products that Andy represents, products that I

represent, products that we don't represent that are just really phenomenal. It's just a part of this overall movement to healthier living. I think one of the other things that I'm going to be thankful for ... this is kind of a two-edged sword. We have to be thankful that the information highway has opened up this whole new world of understanding these problems.

Andy: That's true. You can always say that 50% of what you read online is inaccurate, but the fact that it's out there, it's at our fingertips, it allows people to do their own research, at least what they can do. Then to find us, we wouldn't be here doing this podcast if it wasn't for that mechanism.

Jay: That is correct, that's right.

Andy: I want to go back to what you said about the manufacturers. From my standpoint, Jay, when I started this, I had one manufacturer when I first started selling healthy building materials, and that was AFM. 1992. By the end of 1993, I had two manufacturers. I had AFM and I had a company called Forbo, and they make the Marmoluem product. Fast forward to 2018. I have over 150 suppliers. I have over 7,000 product at my disposal.

Jay: It's mind blowing. Mind blowing.

Andy: It is, and what I'm truly thankful for is not the fact that we have vast quantities of product, I am thankful that we have manufacturers who truly see this as something that they need to do. Companies like AFM, yes ... AFM is the grandfather of this industry when it comes to healthy finishes.

Jay: One of them, absolutely. Correct.

Andy: One of them. Yeah, but companies unrelated, like a company called Caliwel, who makes a product that kills mold and keeps it from coming back for up to five years and it does it using completely toxin free ingredients. I'm thankful that there's a manufacturer out there that found that there's a problem with mold and invented a product to fix that problem, and they're doing it using products that are non harmful to humans.

Jay: I'm thankful that you can keep 7,000 products in your head.

Andy: Yeah, I will second that thank. It's becoming more and more difficult, I'll say that.

Jay: Well, yeah, I would think so. You've only got so much room up there, brain cell room, right?

Andy: Right. So yes, I'm very thankful for the manufacturers who are committing themselves to making healthier choices for consumers. I think that this particular genre of product is now expanding far more than I ever thought possible. Back in the mid 90's, I remember telling customers that the environmental myths, that green products are more expensive, they're harder to find.. they don't work ...they don't have the choices available. Back in the early to mid 90's that was pretty much the case for all of those. But now, those are just complete myths. There's a healthier alternative for just about anything inside the home. Not only is it just an alternative that's healthy, but it's also ascetically pleasing, meets your price point, easy to find, easy to install, there's really very few things inside of a home that we cannot find a complete replacement for, for whatever you're looking for.

Jay: You know, what a change. What a change that's been, such a beneficial change here, everyone. You know, Andy, I've pretty much gotten trough my list of thank you's, if I thought about it a little longer it would probably get really really long, but I know we've got a time thing here.

Andy: Well, we do. It's a holiday week, so we're going to wrap things up pretty quickly, but the last thing I want to say, Jay, is I'm thankful that we finally have this voice.

Jay: Yes, me too.

Andy: This podcast has ... let's face it, folks. I'm not a professional speaker. Jay is actually a professional speaker, and you can tell.

Jay: No, not really, I have intentions of trying to be a professional speaker.

Andy: Well, he has the professional voice.

Jay: Well, so do you.

Andy: I have professional equipment that makes me sound good, but I'm very happy that we finally have this voice where I feel like we can talk to people. It's like we're in their living room and for so many years, customers have told us that, "if you could just talk to everybody, people would agree and understand and do something that's positive in their home." We finally have that voice, that's this podcast, Non Toxic Environments. Again, it's not possible without all of our listeners who have reached out.

Jay: Right, reached out and continue to reach out. We couldn't wouldn't be able to give you what we believe you really want to know about unless we have that back and forth with you. That feedback, that back and forth. Folks, we're not afraid to be called out either. If you hear something and you want to challenge us about what you're hearing, please bring it on. Andy and I want to be as open and transparent about everything we talk about, and if there's something you don't understand, or something you think is not exactly right, or you need us to articulate that a little differently so people understand it better, you yourself, then please by all means, let us know.

Andy: No, I love that, really. Neither one of us profess to be the end-all be-all experts in everything we talk about. We want to bring this information to folks, and let's make it an open dialogue. Matter-of-fact, one of the things that Jay and I will be working on for next year is, we want to start doing a show maybe once a month, and do it live. We're going to do some Facebook live shows, where we can actually have people interact with us in realtime right through the Facebook group and Jay and I can answer questions. We can have conversations with our listeners. We're always looking for suggestions on how to make this show better and what more we can do to solve these issues that you have in your own home.

Jay: I second that motion.

Andy: Excellent. Alright. Alright, folks. With that, we're going to let you get back to cooking your turkey and enjoying time with family and friends. This is the time of year where we all kind

of sit back and hopefully are thankful for the things that we do have in life. Jay, I'm thankful that you're with me on this journey. Thank you so much.

Jay: Thank you, Andy. I agree completely. Folks, Happy Thanksgiving to you all. Rest, rest is really important this time of year. Rest up, enjoy family and friends, be kind to yourself.

Andy: That's a great message to end on. Thank you all, take care. Bye.