

Healthy Home Build...In Their Own Words

Andy Pace:

Hello and welcome to Non Toxic Environments, your source of information for healthy home building and remodeling and common sense solutions for everyday home repair issues. This is your host, Andy Pace. Thanks for listening.

Well, hello everyone. It has been a few weeks. I apologize for that, but I am glad to be back here with you today. And I'm really glad to share this topic with you. I've been doing this consulting thing for many, many years, working with folks trying to build healthier homes. And it has come to my attention that many people who are interested in doing this are just a little bit shy of starting the process because they don't know what they don't know. They don't know the problems and the procedures and so forth. And that's of course what I helped them through, but I thought it would be a good idea in the next month or two or who knows, to interview some of my past clients and to let you hear in their words, what the process was like, the good, the bad, the ugly. We actually want to hear all about it. We're interested in knowing what their goals were. Do they meet those goals? How was it working with the local builders and so forth?

Andy Pace:

And so today will be the first episode of hopefully many in the next few months, talking with previous customers. And we'll try to get a variety of projects for us to hear about, but today is a client of mine, Kari in Minnesota. And I started working

Non Toxic Environments

with Kari and her family two and a half, three years ago. And they moved into their home a little over a month or so ago. So it's been a process, but it was a great project because it was from start to finish, from design conceptualizing all the way through the finished project. So I'm here with Kari, one of our clients, and Kari, I think I started working with you probably two and a half years ago, maybe.

Kari:

I think so. Yes.

Andy Pace:

And that was when you were just planning, you decided that you wanted to build a home. You wanted to build a healthy home and you and I connected. And we had our first call about two and a half years ago. So let me ask you, kind of broad question, but what was the main reason why you wanted to build a healthy home?

Kari:

Well, I was diagnosed with Hashimoto's thyroiditis about 18 years ago and about, I don't know, seven years ago or so I was having some different symptoms and I just started digging more and researching more about it. And I got connected with some functional medicine practitioners and I was just doing a ton of digging to try to find out, well, what is the root cause of this? And I was listening to lots of different summits, things like that. I came across, I was listening to the Toxic Home Transformation. And that's where I heard an interview with you, that was being done with you, Andy. And so, that was a while ago.

Kari:

And then when we were deciding we would want to build, at some point we wanted to move into the country if we could and build a home. I'm married and have three boys. And so in digging into all of that health, just my health issues that I was having, symptoms, things like that. And the Hashimoto's, I was discovering all the different things that can impact and that can be triggers or causes to different health issues. And I started doing a lot of different things in our home, making changes with cleaning products, all kinds of things because I wanted to make it be the healthiest I could make it be for myself because I had that health issue, as well as to prevent anything from the rest of my family. And so, that always stuck in the back of my mind as I had heard the interview with you, Andy and when we decided to move forward with building, I talked with my husband about it and that's how we got connected.

Andy Pace:

Interesting to bring up Hashimoto's, I have Hashimoto's as well. And it seems like when you have Hashimoto's you, sort of, I don't know, at least in my world, ever since I've been diagnosed, I've met a number of people who also have it.

Kari:

Yes.

Andy Pace:

Non Toxic Environments

And otherwise I never would've heard of it. But it is interesting in that all the things you need to avoid and it affects my health on a daily basis and so I can see why wanting to build a healthy home was such a desirable thing, to have that healthy space to get home to every night and heal from what has bombarded you throughout the rest of the day.

Kari:

Correct. Yes.

Andy Pace:

So I remember when we first got together, I think you already had a builder either under contract or you knew the one you wanted to work with. And I don't recall at the time, was your builder familiar with the concept of healthy home building at that time or did you and I basically teach them how to do it?

Kari:

Yeah. They hadn't worked with anyone pursuing this that I knew of. So it was new to them. We had a builder, actually friends of ours, the builder is a friend of ours. And so then I obviously shared this with him and the rest of his team to find out, would you be willing to pursue this with us and work with you, Andy? So no, they didn't have a lot of experience.

Andy Pace:

Non Toxic Environments

From my perspective, they were great to work with. And for anybody listening, if you're up in Minnesota and you're looking for a builder, please reach out to me, I'll be happy to pass along contact information. I work with builders all over the country and I can tell you that the ones who are used to building custom homes, and I say this all the time, if they're custom home builder, and they're used to having clients with very specific recommendations, those are the builders who can build a healthy home, at least that I can work with to help build a healthy home because they'll follow directions. I'm not necessarily teaching them how to build, I'm giving them other ways to do it, utilizing their skill sets and just some other recommendations just to make it an overall healthier project. And they were just fantastic to work with.

Kari:

Yes. I felt like they wanted to accommodate what we wanted. There were things that, just working with all the different contractors, some things that they hadn't necessarily worked with before but they were willing, they were willing to do what we wanted to do and then even share that they hadn't worked with this. So, then they couldn't say they would, like paint, for instance, [they] couldn't say, I don't know what this is going to [be] like touching up, or what will happen to on the road or things like that. Or even estimating to get the paint. They just wanted to be conservative, they were really good about that, not wanting to have me order too much or this or that, but we're really good with it. And the neat thing is I did hear some things like, "Well, this applied really well," or some different things like that.

Non Toxic Environments

But then there were some things that they're like, "Well, this didn't work how I wanted," but they were open, which I really appreciated.

Andy Pace:

Yeah. I would say that from my perspective, they asked the tough questions that they needed to ask, that I was hoping they'd ask. Working with builders is always a bit precarious because I don't necessarily want to question what they do because they're experts. They know how to build a home. On the other hand, I need to get them to a point where they have to ask for assistance or ask for a recommendation because it's just the dynamics that are created in working with builders. If I tell them, here's what you should do, that doesn't come across as them asking me, what should we do in this situation? I give them an answer. And so they're more willing to accept an answer and accept that recommendation if they're the ones reaching out to get it. They were very fair with that. They asked a lot of questions up front and I think in the long run, that was the difference in making this project go so smoothly.

Kari:

Definitely.

Andy Pace:

So we talked about smooth. What was the biggest challenge of the project for you?

Kari:

Non Toxic Environments

Gosh, I was thinking about that and I guess I don't know, the thing that stuck out the most at the time right now was just me wanting to stay on top of all the details, wanting to make sure that they knew they need to do this or this, or, because it was an unfamiliar territory for them. I'm a perfectionist. So just worrying about all those details, I guess. And so I would go back and ask the project manager, because we had a lot of notes obviously and Andy, you were awesome because I had so many questions and I know I repeated the questions multiple times because learning the answers and I learned so much. And I thought it was great too, that they would say, "Well, you might want to check with Andy on this," because they knew that's what we wanted and they weren't sure. Kind of back to your other statement earlier.

Kari:

I think that is the main thing is me worrying about- did they get all those details that were talked about? And our project manager was great. Because a lot of times I would ask him and he'd like, yep. He would go back to his notes or whatever, or he would check. So yeah, I guess it was probably more on me just being concerned that everything was going to get done how we wanted it done.

Andy Pace:

I can imagine. Building a home, even if you're not involved in building a custom home, you're a ball of anxiety. Imagine then having to choose each and every product that goes in and then the fear factor, the fear of the unknown, the fear of did they do it actually this way, did they install it properly? Did they use the right

Non Toxic Environments

materials for installation? And there's a huge trust factor that needs to be developed with you and your builder and the subs and suppliers. And obviously in this case with me in the consultation process, at some point it's like this whole team has got to be in it together.

Andy Pace:

And that's one thing I have a hard time with, with a lot of new clients, is that getting them to the point where they feel educated enough themselves, that they can now stand up and ask a question to the build team and come across as being serious about it, but not being overly worried. Some customers just worry about everything and at some point the team starts to roll their eyes a little bit like, oh boy, what about this? What about that? But you have serious concerns. And I remember through the process, the questions that you were asking were very valid.

Andy Pace:

And at some point I forget what the topic was, but I think there was even like, you know what, we never even thought of that. And so I tell people every day that I've been doing this for 30 years, but I learn from my clients and I learn every day about projects and the more that I do and then the more that I work with clients like you, the more that I can help the next client that comes to the door. And so it's, these are always so valuable for me as well.

Andy Pace:

So you've been in the home now for a couple of months?

Kari:

Yes.

Andy Pace:

Okay. So I guess the million dollar question, if you had to do it again, would you?

Kari:

I would. Yes, I would. I have all that experience and under my belt, so to speak, so I would probably feel a little bit more confident going into it.

Andy Pace:

Excellent.

Kari:

I probably would still be calling you and asking you tons of questions because there's always things that come up. And again, I do have to thank you, Andy. Because you were great because I know I had a million questions.

Andy Pace:

Yeah. That's all right. The more, the better. You have to get it out there. But I asked that question about doing it again because so many people I've talked to over the years in this industry, they would say, "Oh yeah, my husband and I built a home 20 years ago. We never want to go through that again." And honestly my goal at the

Non Toxic Environments

end of these projects and I've done probably over a hundred homes now across the country, my goal at the end is to have a client that says, "Honestly it was a process. It was difficult, but I'd definitely do it again if need be." And I already have some clients right now who are working on their second home and in one case their third home because the more they do it, the more they understand and they feel empowered that every time they do it, they can do it even better.

Kari:

Sure. Yep. I would agree.

Andy Pace:

So that is wonderful to hear.

Kari:

I would agree with that. It was hard. It was difficult. There were times, just all the decisions that are being thrown at you and then wanting to make sure that they're in alignment with what you're trying to do from a healthy home perspective and not rushing something, things like that.

Kari:

We even had an issue where there was some water that got in and emits [sic] the process and our builder was great. Because I even said to my husband, I said, "This is why we're doing this, so we don't have things like this happen where there's mold that can grow and things like that." And they were great. They're like, "Whatever

Non Toxic Environments

you want us to do, if you want us to rip it out, open it up." Things like that, "whatever it takes" type thing. And so they did. They did what we wanted to do. And in that case it was, it was like, "Yep, I want it opened up." I wanted to make sure there's no water, there's no mold growing. So yeah, the process was hard at times, but the end product is great and I learned a lot and you helped me learn so much.

Andy Pace:

Thank you.

Kari:

I appreciate it.

Andy Pace:

Of course, it's my pleasure. And so this just proves that, and I've said this a thousand times in this show, there is no perfect project. Every project you're going to have some adversity through it. And I believe that starting early in the process, you and I started working together during the design phase of the project before the first shovel got in the ground and the quicker we can get at that and get the entire design and build team on the same page, the better it is towards the end. And that's why I believe your builder was so, so kind to say, "Hey, anything you want us to do, we'll take care of that situation." Because by then, two years into this process, they understand how important it was for you to live in a healthy

Non Toxic Environments

home. And they feel responsible and so that's why you want to get started with them so early.

Kari:

Right.

Andy Pace:

Fantastic. Well, Kari, I can't tell you how wonderful it is to have you on the show and to talk to our listeners about your project. I think that a lot of times people's hesitation in moving forward is just not knowing enough about how the process works and it really helps to hear from an actual homeowner in their own words on how the project went. So thank you so much.

Kari:

Thank you, Andy.

Andy Pace:

So I know I've said this before, but it really makes a difference having a contractor who is 100% behind the project. A contractor and a design team and a build team, including all the subs and suppliers that just get it. They understand the fact that this is a project that requires complete transparency and precision. And Kari and her family were just lucky to find that contractor so quickly. And it made the project run that smooth. And as you heard from her, it was just so nice to have really no

Non Toxic Environments

worries about that throughout the project. So thank you for coming onto the show, Kari, we greatly appreciate it.

Andy Pace:

And everybody else, thank you for listening. I really hope you got out of it what I was intending. Intending to teach people or to give people hope that if others can do it, you can do it too. So I appreciate you listening to Non Toxic Environments today. We'll be back again soon with another episode. And please let everybody know about Non Toxic Environments through your clicks and likes and shares. And we hope to hear from you soon. Take care, everyone.