

The Green Notebook

Keeping a Healthy Home

I just read an interview with Annie B. Bond, named one of the top 20 environmental leaders by *Body + Soul* magazine—she is a green living expert. I was inspired to share some of her tips and thoughts as she got me thinking about the products I use in my own home.

As executive producer of Care2.com's Green Living channels, Bond keeps a non-toxic home and explains how that has enriched her life, protected her family and propelled her into the green spotlight. The interview I read was featured in Co-op America's Spring 2008 Quarterly magazine with the theme of Heal Your Home.

Having dealt with severe chemical exposure in the early '80s through her work and her landlord using a toxic pesticide, she describes her philosophy of dramatically reducing toxin exposure using a barrel analogy. She explains, "Imagine everything you breathe going into a barrel. Ultimately, what happened to me is that my barrel filled up and overflowed because I was exposed to too much. So if you see it that way, everything makes a difference. Every little bit of chemicals that you don't use helps keep your barrel from overflowing."

Author of four books: *Home Enlightenment* (Rodale Press, 2005), *Better Basics for the Home* (Three Rivers Press, 1999), *Clean & Green* (Ceres Press, 1990) and *The Green Kitchen Handbook* (HarperCollins, 1997), Bond promotes staying connected to nature and working with the natural world.

"A perfect example is linen. Imagine a hot August day—linen works with your body, lets your body breathe, and wicks moisture away, as opposed to polyester, which just feels like a plastic bag," she says in the Co-op article entitled Answers from the Experts. "It's a totally different experience when you work with nature as opposed to against it, and you have natural materials as your allies."

Her first recommendation in helping people make their homes a sanctuary against our toxic world is to stop any pesticide use anywhere outside or inside your house. If that is out of your control because you rent, check with your landlord or consider moving. Second, she recommends swapping your commercial cleaning products for natural products. Definitely toss anything with the word "caution" on the label, she says. And third, Bond encourages people to stop using anything with synthetic perfumes. If something says "fragrance" in the ingredients list, that's almost a dead giveaway that it's synthetic, she says. This guideline will help steer you towards more natural personal care products. I couldn't agree with her more.

In the same "Heal Your Home" issue, an article entitled "Should We Tolerate Toxic Cleaners at Work?" also caught my eye. It stated that the industrial-strength cleaners used in many offices are a danger to your health and are especially hazardous to the 4 million janitors in North America who are exposed to them all day, every day on the job. There are many alternatives to these harsh, we just need to be aware!

According to Co-op America, to protect children, who are more vulnerable to toxic chemicals than adults, it's especially important that schools and day cares make the switch to green cleaners. For more on how schools can do so and for resources that can make schools and offices safer and greener for everyone, especially janitors, see Co-op America's Web exclusive at www.coopamerica.org/go/healyourhome.

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