

## Loving yourself no matter what

As we continue in our review of Marcie Shimmoff's book, "Love for No Reason. Seven Steps to Creating a Life of Unconditional Love," our next step is to understand unconditional self-love. Back here in Chatham County, the Stress Monster is having a field day with this idea. His beady eyes gleaming, his derisive smile taunting, drooling with satisfaction, he raves on. "Who do you think you are? Too stuck up for your own good. Too high and mighty. Pride goeth before a fall." Don't let the Stress Monster take you down. I encourage you to try the Phillips strategy for defeating the Stress Monster. Hold up a mirror so he can see himself. He'll scream and disappear because he really doesn't love or even like himself.

Can YOU look in a mirror and love yourself unconditionally? Can you feel happiness and joy as you look into your heart? Most of us can't. Somewhere along the path of our lives we've been taught or taunted with the same ideas the Stress Monster expressed above. But yet, shouldn't we love ourselves as we love our neighbor? Shouldn't we be able to give and receive love to

ourselves and others? By definition there's only one path to self love: you must love yourself because you are the only candidate. Many people are worried that self-love is selfish or narcissistic. If you are concerned about this issue, please review a recent article I wrote about the difference between self-love and narcissism. Narcissists really don't love themselves or others.

Most of us realize that we don't love ourselves unconditionally. These days most people walk around with lowered feelings of self-esteem. I teach people to identify their self doubts and judgments and realize that they are relayed within by an "Internal Critic" unfortunately taught us by parents, teachers and others who feel that criticism and guilt build character. I teach that everyone must learn to love themselves and others by casting away negative judgments. It is very true that people who judge themselves harshly also judge others in the same manner, while self love radiates empathy and compassion to others. If we truly manifest unconditional love, we can survive life challenges with equanimity and a positive spirit.

Some people learn to love themselves based upon the feedback they receive from others. They bask in pride when praised or when they can surround themselves with the trappings of success. But this is conditional, not unconditional, self-love. Self acceptance based upon external achievements is ephemeral as conditions of life change. The need to chase the brass ring leaves us anxious, hollow and unsatisfied.

An important step to unconditional self-love is learning to accept and love the unlovable in yourself, being kind to yourself in situations where you usually have been harsh. A strategy to accomplish this can be called "the best friend technique." In other words, if your best friend just made a mistake or perhaps displayed an unlovable characteristic and asks you for support, wouldn't you meet this request with loving compassion, helping your friend understand the problem and move toward resolution? Okay so let's do this for yourself. When you are down, talk to yourself as if you were your own best friend and move from self criticism to self compassion. If you continue to experience negative judgments toward yourself, you can also consult the articles on self-esteem in the Reading Room section of my website.

### Advice Line

by Dr. Betty Phillips



In the next article of this series we'll discuss the heart center which generates unconditional love. If you continue to be plagued by feelings of self-doubt and negative judgments which block your self-love, consider this technique. Start by generating a feeling of love in your heart for anything or anyone: your child, your pet, your friend, your flowers, a beautiful sunset, whatever, then let those warm feelings radiate from your heart throughout your body, consciously enveloping yourself in that feeling of unconditional love. Each time you are able to do that you will be banishing the Stress Monster from your life. When we walk around with loving feelings the Stress Monster will shriek and run away back into his gloom and doom.

As a final thought, consider these wise words: "A loving person lives in a loving world. A hostile person lives in a hostile world. Everyone you meet is your mirror." (Ken Keyes)

## Toxic chemicals you should avoid

By Shawn Huber

Local business owner and native to Pittsboro, Megan Huber has been busy raising her 18 month old. While pregnant, she began to think about issues far more important than getting her pre-baby body back.

When the former high school business education teacher was pregnant, she conducted research on how to create a safer environment for her baby. And she didn't like what she learned. In fact, she was devastated.

"I was shocked," says the 29-year-old first-time mom. "There are so many toxic chemicals — not just obvious ones like bleach — in crib mattresses and baby shampoo that are known and proven to be harmful to people's health."

As a result of the skin to weight ratio of a baby, these chemicals are even more harmful to children.

"There are 80,000 chemicals in consumer products — chemicals that frankly haven't been tested," Megan says. In fact, now that she's "educated" herself, the mom and business owner has even changed her home cleaning as well as beauty and hygiene routine.

"My daughter, Brighton, is big on picking up any beauty product in my bathroom and touching, smelling, and tasting them. We use non-toxic make-up, organic home cleaning products, deodorant, lotion, body soap, toothpaste, and baby products. I try to use as much non-toxic products as possible", she says.

Dr. Steve Chaney, a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics and the Department of Nutrition at UNC says Megan is on the right path toward minimizing her family's exposure to toxic chemicals.

"The prevalence of childhood asthma increased 74 percent between 1980 and 1994 and has continued to increase in the years since. The causes of this rapid increase in asthma prevalence are likely to be complex, but evidence has accumulated in recent years that some of the increase may be caused by early exposure to toxic chemical fumes in the home", says Dr. Chaney.

"I'd like to focus on one particularly good study on this topic that was published a few years ago in the European Respiratory Journal (31: 547-554, 2008). This study measured the household chemical exposure of 7,162 pregnant women in England and looked at the incidence of asthma in their children at age 8.5 years. A maternal composite household chemical exposure (CHCE) score was derived by measuring the pregnant mother's exposure to a number of common household products known to contain toxic chemicals. The household products used most frequently were disinfectants (87.4%), bleach (84.8%), aerosols (71.7%), air fresheners (68%), window cleaners (60.5%), carpet cleaners (35.3%) and pesticides/insecticides (21.2%). (For information on the toxic chemicals in these and other common household products visit: <http://www.householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov/products.htm>)

"Asthma was quantified based on persistent wheezing (reported by the parents) and several lung function tests that were administered at age 8.5 years. To make sure that the asthma was not caused by simple allergies, the children were also given a skin prick test against a panel of 6 common childhood allergens (house dust mites, cats, mixed grass, mixed nuts, peanuts and milk). The study also controlled for confounding variables, such as exposure to tobacco

smoke, damp housing, pets in the home and maternal history of asthma."

"Higher household chemical exposure during pregnancy was associated with a 41 percent increase in childhood asthma in children with no known allergies."

So which chemicals should you avoid, whether you're of child-bearing age, pregnant or already a mom? Here's the scoop from Megan.

• **Brominated flame retardants (PBDEs):** These are synthetic chemicals added to mattresses, furniture, carpets and computers to reduce flammability. The problem is, they are very toxic, especially to the infant brain.

• **Phthalates:** When it comes to baby shampoo, Megan avoids these endocrine disrupters, which are found in many cosmetics. Phthalates have been found to cause disordered behavior among babies exposed in the womb.

• **Petroleum or anything derivative of petroleum-based products:** As for petroleum, Megan is basically minimizing the use of plastics in her life, as most plastics are based

on petroleum.

• **Bleach:** Using chlorine bleach, cleaning sprays and disinfectants more than once a week is linked to asthma.

• **Formaldehyde:** Formaldehyde is a toxic chemical used as a cleaner as well as in new plywood and wallboards. Like bleach, it's a respiratory irritant and it's also carcinogenic.

• **Pesticides:** Pregnant women should avoid pesticides, which are toxic to brain development.

• **Bisphenol A (BPA):** BPA, the synthetic estrogen linked to cancer and abnormal brain development, is found in plastic baby bottles. To avoid BPA, steer clear of plastics that have #3 and #7 on them and beware of canned foods.

The best time to make these changes? Before you even think about trying to have a baby. Changing brands can simply change your life.

Shawn Huber, a personal trainer with 20 years of experience in the health and wellness industry, is Megan's husband. He can be reached at [shawn@structuredfreedom.com](mailto:shawn@structuredfreedom.com) or 919.824.3530.

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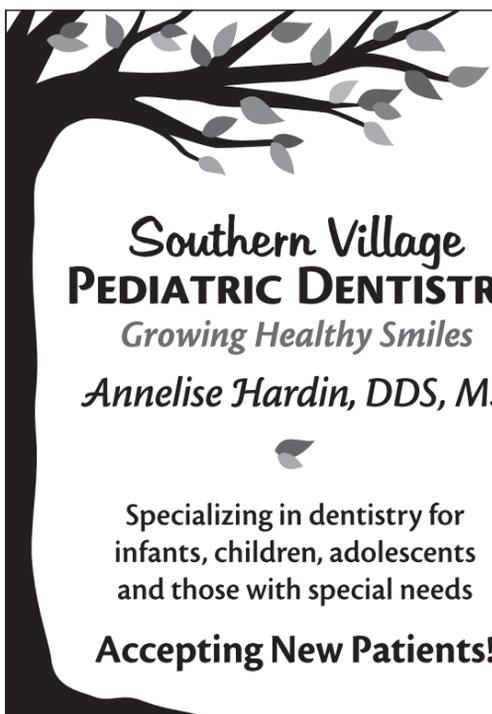
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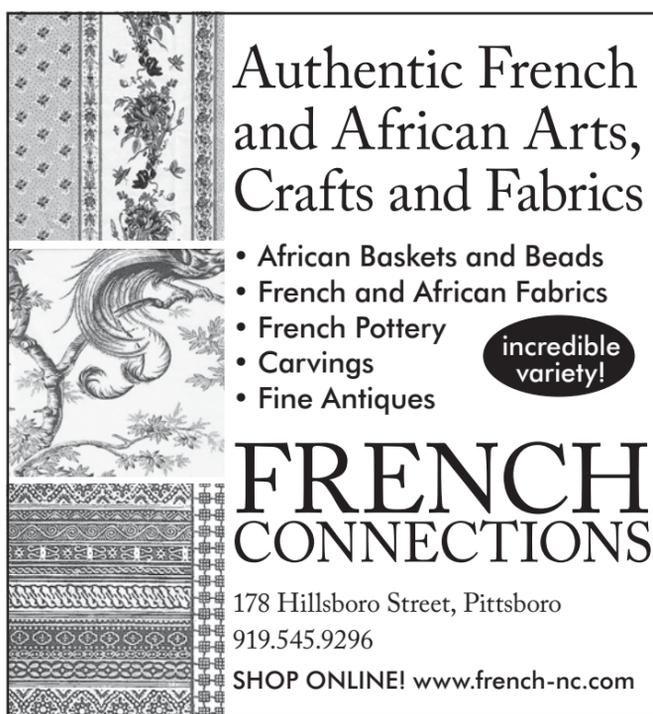


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