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**2015 5.19 Health Matters  
Body and Soul 1**

**This is Health Matters. And today we're launching a**

**new series -- *Body and Soul* -- that will discuss the links between mainstream living, personal health & communityhealth*.* Our reports on breaking health stories will continue, with *Body and Soul* episodes interspersed every now and then.**

**The Irish scholar and poet John O'Donohue once said the soul is not in the body, the body is in the soul. This insight, which has a lot of relevance for modern civilization, may not come as a revelation to Native Americans. Indigenous people around the world have always known that all beings are related to one another. And that our communities exist within a Spirit body that extends from the depths of earth through every living thing to the far reaches of the universe.**

**When we look at health issues in this context, it's easy to see that the expanding health crises in communities around the world -- from viral epidemics to cancer and disease -- parallel a worldwide breakdown of communal cohesion.**

**Take toxics, which we've discussed many times --toxics in the food supply, in beauty products, in lawn and garden products, in carpeting, upholstery and plastics.Toxics illustrate how human industry that ignores the natural world -- the spirit of nature -- is, inevitably, toxic and destructive.**

**42 billion pounds of chemicals are manufactured or brought in the U.S. every day. All of us come into contact with toxins every day -- either low-level or high level, or both. People with all natural houses surrounded by all natural implements of living only exist in remote rainforests, jungles or mountain tops.**

**So the caution for the rest of us is: be a careful consumer. Don't buy products that will contaminate your home. Try to eat organic. If you can't afford organic food, or grow your own garden, wash your store produce well. The tough truth is many of us can't afford organic food. We can't afford to throw out the furniture made with formaldehyde and other chemicals. That's why impoverished communities suffer the worst health impacts from toxins.**

**Scientists have been studying the impact of overexposure to toxins for years -- in the workplace and in communities near toxic sites. But recently two scientists took a look at low-level exposure to the toxins of everyday life. First they had samples of their blood and urine lab-tested for toxins. Then they shut themselves up in a condo for two days surrounded by everyday consumer products.**

**Things like couches, shower curtains, skillets, shampoo, carpets. Nothing out of the ordinary. Just stuff we live with every day. After two days, they had blood and urine samples tested again. One of the men increased his phthalate (THAY-late) level by 22 times, his bisphenol A (BIS-fen-ol) level by 7.5 times and his triclosan (TRICK-lo-san) level 2,900 times. That's right. 2,900 times higher. Dangerous chemicals all.**

**No one living in the U.S. has a body free of toxins. The question is, what can we do about this? What strikes me about the two men who shut themselves up in a condo is that they spent two days entirely indoors. Surrounded by stuff off-gassing toxins.**

**With Spring underway and Summer around the corner, it means that we could spend more time outdoors. Is this a simple, do-able way to reduce exposure to home toxins? Spend lots more time outside? Soak up some sun-rays. Sit by the river. Take a vigorous walk. Shoo the kids outside and then stay right out there with them, tending a garden perhaps.**

**Or walk over to check on elderly neighbors. Encourage them to spend the afternoon outside instead of with the TV.**

**Or take someone homebound to the community garden for a few hours. Or peel potatoes or shell peas under a tree. Or set up a summer kitchen and cook meals outside. In other words, what if we remove ourselves from the low-level toxic air of the average household and inhale more fresh air during our long months of good weather?**

**Minimizing exposure to low-level household toxins by spending more time outside makes sense. Toxins are cumulative. As we reduce our exposure, our bodies will have less work to do processing toxins and more energy for maintaining our health.**

**Sources and Links**

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