

The Ultimate Spring Cleaning Guide With Michael Rubino

KS

Kendra Seymour

0:05

Hello everyone, my name is Kendra Seymour and welcome back to another Change the Air Foundation interview. I'm joined today by one of our co-founders, the very passionate Michael Rubino. And I'm not going to read his bio, because you can head on over to our website, ChangeTheAirFoundation.org and read about all the amazing things he's been up to. But I'll just leave it at this, he has been in the indoor air quality and mold remediation arena for quite some time. And he's been helping really to change the way we address poor indoor air quality in our homes and our buildings, and he's doing all sorts of exciting things. So thanks, Mike, so much for being here.

MR

Michael Rubino

0:35

Thank you, Kendra, thank you for taking the time to do this with me.

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Kendra Seymour

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So, I love today's topic. It is all about healthy home spring cleaning. And you're going to be sharing with us, you know, kind of your top 10 list for spring cleaning. And I have found that people tend to fall into two categories when it comes to cleaning. Either they love it, or they hate it. Now I know I personally love cleaning. Well actually, I love the end result of cleaning when it's all done, which sadly, with kids, I know you know, this doesn't last too long. But it's a great thing when my whole house is clean and I can finally relax. And I'm not worrying about all the dust that's settling and what that might be doing to my living environment. So before we jump in, where do you fall in the spectrum of loving and hating cleaning?

MR

Michael Rubino

1:19

Well, it's a love-hate relationship for me too. You know, obviously, I love the after effect as well. But you know, let's be honest, who really enjoys, you know, cleaning...the act itself? But it's really important, right? And I think that's where we have to really put in the back of our mind. Not only is it going to look better, but we're actually going to feel better at the end result of it.

KS

Kendra Seymour

1:39

Yeah, absolutely. Okay, so let's jump into top 10. Number one... And you had sent me your list ahead of time. You talked about cleaning your HVAC unit thoroughly... replacing filters.

Talk to us about the HVAC system. What do we need to know? Some people are probably listening going, "Wait, I'm supposed to clean my HVAC unit?"

MR

Michael Rubino

1:59

Yeah, so first off this list is probably in no particular order. But I will say this, this is number one for me. And I think the reason being is because the HVAC system, it's like the lungs of our home. It greatly affects the air quality inside our home and buildings. With that being said, you know, HVACs typically don't get cleaned, often at all. Sometimes people will tell me they'd gone three, four or five years without cleaning their system. And just so we're clear that you know the guy that comes over every once in a while to tune the system up. That's not really the cleaning we're talking about. We're talking about you know, hiring someone from like the National Air Duct Cleaning Association certification program, and really doing a deep detailed cleaning of the coil, the blower unit, the ductwork, the registers, all the different components inside the HVAC unit, because it is a breeding ground for mold and bacteria. And this would also be a good time to, while you're doing this deep dive cleaning, to analyze what MERV rating your filter is because the highest we can really get in a residential setting is going to be MERV 16. If you're not MERV 16, you know, you have room for improvement. And if it's in the budget this year, you should highly consider it.

KS

Kendra Seymour

3:18

Yeah, no, that's great. And, I just want to add a point here, because, you know, nobody necessarily teaches you all these like adulting things. Like if you're not changing your filter on a regular basis, aside from even upgrading it, make sure you are paying attention to how often you're changing that filter. And you're gonna want to be doing that. And if you haven't, definitely, you know, put that at the top of your list. So a MERV filter, can you tell people just a little bit more about that? There's a rating system, you said it goes up to 16. If your system maybe can't handle a MERV 16, because that is going to cause a lot of resistance, what might be some other options in terms of a MERV rating?

MR

Michael Rubino

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Yeah, there's some products out there that have like MERV 16 filtration with the pressure drop of a MERV 8, which is really good, because most systems can handle a pressure drop of a MERV 8. So just do your homework on that. But replacing filters is really important. Why do we want to have a higher MERV rating? Well, the higher the rating, the smaller the particle it removes more efficiently. That's really the key here. And so when you're thinking about mold and bacteria, or toxins, which are very, very small, a lot of the you know standard filters you would buy at a big box store typically aren't going to be efficient enough to remove some of these tiny particles at a high enough rate. Which then means your system's vulnerable because if you know about an evaporator coil that constantly condensates, it's the reason we have drip pans and drain lines that take the water away. Well, then our coil obviously has a lot of moisture, and that moisture provides a good

breeding ground for mold and bacteria. So you know, thinking about all of these things, the better we can do to filter out these particles from getting to the coil, the better and healthier air that we're gonna have.

KS

Kendra Seymour

5:05

Yeah, I love that. And for frame of reference, if you have a MERV 8, it filters out I think it's roughly like 50% of particles that are, you know, a size, you know, 2.5 PM, and then a MERV 13, filters out 90% of particles that size. So between the 8 and the 13, you have, you have a pretty big jump as it is. So it does matter. It does make a difference. I love that. All right, number two... You talked about cleaning your gutters. What are some things that we need to be thinking about there?

MR

Michael Rubino

5:36

Well, first of all, if you don't have gutters, get them. And if you do have gutters, clean them, right? And the key here is, when our gutters fill up with leaves and debris, often the way the gutters are installed (sometimes improperly installed), water starts to overflow from the gutters. Now, with waters overflowing from the gutters, it presents two problems. One, if it goes backwards towards the house, it's more likely to find a water intrusion point to intrude into the home, right?. So we just don't want that. The second concern is if it overflows to the front. Now it's really not working as it's intended. And the water is just dumping right in front of the foundation where again, it can find points to intrude where you have water intrusion. All of which leads to things like mold and bacteria growing inside the home, which we don't want. And so we have to clean our gutters. It's really important, you know, it should be done probably at the beginning of each season. You know, do it in spring, do it in fall... Just to make sure because look.. it.. we have storms, wind blows, leaves fall into place. And it clogs the gutters and makes them ineffective.

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Kendra Seymour

6:48

Yeah, and not to harp on kids again, because I threw them under the bus there with cleaning earlier. But I know and with our gutters, we found more than you know, a few smaller balls, Nerf bullets and things like that. So you know, always a good idea to do it and make sure that you, you can get... If your gutters are emptying near your foundation, you can extend those. You can get cheaper extension, or you can have something professionally done, but you really want that water moving away from your house. I love that. Okay, so number three, you talk about cleaning the exterior of the home to remove dirt and mold and moss, and bacteria growth. And I know, our house, the front gets the sun in the morning and the back doesn't see really any sunlight until late in the day. And so we always have some, you know, growth on the siding. So what should we do there? It's always a challenge every spring for my husband and I and how best to tackle that.

MR

Michael Rubino

7:40

Yeah, you're gonna want to probably power wash it with some sort of surfactant attached to that. And you gotta be careful when power washing too, of course, because really around windows and doors are a little bit problematic. If you're power washing, and they're not well sealed, or the flashing is kind of deteriorating, you can actually cause water intrusion that way. So be careful...stay away from, you know, doors and windows and maybe clean around those areas by hand. But for most of the house, you know, unless there's visible cracking or anything else, you should be safe. When you clean these areas, well, let me tell you why you should clean these areas. So I had a client probably about a year ago now who had pretty high levels of Chaetomium on the outside of her house. And she had pretty high levels of Chaetomium on the inside of her house. So she had a stucco house. And it was the mold was growing on the exterior. They haven't washed the home in probably five years or something to that effect. Now, it was abnormal to see so much Chaetomium inside the house, especially with no known sources in the house. And I started asking, well, let's look at all the outside testing. We look at the outside testing, we see that there's some trouble spots on the exterior. I said, "Do you open your doors and windows, like at any point throughout the day or you know, but what's your normal routine?" "Oh, yeah, we have the doors and windows open 24/7." "Okay, good." So what's happening is you're allowing all that stuff to blow into the house. And even if you don't open doors and windows, you know, no house is hermetically sealed. So you're gonna get some influence from outside, right. So the goal is we want to keep the exterior of our home clean too. So that's not affecting the indoor air quality. And that's really crucial here. So it's not just about the way it looks outside. It's also about the impact that it can have on the air that we're breathing when we spend the 90% of our time inside of our homes.

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Kendra Seymour

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Yeah, that is like a good... It's not a PSA not to open your windows because the fresh air is good. But just to be cognizant and be thinking about that... Cleaning out your window wells and screens too I know can go a long way. Now you talk about for number four... evaluating the landscaping around the home... so grading and drainage but even things like our mulch and our beautiful plants and bushes. So talk to us about that.

MR

Michael Rubino

10:02

Yeah. So another story that comes to mind on this whole subject is a client who had a home in, I think it was California, and they had a lot of foliage around their property. And it was an older home. So there was a lot more cracks and crevices on the exterior of the home that allowed airflow to move in and out. And they, no matter what they did, no matter how much they clean, they always seem to have this issue with high levels of mold making their way inside the house. The survey of the property identified you know just, so much mulch, I mean, so much mulch, so much foliage. And all of this is impacting the the air quality inside their house, right. And so they had to do extensive work to you know, relocate a lot of the mulch and use rocks instead, closer to the house. Limit some of their foliage to the point where it's not so much right up against the house, and it made a massive difference. I mean, once all that work was done, all their levels dropped significantly. I think, you know, we just

want to be mindful of this stuff. Because when mold sits up against the house, every time it rains, it holds onto that moisture pretty well. And that's sitting up against the house. And again, that's moisture sitting against the house, right? And moisture is always going to dry to the drier side, which is typically going to be inside our house not outside. So it presents a problem over time. And I think that's, you know, something people want to be mindful of because mulch looks fantastic, especially fresh mulch. However, you got to make a switch for the rocks... helps drainage, helps with drainage, helps the water drain better, and keeping it away from the house. As well as the fact that it's not going to get moldy itself like the mulch will.

KS

Kendra Seymour

11:52

Yeah, and while you're doing all that, again, really check your, your grading there to make sure that it's sloping away from your house. Do it all at the same time, save yourself some heartache. And I will add, I've sometimes seen... This happened to a family member of mine, her sprinkler system was built in and it was a little too close to the house. Every time it would turn on she was essentially watering the side of her house. And then to your point it dries to the inside or the sun causes inward vapor drive, and it pushes that moisture in and that can be very problematic in the long run. So check the location of your sprinklers too while you're at it.

MR

Michael Rubino

12:27

Yes. And if you do have sprinklers too close to the house, you can get different heads for them so that they spray 180 degrees instead of the 360. So they'll actually spray away from the house. So you know, you don't have to like rip out the sprinkler system and redo it... just change the head. But yeah, it's something very important to be mindful of. I've seen a lot of mold problems from sprinklers over the years.

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Kendra Seymour

12:50

Yeah. Great tip about that. Okay, so number five... You talk about washing bedding and sheets and pillows, stuffed animals, and even in those spare rooms that maybe don't get used as often. What are we thinking about there?

MR

Michael Rubino

13:03

Well, first off, I don't know if you've seen the recent studies about you know, your pillowcases, but they're pretty disgusting. Sometimes 17,000 times worse than your toilet seat. Yuck. We have a couple of different issues with, you know, our bedding, for example. When you're laying on it... Look, we're human beings. We sweat in our sleep, it happens. That moisture buildup inside your sheets over time allows for mold and bacteria to grow. I mean, this study was really focused on bacteria. And the amount of bacteria that was in these pillowcases is disgusting. You know and I hate to say it, but that's just after one week of not washing it, by the way. We have to also be concerned about mold, right? Because

look, I don't care, you can't build a bubble around your house, you're gonna have some level of mold. And when there's that much moisture, pretty much eight hours a day, every day, you're gonna have some ability for mold to grow. That's why we have to consistently wash our sheets and bedding. Now why did I mention bedding in rooms that don't get used a lot? Well, okay, because we're human beings and I have a guest room. Okay, and I know that I have a guestroom and I know it doesn't get used very often. But I don't want to leave those sheets and bedding in place for six months until the next guest arrives. And the reason being is because part of our household... we have dust and part of our dust is going to be, you know, PFAS and chemicals and VOCs and, you know, formaldehyde and mold and bacteria and all these crazy things, right? So those things are going to accumulate in those guestrooms over time. And dusting... it's not enough. We have to consistently wash those sheets. Now maybe you don't need to wash it as much as the bedding that gets used every night. But you still want to wash it every couple of weeks to get rid of all that stuff and keep it from building up because I don't know if you're like me, but if you invite guests over and they get sick... It's never a fun time.

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Kendra Seymour

15:03

Yeah, they may not be your friend anymore after that. And while you're at it, like I'm even thinking, like, we have blankets that are on our couch that my kids use, and they end up on the floor and the dog's all over them. If you're not washing those regularly too just throw it in, throw it in the, the to-do list. But you talk to us, for those who have children who just love stuffed animals, they sometimes feel like they multiply and they can take over. I mean, should we be washing those? How do we do that?

MR

Michael Rubino

15:32

Well, yeah, I mean, it's kind of like the bedding situation. I mean, they're laying on them, they're sweating on them, they're cuddling with them and sleeping with them at night. I mean, they have to be part of the program of things that get washed. I know it's tough, some of them aren't machine washable. Some of them you know, or would take an extremely long time to dry. You gotta probably run it through the dryer a few times. I mean, you know, look, it's... it's better than the alternative which is letting them get disgusting. Full of mold and bacteria, which can you know, around our kids a lot as we know that they can be... They can make them sick more frequently.

KS

Kendra Seymour

16:07

Yeah, yeah. Great reminders. I love clean sheets. So that is one I'm better at. The other things maybe I'm not so good at but that one is... love it. Alright, so number six... You talk about and this is not something people are thinking of. You talk about wiping down ceiling fans, baseboards, door, window moldings, walls, ledges, shelving, like all those surfaces that, you know, we aren't thinking about. So how do we do that? And, you know, what do we need to know there?

MR

Michael Rubino

16:38

Yeah, including all the items that are on the shelves, too, you know. It's about the accumulation of dust. I mean, you know, if we're being honest with ourselves, when we clean our rooms, you know, or the spaces in which we live, we're really more focused on, you know, counters and floors. And I think that's probably the bulk of what people do routinely. And that's fine. But we have to think about all the things that accumulate dust over time, like our ceiling fans, like the shelves, like the items on the shelves, the baseboard moldings... When's the last time you wiped down the top of your baseboard moldings or your door moldings, right? All of these things collect dust over time. And if we don't clean them, you know that dust gets worse and worse. And, of course, over time, as you probably have seen, how much dust is actually in your air? That dust makes its way into your body through inhalation. So we want to essentially probably, if, at least once a month be cleaning some of these things that don't get cleaned regularly.

KS

Kendra Seymour

17:48

Yeah, so how... What is a good way to clean your baseboards? Are we taking a HEPA vacuum to it? Are we using a microfiber cloth? If so, are we using any kind of solution? What do you do in your own home for that?

MR

Michael Rubino

18:02

Yeah, so I use like a botanical disinfectant, and then I wipe it down with a microfiber, it's just easier. You know, when you talk about vacuums, everybody's got a different vacuum. There's different filtration systems for each vacuum. I tend to avoid particles from popping back up into the air. And when you get something wet, you weigh it down. And you really suppress it from getting aerosolized. Right. So you spray down the baseboard really lightly, you wipe it down with a microfiber towel. It's probably going to be a lot faster than whipping out the vacuum anyhow, and getting the scrub brush attachment and brushing it. And also the dust can get caked on which makes it hard for even the vacuum to to pull it off and separate whereas when you wipe it down, the surfactant usually that's in the disinfectants will help remove those particles pretty easily.

KS

Kendra Seymour

18:54

And for this surfactant it really... Your dish soap is a surfactant, your hand soap. And as Michael said, a lot of your, your botanicals that you may be choosing to use have it in there. Now, I think you've shared a video before but in case people haven't seen it, you know I love your tip. You put that in a spray bottle and you spray the microfiber cloth right? And then wipe it, is that how you do it?

MR

Michael Rubino

19:16

Yep, you can spray the microfiber cloth, which is definitely one way to do it. The other way would be to spray the item down that you're cleaning directly and wipe it with a microfiber cloth. There's really no wrong way to do it. It's really a matter of preference. And I think when I'm doing it, you know depends on the surface I'm cleaning. If I know that it's a non porous surface, I don't mind getting it wet. I'll just spray the surface directly. And when it's something that I don't want to get too wet and don't want to accidentally overspray it, I'll spray the towel directly and then wipe it down.

KS

Kendra Seymour

19:49

Yeah, and these... it needs to be damp, it doesn't need to be sopping wet. You're not mopping your baseboards right, like you don't you don't need a ton of water here.

MR

Michael Rubino

20:00

You know, they say a little bit goes a long way.

KS

Kendra Seymour

20:02

I love it. I love it. And you know those ceiling fans, you... if you haven't ever cleaned ceiling fans before, prepare yourself, because chances are they're gonna have a lot on there. But definitely move that up to the top of your list. Now, number...

MR

Michael Rubino

20:15

If you haven't cleaned your ceiling fans, you may want to wear a mask when doing so because there's probably a lot of dust up there.

KS

Kendra Seymour

20:21

Yeah, absolutely. And then I guess you could add like the tops, if you have like chandeliers or light fixtures too, because those are up high, you know, above our eyesight, especially the top part. So prepare yourselves. Now number seven... You talk about cleaning bathroom grout, and oh, you know, that's just something you know, no one wants to do. But, so I think everyone can relate to the grout and caulking, getting funky, at least at some point in their lives. So how do we go about doing that?

MR

Michael Rubino

20:52

Yeah, so grout is notorious for all kinds of disgusting stuff; bacteria, mold, you name it. And so it is a semi porous surface, right. So, semi porous means it's going to absorb some moisture. With that being said, it remains wet after we shower for long periods of time and takes forever to dry. Because you know, most of us, we're not putting fans on it or anything like that, right. With that being said, over time, that ability for it to absorb moisture... Things like mold and bacteria that are already in our environment, they tend to grow there

pretty easily. I'm sure everybody has seen some unsightly stuff in their grout. Cleaning it with hydrogen peroxide is probably going to be the better solution to go because it's going to, you know, help bring things to the surface, so you can remove it from the grout. And that's also going to probably lighten the grout, which always looks nice. So it's kind of a double whammy there. And after use, you actually clean the grout. My recommendation would be to then seal it. And most people don't realize this, but the sealer itself only lasts about a year. So it's something we need to kind of do a little more regularly; once a year. But that's going to help actually prevent it from absorbing so much moisture, and then prevent mold and bacteria from really being able to grow inside of it. So that's key. Now, a wise word of caution here, you know, if you're cleaning your grout, and like in just a day or two, it's back... Meaning like mold, or bacteria or some of those colorization, you actually might have a waterproofing issue and you might have it growing from underneath through the grout, right. So just keep an eye out. Unfortunately, those types of problems do require a little bit more remediation activities where you need to... Because it'll just keep happening unless water... the proper waterproofing membrane is behind the tile. But I would say luckily, it's not always the case. And sometimes people just have this perpetual moisture where it's just growing on the surface of the grout and growing into it from the top side.

KS

Kendra Seymour

23:04

Yeah, and that's a good distinction for people because we actually get that question a fair amount. So you know a little bit, you can try cleaning and replacing the caulking and grout but if it comes back, then that's the time you're going to want to maybe consider bringing in an IEP. We have resources on our website, ChangeTheAirFoundation.org and so go there, you know, before you hire someone to investigate that further. And it's also that... I don't know about you, but I make my kids and my husband, I do this as well. We squeegee the shower after... Because once I get it all clean, I want it to stay clean. So even my youngest, you know, knows that he has to squeegee the shower, the tile walls, and then floor and then down to the drain. And ever since we started doing that a few years ago, it... we rarely have issues with any kind of growth or anything because it's just one more step to keep the humidity and moisture down in the room.

MR

Michael Rubino

23:58

Yeah, great idea.

KS

Kendra Seymour

24:00

So for number eight, I gotta be honest, this one gives me anxiety: pull out kitchen appliances, like your refrigerator to clean them inside and out and behind. So talk to us about that. You must have stories with you know, with this being a very common and overlooked potential problem area.

MR

Michael Rubino

24:22

So, yeah, if you've seen the amount of mold that I see underneath people's dishwashers and stoves, and refrigerators... I mean, I'm talking like the bottom kick plates, not even you know, talking about leaks here. Just the bottom kick plates from you know, so much dust accumulation and food droppings and all these crazy things that occur in our lives that kind of just get swept under the rug, if you will. You know, I'll give you an example. Like we're all sweeping and mopping all the time and vacuuming, right. And over time, we have a lot of dust that gets gunked up underneath our appliances, and every time we mop, because we do, we mop and we get the bottoms of these appliances wet, and that dust starts to grow mold. And over time, it gets really disgusting. We need to probably, you know, I'm not going to say once a month because I don't, you know, I don't want to give people a heart attack. But I would say, at least once a quarter, we have to pull these appliances out. We have to, you know, vacuum, wipe down and mop, you know, the cavity in which those appliances are located... The back of the appliance, underneath the appliance, to the sides of the appliance, inside the appliance, all of those things to make sure that we're reducing just the amount of microbial growth that's occurring there. I can share with you sample results of people's fridges and dishwashers. And it's... You wouldn't believe how much stuff grows over time. So I think it's a really important thing that people need to have on their radar. Because, you know, just the tiniest little area of mold growing can be producing hundreds of 1000s of spores.

KS

Kendra Seymour

26:12

Yeah, no, that's helpful. I mean, I think people realize as dishwashers with the amount of water that goes through it that, yeah, we could have a leak at some point. But people tend to forget that the refrigerator, especially if you have... which most fridges nowadays... It's actually hard to find one without a water line or an icemaker. I've seen those water lines in the back have slow leaks, and it just... It's a long time before somebody is clued in that there's a problem there. So if you can catch it early, that's a great tip. So I will do some breathing exercises before I throw my you know, pull out my fridge. Because it does it makes me nervous that I'm going to find something. Alright, number nine... You talk about wiping down all non-porous and semi-porous furniture. So how do we do that, I mean, some of our furniture might have fabric and things like that. So take us through that process.

MR

Michael Rubino

27:03

Yeah, the fabric stuff. Unfortunately, there's just no 100% effective way to clean them. Best thing you could do is probably HEPA vacuum them with a scrub brush attachment, go in different directions. So you're, you know, trying to pull stuff loose from the... that might be embedded into the fabric and suck it into the vacuum cleaner. You can't wipe fabric, right. If you ever tried to wipe fabric, it's not gonna go well. So that's really your only option. You know, it really depends on the situation. Some couches will get... You know, some fabric couches will get dirtier than others. That depends on pets, and how many people live in the home and if the home has a mold problem or a bacteria problem, et cetera, et cetera. But

we have to keep in mind that these things are in our environments, and we have to really diligently clean them. With respect to semi-porous and non-porous stuff, semi-porous is really going to be your wood furniture. A lot of us have a lot of wood furniture. And then you're going to have your non-porous, which is going to be your glass metal or plastic furniture. So glass, metal and plastic; super easy to clean, you just spray it down, wipe it away with a microfiber towel. Wood could be a little trickier. Because it depends. Does the wood have a varnish on it or is it sealed? It's wipe-ability, if you will, is what's going to make this easier, not easy. Even if it's raw wood. You have to be a little careful, but it's usually sanded down and smooth at least. So if it's not rough, you should be able to still kind of wipe it clean. If it is rough wood, you know, the best thing you could do is probably vacuum just like you would fabric. But I would say luckily most of us that have wood floors and wood furniture, a lot of it is sealed which makes it easy to wipe down and clean. However we just have to remember to do that because you know... I'm looking around my room right now there's a lot of stuff here that, that has to be cleaned on a somewhat regular basis. And I'm sure you are the same right? So we have to be mindful that it's not enough just to clean the floors. And the surfaces, we really got to do a deep dive cleaning every once in a while.

KS

Kendra Seymour

29:16

Yeah, and if you're doing furniture I have to like remind myself to do this. It's good to vacuum like underneath the furniture, underneath the bed, underneath the dresser, underneath the couch. So if you're doing this as part of your spring cleaning, we might as well just pull it out, vacuum you know all the little Legos and hair ties and food crumbs or whatever else has managed to migrate under there, and take care of it all in one fell swoop. Alright, so number 10 finishing our list. You end by, you know, mentioning cleaning all the floors with a microfiber mop and botanical suitable for that floor surface. So take us through you know... I think people want to know like the specifics. How do you tackle this in a way that makes sense when it comes to cleaning floors?

MR

Michael Rubino

30:00

Yeah, so when I started with the cleaning protocol from the inside perspective, I kind of listed it out in a step-by-step fashion. And the reason being is because you always want to start with the ceiling. You know, so we're ceiling fans, light fixtures, things of that nature. Why is that? Because if I'm cleaning a ceiling fan, even if I'm spraying it, even if I'm wiping with a microfiber towel, odds are some of that stuff is going to fall on the floor. Right? So, or surfaces if I have furniture in there, right, so I'm going to start top, and then I'm going to work my way down. Now, I'm gonna want to clean my furniture, and my baseboards before I clean the floor, right? Because again, same theory, odds are some particles are going to spill out from my furniture as I'm wiping it and fall onto the floor. So the floor is last, that's the absolute last thing we want to do. If we start with that top-down approach, by the time we get to the floor, we'll be you know, picking up any, you know, thing that might have dropped from some of the other surfaces we've already cleaned in the room. And now we're getting to the the last item of agenda here by thoroughly cleaning the floor. I have a

really good analogy that I learned from cleaning from my mother. And, you know, I was in high school and I'm doing chores, and I had a mop bucket, which, by the way, I would never recommend this now in today's... with today's technology. But I had a mop bucket full of water and a mop. And you know, I'm sitting there, I'm cleaning and I told my mom, "I did my chores for the day. I'm gonna go hang out with my friends." And she's like, "Hold on a second." She goes over and she inspects this bucket of water. "Michael, this bucket of water is dirty." "Yeah, yeah it's dirty, because... it's because I cleaned. See, that's how you know that it's clean." "No, no, no. You need to do it again." "Why would I need to do it again? Look how dirty it is. I got the dirt in the bucket. Right? That's the goal, no?" Yeah. So every time you clean it is exponential. And this is what I learned through this trick. She goes, "It is actually clean when that bucket is clean." It mind blew the heck out of me. Okay. So I'm like, "Wait a second. So you're saying that I still will pick up more stuff? And I will probably dirty another bucket of water?" She goes, "Absolutely." And that's where I really learned and understood for the first time what cleaning is, right? And so if you ever read any protocols ever written on the subject of cleaning, it's like it's not clean until the rag looks like it just came out of the package. It's not clean until that, you know, last time that you mopped the floor that microfiber looks like it just came out of the package. Because the reality of it is we're still going to be picking stuff up for quite some time, especially if this is a first time doing a deep dive cleaning. And it's been some time. And it's kind of gross when you think about how much stuff is really in our dust and how much stuff is really all over our floors and surfaces because it always looks clean after you wipe it once but sometimes you'd be surprised the way it looks after you wipe it three or four times.

KS

Kendra Seymour

33:17

I love it. So we have Mama Rubino to thank for your, you know, maybe nudging you in this direction of you know, IAQ and mold and really removing these pollutants from our environment. So I love that because I probably did the same thing when I was your age... or that age. So I do have a follow up question though because that works great for wood floors and tile, but what about carpet?

MR

Michael Rubino

33:40

What about carpet?

KS

Kendra Seymour

33:42

Yeah, I mean is there... Should we be clean...people be cleaning that regularly? Like.. that.. I know that's probably its own episode, but what tips do you have if there's carpet in the home?

MR

Michael Rubino

33:53

I have probably 10 reasons why you should change your carpet to another surface. So I want to make that very well known. I don't like wall to wall carpet because it doesn't

matter what you do. Keeping that thing clean is next to impossible. If I had wall to wall carpeting, and I'm renting a place...it's got carpeting, I'm not moving, this is what, what I'm stuck with here...Well, I'm gonna probably get it steam cleaned. Probably pretty often. You know, really deep cleaning of rugs. I mean shampooing and the whole nine because you have to essentially remove particles that are embedded in the fibers. And if you ever get on your hands and knees and looked at a carpet you know it's just 1000s of strands of fibers woven together. It is really very difficult to keep that clean. If you've ever moved out of an apartment after living there for a year, you'll know exactly what I mean, right? It's like, you vacuum all the time, you've done the cleaning. But when they lift your bed away out of the room, when on moving day, you're like, "Oh my God, that's a totally different color!" Right? Our carpets, they get really gross really fast. And it's just unfortunate, because it's like a sponge that picks up everything that's in our environment. So I cough, and I release 100 million bacteria particles, where is that all going? Well, it's going to be settling in the carpet, right? You have to be careful with carpet cleaning with just the moisture factor. Which is... because, usually we'll have carpeting, we'll probably have padding underneath. If these guys get it so wet when they're cleaning it and the trapped moisture in the, the pad below you can create a mold problem underneath it. It...I would have anxiety, you know, just thinking about this. You know, how do I clean it, keep it clean, and make sure it never gets to that level. I'd say if you could...if you're renting, try to find a place that doesn't have wall-to-wall carpet. If you are buying, you know and you have your own home, you know, carpet's probably like number one thing on the list to get the heck out of there and change for any other flooring, any other flooring type. You think about like wood floors, and tile and laminate flooring are so easy. You could literally clean them and wipe them down. With carpeting it is a constant fight. You know, and I have some area rugs because you know I'm a human being here. But even with those like they have to be cleaned regularly. I don't keep them more than two years before I switch them out for something new. And it's just part of my lifestyle at this point. Because the truth is, I know how gross they can be. So I'm sorry if I've broken some hearts here. But I just want people to know the truth.

KS

Kendra Seymour

37:01

As I... I'm like, "Thank God, they can't see the carpet." No, I have hardwood on my main floor. But I do have carpet upstairs and it is in the plans to change eventually. Because I know that spring cleaning aside, it is probably not helping the health of my family. So for those listening, we get it. You can't do everything all at once. You do the best you can, you make strategic moves, you make plans. And those changes over time can add up to big difference for your health. Well, Michael, thank you so much for being here. I know we have several more interviews planned together this year in 2024. Lots of exciting things coming. So we'll be digging into many more topics. Is there anything else you want to add, as we kind of wrap up our spring cleaning discussion that folks want to be thinking about?

MR

Michael Rubino

37:47

You know, I just want to thank you people listening and thank you Kendra, for all the amazing work that you do here. You know, it's not easy to do what we do here. As a

nonprofit, you know, none of us are making any money here. And we're really investing our time and resources to educating you so that you, as you listen to this, you can get something out of this. You know, the amount of people that I see on a daily basis getting sick inside their homes, is tragic, and is astronomical. And so I'm just so glad that you're here taking this serious. These 10 simple steps can make a massive difference in your life. And that's why we're here. And that's why you...we want you to have this information.

KS

Kendra Seymour

38:37

Absolutely, and I'll just bring it home by saying you know, if you found this helpful, this interview, do us a favor and like, follow, and share us on Facebook and Instagram and LinkedIn, our new podcast, YouTube. And if you want to make sure that you never miss a great interview like this, head on over to ChangeTheAirFoundation.org and sign up for our newsletter, because it really is the best way to get great interviews like this directly to your inbox. We'll see you next time. Thanks so much.