



A Cry for Help: The Reeves Family's Journey Through Mold Illness

LR

Lindsay Reeves

0:00

But when we got there, our five-month-old daughter started screaming the day we moved in. And she screamed and screamed and screamed for two and a half years. And honestly, when we moved out, we still had not connected the dots that her screaming was from mold.

KS

Kendra Seymour

0:24

Welcome to Your Indoor Air Podcast, brought to you by Change the Air Foundation. My name is Kendra Seymour and today is my favorite kind of episode. Because we highlight real stories of healing and hope from people who have been made sick by mold, water damage, and other indoor pollutants in their homes and other buildings. These stories are so important, and I know firsthand how lonely and overwhelming and expensive and even hopeless this journey can feel at times. And we want you to know that there is that light at the end of the tunnel. So today I have the honor of talking with a husband and wife duo, Blake and Lindsay Reeves, whose story I think will resonate with many of you and offer you hope that healing your home and body is possible. Thank you both so much for being here.

LR

Lindsay Reeves

1:06

Thank you, Kendra.

BR

Blake Reeves

1:07

Thank you.

KS

Kendra Seymour

1:08

Now something that I really appreciate about you guys, you know, doing this interview together is that even if it's only one person in a home who's experiencing health symptoms... It really is something that affects everyone in that home and even

relationships and friendships and the effects just aren't physical. They're emotional and they're financial and they strain marriages and relationships. And so, I... the fact that you're you're both here to kind of share your, your story and perspectives I think is gonna resonate with a lot of people. But let's jump right in. So we have chatted before and... and I know you guys met after college and you got married and you've had children and you were just ready to live happily ever after. But things didn't exactly turn out how you wanted. You moved into a rental house in Georgia, and that's when things began to deteriorate. So talk to us about that change and how you eventually connected the dots between your declining health and your home.

LR

Lindsay Reeves

2:07

Yeah, so in 2014, we were living in Arkansas, that's where we're from. Blake's job asked us to move to a northern suburb of Atlanta. And so we packed up our kids. We had a two-year-old and a five-month-old daughter. Both of them are daughters. And we left and we went to Georgia and we rented a house. It was a beautiful house on a cul-de-sac. It was three stories; very nice. You know, we were like, "This is gonna be great for the kids; a big backyard." But when we got there, our five-month-old daughter started screaming the day we moved in, and she screamed and screamed and screamed for two and a half years. She... As she got a little bit older, she started hitting, kicking, biting, spitting, head-butting, she didn't eat, she didn't sleep. It was just a nightmare. We took her to the doctor many times and they were like, Oh, she was a premie, it's sensory issues. This is totally normal. And I just kept telling him I'm like, "This is not normal. This something is very wrong." And fast-forward a few months and our other daughter started having issues. She started having bronchitis. Like all the time. She started getting rashes. She started falling down for no reason. She had an eye that turned in and so she had accommodative esotropia and she had to start patching and wearing very strong glasses. It was just one thing after another. And as we continued, everything on Sarah started hurting. Our other daughter was still doing really bad. We had her in a lot of therapies. Fast forward a little bit further. We adopted our son, he was 17 when he moved in with us. He started having respiratory issues, nosebleeds, you know, that kind of stuff. I was getting sick. Blake was the last person standing in the house. He traveled most of the days of the week for his job. And so he was doing great and all the rest of us were just falling down. I took our kids all over Atlanta, to every specialist under the sun, I felt like. They all just said, "Here's another cream. Here's a steroid. Here's an inhaler. Here's another medicine. Here's an antibiotic."

BR

Blake Reeves

4:33

"It's in your head."

LR

Lindsay Reeves

4:34

Yeah, it's... they tried to put me on anti-depression medication, told me I was depressed. And we just kept telling them, "No, there's something very wrong. And there's got to be one thing that's connecting all these dots." And it wasn't until summer of 2017 that Blake started getting affected. So he started working out in the basement, which was the epicenter of the mold, and his liver numbers shot up very quickly. And at this point, everyone's falling apart now. And so he started researching more than ever, and finally came up with mold. And so...

BR

Blake Reeves

5:11

Well, and I remembered when we first moved in... Our oldest daughter's room had this little black spot at the ceiling. And we had the landlord deal with it, and I even crawled up in the attic, looked at the back, they got it fixed, right? But for some reason... Well, but that area was clean, but triggered in my brain for some reason (I think God put it there). It's like, "There's mold, check mold." So I just started researching it. And I told Lindsay, "I'm reading our story."

LR

Lindsay Reeves

5:39

Yeah.

BR

Blake Reeves

5:40

Like, "This has got to be the issue." So that actually got me to take our daughter one more time to a Mediquick clinic. You know, I took her in and kind of unloaded on the doctor unfairly because she had never seen our daughter. I just told her, I said, "Here's what I think's going on with the house," which I talked about mold. And I told her, like, "Don't come back to me with 'strep' don't come back to me with... Like, tell me what is wrong with my daughter." And she came back later. And she's like, "I can't tell you anything is wrong with your daughter," she said, "and I can't diagnose anything as related to mold. But I've been doing this for 25 years." And she said, "You need to move out of your house today." And that triggered it. And so I'm driving home, I went home I called my mom who lives in Arkansas, said "I'm flying you out. And then you're gonna get in the car and ride home with the kids and Lindsay," and I sent them... Well, I didn't see them again for five, six weeks. And I had a mold inspector in... That, that was on... So over that weekend, they left... I had a mold inspector in that following Monday. And he told me, "Don't ever bring them back in this house. And don't ever come back in this house without a mask." And so it was... Luckily, I think the fact that I wasn't being affected, I had a clear head and I could see... Like, I trusted Lindsay that something is wrong. Like I'm watching them deteriorate in front of my eyes. And so there was a benefit to that. Not everybody gets that benefit. Sometimes everyone is deteriorating. Right? And it's a... It's a challenge. So, so yeah, that was really kind of how it manifested into, "This is the problem. Now, we gotta figure out how to get out of it."

KS

Kendra Seymour

7:13

I'm wondering, how long was it between the time you guys moved in before you saw that doctor who while she wouldn't officially diagnose it as exposure to, to a moldy or water-damaged building...but how many doctors would you say you saw between there? And how much time went by?

BR

Blake Reeves

7:30

I think we counted it to 24? Over 24.

LR

Lindsay Reeves

7:33

We had seen so many. I mean so many.

BR

Blake Reeves

7:36

Nobody, nobody could tell us...

LR

Lindsay Reeves

7:37

No one ever...yeah, no one ever mentioned environment. I even went to a D.O. – which I thought, you know, “Oh, they’re you know, holistic, and they’re gonna find it.” And all this kind of stuff. Even they didn't mention it. Yeah, not a single doctor mentioned it ever, once.

BR

Blake Reeves

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It wasn't until we were a couple of years out of it that we found a doctor that...

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Lindsay Reeves

7:54

That would treat us, yeah.

BR

Blake Reeves

7:56

That could really treat us for it.

KS

Kendra Seymour

7:57

Yeah, your story is so similar to mine – and probably a lot of people listening. My husband traveled all the time when our kids were young when it started. And so he

wasn't impacted in the same way that we were. But you start racking up diagnoses. And I know what it meant to have a baby who screamed all day, every day. And like, "Well, it's...you know, she's in the newborn phase. It's colic. It's reflux." But when you're 11... By the time they're 11 months old, and it's not getting better, and you're not getting under those Wonder Weeks or whatever, you're like, "Something is wrong." And they tell you, "No, no, this just happens, or the eczema or the allergies, or the sensory processing disorder," or, or whatever acronym, or diagnoses they throw at you. But in your gut, you're like, "Something isn't right." And it's taking people it's taking us a long time to connect those dots and people are sick, and they're being misdiagnosed and the interventions are incorrect. So you guys eventually ended up getting out. How did your health change, then? You moved to... moved to a different location and what happened from there?

LR

Lindsay Reeves

9:06

Um, so when we left, we trashed just about everything we owned. Because our kids were so sick. I was so sick. We just did not want to risk anything. And so we moved into a new house and the girls turned around pretty quickly. Our daughter that was screaming, stopped screaming within three weeks. And honestly, when we moved out, we still had not connected the dots that her screaming was from mold, because you could not see her issues. You can see our other daughter's. There were rashes, you know, there were bumps. You know, there were things that were visible. The other daughter, it was so neurological that we did not connect the dots until she stopped screaming. And then we were like, "Oh my gosh, was that the mold doing that to her?" And so she got better pretty quick. I mean, she stopped screaming. She still had meltdowns for a while. You know, she had to detox and all that. She has some sensory issues still. Our other daughter stopped having bronchitis very quickly as well. Some of the things on her though never went away. Her vision is still not good. Her tonsils are still huge. But for the most part, within...

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Blake Reeves

10:21

She stopped randomly falling over.

LR

Lindsay Reeves

10:22

Yeah, she doesn't fall down for no reason anymore, thankfully.

BR

Blake Reeves

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When we were in mold, she would be standing there just, you'd be looking at her and she would just fall over. And that stopped, right? That was one of those frightening parts of it. But it went away.

LR

Lindsay Reeves

10:32

Yeah, she also got seven cavities all at once in mold and broke her arm from falling off the tiniest little thing. And so bad that she had to have surgery. And so we realized after we left, she was completely depleted of all her vitamins and nutrients and minerals. And she's not had a cavity since, you know, so and she's not broke an arm, *knock on wood*. You know, but so the kids actually, for the most part turned around pretty quickly. I would say it took me personally quite a bit longer.

KS

Kendra Seymour

11:06

So I'm curious, did you ever mention this to the doctors that originally diagnosed you with all these labels? Like, "Hey, we got better. And it was after we moved out of our house. We think it was mold." Did you ever have a chance to speak with them again?

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Lindsay Reeves

11:20

We did a couple of them. No one ever believed us.

KS

Kendra Seymour

11:27

Yeah, it gets chalked up to a coincidence, "All of a sudden, everyone's symptoms are improving, but we can't, we can't be certain. We can't be sure." Right? And you guys know. You know, in your gut that... that it... There was an obvious connection there. So you guys are doing better now. That is amazing. I'm curious, because you know, the physical symptoms are so real. Some of them you can see like rashes and bronchitis. And you're right, a lot of it you can't see. So the screaming, you know, the gut dysbiosis, the anxiety, the OCD, the depression, things that can all be caused by poor indoor air quality. I'm wondering though, if you wouldn't mind like... Going through this is stressful on your marriage and relationships. And I know when our daughter, when we first kind of really put all the dots together, we finally found a doctor. And she was a Functional Medicine Doctor. And the first thing she said to me... We weren't even in the room two minutes. And she handed me this paper with a summary of some of the stuff she was going to share. And she circled something and it said, basically something to the effect of, "Parents of children with chronic illness have like a 90% divorce rate, because of the stress involved with caring for a chronically ill kid." Now, in your situation, you're experiencing symptoms, you have all this financial stuff. And it was so eye-opening to me that she led with that. And she's like, "Take care of yourself, take care of your marriage, take care of your relationships, because you won't be able to, you know, do this without that support." So how has this journey... How did it impact your relationship

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while you were going through that? And since then, if you wouldn't mind speaking to that, because I think that will help people feel heard or seen.

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Blake Reeves

13:13

Yeah, I'll, I'll go from my own side because I wasn't being as affected. Right? It was... There was definitely challenges, but... Put the right context around it. So I knew before like when I married her and part of the reason I married her is because she's very strong willed... very like, she gets it. Right? Like, she just runs it, when she has something like she runs it. And I started to see her being all over the place, depending on what day she woke up a certain way. So I was stressed out because I was like, "I don't know what Lindsay I'm getting today?" And I'm traveling, so I'm only in a couple days a week or a few days week. And so it's like, who? Whatever... So, but I knew at the same time I was like, "Something's wrong." So there were probably, hopefully – probably times there wasn't grace there. But I think hopefully I was graceful in that. But I think, you know, it just kind of becomes, I knew who she was before we were in this situation. I knew that what she was going through was, uh, real. And I'm watching my kids deteriorate. So, like I knew something was wrong. So I was just in the mode of we have to figure this out. And so I think from a marriage perspective... There were strains in there, that she may tell you, you know, some difference from her side because she's thinking different things. She's probably, whatever. But for me, it was yeah, there were strains in there. But it was more on my end of like, *I'm stressed out because I'm trying to figure out why my family's falling apart.*

KS

Kendra Seymour

14:35

The lack of...

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Lindsay Reeves

14:36

Yea, financially, it was a huge strain. You know, we had that house that was you know, full of stuff and we did throw it all away. That was a huge strain. Going to all of the doctors and getting no answers was a huge strain. But thankfully, he was always there for us in every way, shape or form. He never told me I was crazy. He never said, "You're making this up," or "You're just being ridiculous," or "You're being dramatic," or anything like that. He believed me 100%. And I am so thankful for that, because we talk to people all the time. And there are so many ladies that do not get that. I mean, I've told him before, I want to put on our Facebook page sometime and be like, "I'm sorry, but we are not marriage counselors," you know? Because it's... It's so hard. It is so hard. But I was very, very blessed that Blake was who was by my side when I was going through all of it.

BR

Blake Reeves

15:36

Yeah, I think, you know, you... We did... We, I think we, we reached the point where none of our stuff mattered, right? So as we were getting out of it, it was a renewal to see her get better, right? But when it came to the things and our finances, we'd kind of hit that button of, "Yeah, if we have to go live in a ditch and have a healthy family like we're going to do it. If we have to live in a tent, whatever." So the other stuff just didn't matter anymore. And then I think afterwards... You know, I mean, honestly, it's been great for us to do this together now. From you know, me traveling all the time, to not seeing the family very much, to now we're taking on something we're passionate about together has really been awesome. So...

LR

Lindsay Reeves

16:18

Yeah.

KS

Kendra Seymour

16:19

Yeah, and we're gonna talk about that towards... in a little bit. They've actually developed – for those listening, they have their own inspection business, and they've really turned lemons into lemonade. So we're definitely going to get there. But I think I'm so happy that you were able to like lean on each other. Because something like poor indoor air quality; mold, water damage to your point, it's often hidden, right? It's in attics and crawl spaces, and under walls and floors. And so you can't see it, usually, you often can't even smell it. And so I know, at least for me, at one point, you're like, "Could this really be it?" Especially when the doctors aren't seeing anything and the information online is spotty at best. But when you start to dig in and do the research and connect the dots. And then when you start to see the symptom improvement, either because you moved or you're able to remediate effectively, it's that validation that, "Oh, my God," like, "This is a powerful thing that we are overlooking and dismissing." And I don't know about you guys, my kids joke everywhere I go, now, I'm like looking up at the ceiling. I'll take pictures, and they're like, "Mom, stop taking pictures of the water damage. Because I was like, "Oh, I can use this. I can write about this." And you know, not... Once you know you can't unknow but I like to think and maybe you guys agree that we're living more intentionally now. We are more aware, we're more healthy, just about everything in general. So there is a... There's a silver lining, I like to find in everything there. Looking back, I wonder what would you have done differently? If you knew, you know, then what you know, now what would you have done differently?

LR

Lindsay Reeves

18:01

We would have had the house we were going to rent mold-tested before we moved in. As soon as we saw that black spot, we would have thrown up lots of alarms. And we would have probably gotten out of there much, much, much quicker, for sure.

BR

Blake Reeves

18:18

And then I think to their point, is don't fall in love with the house just because you like the house. Like, scrutinize the house as you're going through it. And look, we were blessed with... I mean, look, we were blessed with a great landlord that absolutely loved our kids. He was heartbroken. He gave us a bunch of money back to help us and he did not... Like, so not everybody... Most people don't get that. So, you know, I guess that would be looking at like, as much as you can do to research who your landlord is. Right? Get an understanding of them. But I would say scrutinize the house as much as you can.

KS

Kendra Seymour

18:55

Yeah, and know how to react. I know. I've told this story before when we were looking to buy our home, there was the bidding war. We're in Northern Virginia, it's a very expensive area. Even when the housing markets collapsed, we're still relatively strong, you know. So it's always very competitive. And when they found moisture, (the inspector in the basement) and they were going to tear it out and fix it. They were like swing by after work. We haven't even closed at this point. So they want to show you you know, the moisture and mold they found. And I'm standing there my husband, their Realtor, our Realtor, and whoever they hired who was not a remediation company, mind you. Not that necessarily would have made a difference. We're just standing there looking at this wall with moisture and mold and I remember thinking like, "If this wasn't safe, we wouldn't be standing here right?" Like these are professionals they would say, "This is not healthy. Leave." And you know little did I know in the state of Virginia that there are no certifications or licensure requirements. I can go to bed tonight, wake up tomorrow call myself a mold remediator. You know, my hairdresser has to take more hours and training and certification requirements to dye my gray hair than the person responsible for removing this toxic substance from our home. So it blows my mind. When, when you really start digging into the industry side, but we don't need to go there, that's a topic for another podcast. But...

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Blake Reeves

20:16

And think another thing is if you're highly sensitive, and you've been exposed before, and the people that you're buying the house from or renting from won't allow you the time to do your due diligence, walk. Like, get away. It's just not worth the risk.

KS

Kendra Seymour

20:30

Yeah, yeah. And we're gonna... We have some resources that will be on the website that by the time this airs like a Start Here section. If you don't know where to begin, we're going to take you step-by-step through it. So ChangeTheAirFoundation.org. Go to our Start Here, go to our Free Downloads. We talk to you about everything, how to find a good IEP through a remediation company, and dealing with your possessions and everything in between. Because it really is about connecting you with the right information to make the best possible choice for you and your family. Because once... once you've been burned by a house, then you sometimes... I've noticed, you know, people hit this analysis paralysis where every home you're like, "Oh, my goodness, every rental". And so they don't make any choice. Did you? Did you guys have any when you moved to a new place? Did you have any concerns that, "Oh, is this place moldy? And what are we going to do about it?"

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Blake Reeves

21:24

We did, yeah.

LR

Lindsay Reeves

21:24

We did. And we had it tested, we had the next house tested. So we trusted the mold inspector that had come into the rental. And so we used him again to test that property. So yeah.

BR

Blake Reeves

21:39

And we found some and then....

LR

Lindsay Reeves

21:40

We found mold.

BR

Blake Reeves

21:40

That they... That they got fixed and it was good. And that's the thing, right? Like, mold's everywhere. It doesn't take... But you find that you address it make sure you trust... Like, to your point, you know, the right people, the right steps to take, and then you can... You can be good then.

KS

Kendra Seymour

21:57

Yeah, yeah. And I think too, there's no perfect home. So the idea is to find the best possible home, address areas quickly. And some, some homes, you're right. It just may not even be worth your time, it's too much work, you're a sensitized individual it's just isn't. But, you know, if you can find, you know, if it's a little spot, and you're able to get it

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taken care of correctly and quickly, and it hasn't caused problems, you have the financial resources and the right people. You know, that's something people need to hear. Because I think sometimes it's about finding the perfect place. And another little plug, we have a whole series on our website, and it's tips for buying and renting a home and all sorts of experts. So if you're in the process of house hunting, whether buying or renting, check out that series for sure. So I do have kind of a follow-up question to the one before. If somebody is listening, and they're going through this right now, and they think their health issues, you know, might... might be caused by mold and water damage and poor indoor air quality, what advice would you have for them?

LR

Lindsay Reeves

22:54

First of all, I'd say, you know, make sure. Get it tested, either get your home tested, get yourself tested, or both. And then if you find out it's mold, the most important thing is ending the exposure. That... That has to be your most important priority. And whether that's remediation, or moving or going and staying somewhere else. That has to be the biggest priority to end that exposure.

BR

Blake Reeves

23:20

Yeah, and I think it's funny, as you mentioned earlier, we'd have so many conversations, and there's so many different... I always tell people... So it's funny, and I'm gonna throw this out there. So oftentimes, there's... It's the husbands that are more dismissing that this could be the issue we can go through all kinds of *whys* and *whats*. But that's just the fact of what I see. And then women are affected. And it... There's a challenge, there can be a marriage challenge, right. And I always tell them, when I'm talking to them, like, trust your gut. The truth is, your gut and your body knows probably more than somebody coming in to inspect it does that there's a problem, right? And then on the flip side of that, you know, as I talk to husbands... Because I went through this, I still go through this, I keep... To this day, I can't look at pictures of my kids or my family in that house. I can't look... I physically can feel it. When I look at it, I gotta... I have to turn it off. And so I just tell the fathers, I'm like, listen, "One, she's not crazy. She's... There is something wrong and like you... And here's the problem, I think I went through, it's like you feel like a failure of providing... protecting your family." And so you manifest that into, "Okay, that can't be it. I gotta figure this out. I gotta control this." Well, you can't do anything about meaning like the mold. You can't snap your fingers and fix it right. So I think there was a whole bunch of stuff there. Trust your gut. And then also if... if it's a man or a woman that's kind of on the outside looking in, like you need to trust them. There's something wrong and... and you're not a failure because it happened. You got to figure out how to get them safe. And then to her point, get to a safe place. Because making decisions when you have "mold brain" you're gonna make some bad decisions.

KS

Kendra Seymour

25:01

Yeah, and I think, you guys, I love both those messages, trust your gut. And you know, really, that give yourself some grace, because you're gonna make mistakes. You are, it's unavoidable. You do the best you can with the information you have, but you're gonna get some... make some mistakes and move on from it. I know, you know, to kind of take it a little further, like the PTSD of what happened and the mistakes we made – because for us, it was years – and the interventions we tried, especially with our daughter, I know probably made her gut worse and caused all sorts of other issues. And I struggle and I still struggle to this day with some guilt that I should have known better, I should have made different choices. I still – it's been eight years – I still get choked up talking about it. And so I try, I try not to dwell on the past because you can't change it. What we can change is the steps that we take going forward. And to this day, with everything I know, I still make mistakes, and that's... no one's perfect. It's part of the journey. So I think, I think those are such important messages for, for people to hear. Because you know, as parents, we... we want to protect our, our children, we want to protect our spouse, and it's just you know, this is everything is thrown into this the emotional, physical, the financial pieces. Why it's so stressful. So what I love about your story, and this is actually how we connected is you guys have kind of made it your life's work, you have started an inspection business. And I would love to hear about how your experience has kind of shaped the work that you're currently doing now. Talk to us a little bit about what you guys are up to there.

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Lindsay Reeves

26:50

Well, I mean, everything. The reason we do this is obviously because of what we went through. So after we left that house, we were very vocal about what happened. We wanted people to know. We're not the kind of people that just go on and move on with our lives. I'm kind of loud. And so I wanted to tell people I want to share, I didn't want others to go through this, I didn't want to see families destroyed, and kids sick. And so we were very vocal about it and shared it with our friends and family and people who didn't even know us probably. And so we became “The Crazy Mold People” that everyone sent their friends and family to,

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Blake Reeves

27:30

Or avoided...

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Lindsay Reeves

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Or avoided. And so you know, they would... We'd get texts. And somebody would say, “Hey, can you talk to my sister? I think she has mold in her house. Can you talk to my neighbor or whoever?”. And so for years, that's what we did. We would just talk to people. We would phone... You know, phone calls, emails, text messages, whatever we can do to offer support, and just help and comfort to these people going through that. And eventually, we just got to a point where we were like, we should just start doing this,

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we should start a mold inspection business. Because people do not care as much. When they haven't gone through it. They can't empathize the same if they haven't seen it or gone through it. And so it just became something that we thought, "You know, we can do this. And we can do it with a lot of care and concern." And really, we just thought we can help people. And so that's the reason we started it. But he's on the front line.

So...

BR

Blake Reeves

28:31

Yeah, I think it's... I think the number... The number one reason, honestly, that people tell me they go with us is because of our story. And I think we're able to have... Because we always do these upfront conversations. And it's funny how many times I've had people say, "I don't feel crazy talking to you, right? Like, you... This is the first conversation I've had where I feel like I'm not crazy and somebody understands." And so I think there's a benefit to that. But also one of the things we agreed that we would do through this is probably why we love what you're doing so much is we want to build awareness. I don't want customers to keep coming back to us, right? And I know that sounds, "Oh, you're saying..." No, that is the truth. What I went through as an outsider watching my family deteriorate, I don't ever want another husband or wife to go through that, it's brutal. And so being able to go in and... Part of what we want to do is not just fine mold, but we want to be preventative with these people. So when we send them information, it's annoyingly long, and it's a lot of preventative stuff that they panic about then I'm like, "You don't need to panic on this stuff. Here's the stuff you need to get done." So I think our approach is very much awareness, empathy, and just letting them know – as much as we can – build a network for them to get through the process because we've been there. And that's our goal is just to honestly be empathetic and help them get saved.

LR

Lindsay Reeves

29:55

We do try to do a lot of education for them. Teach them how to inspect their own house. Teach them what the red flags are things they can do to prevent it. I mean, you know, a lot of people don't know that something as simple as gutters can make a huge difference, you know? So just things like that.

BR

Blake Reeves

30:13

Teach them tricks, look in your toilet tank, if you have a massive problem... It's like, open the back of your toilet tank and see if you got mold growing because there's, there's, there's reasons why that could be happening. Yeah, so teach them tricks and things they can do.

KS

Kendra Seymour

30:24

No, so like I would, I would love to hear about some of those tips and tricks, if you wouldn't mind.

BR

Blake Reeves

30:30

Yeah, so again, I mentioned the one with the toilet. And so when people have a heavy concern in their bathroom, like, "Ah, I think we've got massive issues, and we've got mold growing in the shower. And we've got this, that, and the other..." First thing I'll go do is open the tank. And so when mold is in the air, it's looking for a place, it's looking for a way to survive, and it needs moisture to survive. So it gravitates through your toilet tank. And so I can show you some pictures of toilet tanks I've opened up and like, you can know that there could be a massive problem with your air quality in there. So that's one trick. You know, things... If you have pictures hanging on the wall or paper, different setups of paper around the house, I've gone to where I've turned pictures around and see mold growing on the back on the paper on there, because it's thin and organic. Right? And that can tell you you've got a massive, massive issue from an air quality standpoint. And then, you know, really other things that you mentioned it earlier. It's as simple as looking for bubbling, cracking, peeling of building materials. I mean, that can be the number one thing to really help you identify an area of concern. And then there's other little things right is this... this is more preventative. I always tell him like, "Hey, when you're mowing the yard every few months, just when you're mowing the yard. Look at all the windows, do you see cracking? Have you seen sealing issues that you can address?" And it's just being preventative in that way. But there's again, there's different tricks you can learn on... look on stuff around the house. And I use the toilet and I use pictures hanging on the wall and things of that nature. I have them, "Hey, go turn on your air and run your heat first for a little bit. Do you feel differently when it runs?" Right? Because that can tell you that you've got you got some problem in your ducts. And so it's little things. When you start asking questions to people like, "Hey, when you turn on your air, do you feel different?" "I do." "Okay, interesting. That might be an issue." Another thing to pay... I mean, then we can stop here. And you can ask more questions is, "When you're cooking in your kitchen, there's a ton of humidity." You can't so many homes now put air vents right above where their cooking area is. And it blows dust out onto the cooktop and that moisture coming up. I had to do cleaning in our house because our daughter was getting sick again. And I cleaned our vent hood and, and it went away. Right? So it's little things like that you pay attention to the moisture areas of your house. And then Lindsay does a great job of we've got moisture alarms under every sink at the hot water heater. So there's a lot of things you can do to be preventative and, and ??

LR

Lindsay Reeves

33:09

Yeah, and humidity gauges. We have tons of humidity gauges, you know, hygrometers everywhere.

KS

Kendra Seymour

33:16

I do, too! They're all over. I give them as Christmas gifts. I'm a super fun person to know.

LR

Lindsay Reeves

33:21

People come over and they're like, "What is this?" You know, so we have those. We do have... We have water alarms, we have pans under appliances that have water, under every sink, there's some kind of liner. You have got to be looking under your sinks. So many people just put all their product under there. And it can be leaking for months, and they will not know it. Use your exhaust fans in the bathroom and in the kitchen when you're cooking. And for 20-30 minutes after you get done. Be very mindful if one room has you know, 55% humidity and all the rest is 40% humidity, you need to start doing some investigating in that room. We also love people getting their own moisture meters and using those around their house. I mean, we really are trying to teach people how to be their own inspectors.

BR

Blake Reeves

34:14

And the... Probably the number one piece of equipment – I've spent a lot of money on equipment. Number one piece of equipment I have is a high-powered flashlight. Yeah, and I'm telling you, you will see things that you are... You can be looking at something with the lights on in your room. And that flashlight will help you see damage that you couldn't detect otherwise. So I tell people invest in this and periodically inspect your house. That makes a big difference.

KS

Kendra Seymour

34:36

Yeah, I mean, sage advice because I think people tend to think that if it's mold, it'll be like in the horror movies, right? Where there's like a giant wall of mold and that does happen. But more often than not, it's hidden, right? Or, or we can't see it. You know, it's an Aspergillus, you know, and it's just white and you think it's dust you know. And so it's... It doesn't have anything to do with how clean you are. I know some people get defensive and will be like, "I keep a clean home." Well, this this isn't about how clean your home is necessarily. It's about moisture. And so when you're looking for those five signs of water damage, I think Brian Karr talks about them as five signs, the bubbling staining, the peeling. That's the secret to looking for mold. And so that's, that's super sage advice. And I love that you guys are all about prevention and helping the homeowner or renter take control because these, these are things that you can learn. And we definitely have some resources on our website. But I love your tips. And I have all those things that you guys mentioned. So I feel like I'm on the right track. Now I do... You had shared a story recently about a family that you had helped. And it was so

powerful. I think we were on the phone. We were both crying practically. Are you able to share that story with us?

LR

Lindsay Reeves

35:59

Yes.

BR

Blake Reeves

35:59

We have a bet with them that she's going to cry right now.

LR

Lindsay Reeves

36:02

I'm going to make it through. Yes. So obviously, this is all very passionate work for us. And we get very involved in these clients. And so we did have one in September; a family came to us because they had bought a new house in April. By mid-summer, their young daughter was in a wheelchair, she could barely raise her arms. And they had taken her to a lot of different doctors with no reasons found. And they finally took her to a holistic doctor who is aware of mold and he texted her and she was testing positive for mold. So he sent the family to us. The dad called us in September and Blake went out and did an inspection for the family and there was a massive mold problem in the house. And so they started remediating. It was a long process because it was in a lot of areas. A big issue to try to tackle, but he messaged us in January to let us know that she is up, she's out of her wheelchair, she's chasing after their dogs, and she's doing amazing. So we were super excited, we've been very worried about her, and had been praying for her for many months. So we were very, very excited to hear that.

KS

Kendra Seymour

37:21

That is such a testament to how powerful, you know, our indoor air is and these toxins produced by mold and other microbial growth. And to think that you helped to give that child back her life is just just amazing. And I think what this illustrates, not only is healing possible, but your story, what.. The different symptoms your family was experiencing this little girl? I think one of the barriers people face is if they think, "If my home were impacted, we would all be sick in the same way, with the same symptoms." And it doesn't work like that. There are... We're not doctors, we're not gonna get into that. We have lots of interviews with very smart individuals who can talk about why. But we... There are varying factors, right? The amount of time in the home, your age, you know, some say your genetics, the other conditions, the amount of exposure, the type of mold you're exposed to and mycotoxins. And so it is probably one of the biggest reasons this is being overlooked and dismissed. But if you have ongoing chronic health problems, or any kind of health issue, even if it's just eczema, and you're told, Well, that's normal childhood, whatever. Ask yourself what what might be going on in your home and find a good indoor environmental professional, we have resources and

ChangeTheAirFoundation.org

questions to ask that you know how to vet and find a good one because, like, I kinda have a follow up question. One of the challenges people face is, I think a lot of standard, you know, they call mold inspector, right? And the person shows up at their house. And they're in and out in like 45 minutes, maybe they set up, you know, four or five air samples in some random rooms, it's taken in the center of the room. They're not really looking around, they're not asking the history of the house, and they leave. And then the homeowner or renter gets a report with some air testing. And they think, "Oh, my house is fine." Why, why is this common approach, doing us a disservice? What, what, what do you see needing to be done differently? What do you do differently when you approach a home? Because I think too many people are writing off their home as safe, when maybe that's not the case.

BR

Blake Reeves

39:39

Yeah, I mean, look, I think, you know, you mentioned Brian Karr earlier. Right? I think we mirror a lot of Brian's sentiment and what he focuses on is... You said it earlier, right? Open air samples just 70% or more of the time they're wrong, right? And it's a... There's a whole lot of reasons you can go into that, that's right, but the simple fact is 90% of the time the mold is, the mold is hidden. And to be really accurate, we need to find the source, right? And I'll tell you, I'm highly motivated when I go into a home, by marriages by kids and seeing them exposed. And I think the goal is always to, you know, I don't know... My normal time on-site is probably anywhere from small house three, three and a half hours to six hours long, depending on, on the home, right? And our goal is to dig into everything from top to bottom, crawlspace to attic. Because it's not just going in and doing an air sample and telling you you're okay, it's looking at how the house is put together. And the way that the air flows up from your crawlspace. Or the way everything could come down through the attic. And there's a puzzle there that needs to be put together. And you've got to find that source. So I think for us, it is not just going in and doing a 30-minute run to do air samples, it is finding that source, identifying what it is, and then taking the proper steps to remediate. Because here's the thing, I've watched my family for two and a half years go through being sick in a house that we couldn't see anything. You can't tell me somebody can come in for 30 minutes, run a few tests, and fix that, right? Or... Or identify that there's so much more to it. And so I think that's... I mean very similar, I'm not a believer in that open-air samples are the final say. I think it's always deeper that you've got to find the source. And so many times it's hidden. So it's always our goal. My goal is always to find direct sample capabilities. And I'm a big fan of wall cavity samples and different methods that are much more strategic to find it. And I will tell you, there's times that we go in that they've been tested before and found nothing or the air samples were good. And we've gone in and found substantial problems by doing that. Open-air samples are my... I'm not gonna say, I mean, there's different... It's my last resort, right?

KS

Kendra Seymour

41:55

Yeah, yeah. I mean, I talked about like four elements of a good investigation. It's that thorough, you know, inspection, top... top-to-bottom attics to crawl spaces. If they're not going in those spaces. They're not, you know, peeking at your HVAC. If they're not, you know, looking in your closets, and underneath your sinks, they're missing a big piece of the puzzle. And that history of the home, you know, past water events. It's not always known, but often, you know, a homeowner or a renter has, you know, intimate knowledge about certain things. And those small events, people think, Oh, well, there was no flood, there was no sudden burst pipe. And I'm sure you can attest to this, the... the... It doesn't take a lot of moisture to do damage. And it can be a little bit of moisture over a long time, that can create a very big problem. So those pinhole leaks, that humidity.

BR

Blake Reeves

42:43

And I should add, we also... We always do exterior inspection, right. And if you don't look at the exterior, I mean, that tells you where your risk points are. And then obviously, that lets you hone in on the interior. So for us it's looking at... And again, that's why our reports are so annoying, right? People get them and they're overwhelmed. That's because I'm putting everything... like I'm putting every preventative thing I can from, "You don't have gutters," to "Your downspouts aren't draining away from your home." So there's all of that. And we do that because we want them to be aware, not panic. But again, it's our goal. And we are extremely passionate about them being in a safe home. So exterior to interior, I think it should all be done and, and to your point. It's, it's, it's very strategic, on how you approach it.

KS

Kendra Seymour

43:29

And thank you for mentioning the exterior. That's something I tend to harp on and completely forgot that highlight. So, I'm so glad you guys are doing that. Because a lot of IEPs will be like, "Well, it's inside the home that we care about. But you know, your sprinkler watering the side of your house is going to cause a problem with your inward vapor drive. You have other issues here. And so, well I was almost going to say wallpaper on an exterior wall, the number of times I've seen mold behind that. Don't do that. I know that's coming back. Like there's all these things, if you get a knowledgeable IEP, they do understand that the home is a system, right? That all of these things work together. And that all of the materials in our home have different lifespans, right? Windows and roofs and dishwashers and, and all that factors into the equation. It really is like a puzzle to your point. So

BR

Blake Reeves

44:19

I think that adds... Oh, sorry, one more thing to your question earlier you said, "What can people do preventively is walk the outside of their house," right? If you have a crawlspace I mean, so many times, I'll be looking... I'll walk up, see no gutters when I pull up to the house. Inevitably I can walk to... up to that part of the house and I'll see discoloration on the brick because they have a crawlspace you'll see this and I'll see growth of moss and different microbial growth on the base of the house and all that stuff can get into your, into your structure from there, right so there's things you can do outside... Not just the inside, look at the outside as well.

KS

Kendra Seymour

44:55

Yeah, so, so, so important. I love that. We're going to have to have you guys on to talk about you know, maybe some other Inspections stuff for another interview because I know we're out of time. But is there anything else you want to leave our listeners with before we tell people how they can get a hold of you?

LR

Lindsay Reeves

45:08

I have one thing. When you have a water event in your house, you have to address it quickly. We talk to so many people, and I'll ask them, have you had any issues? Do you have any leaks floodings, you know that kind of stuff? And they'll be like, "No." And I'll keep digging, and then they'll go, "Well, you know that one time, we did have a water heater that bust and we got some water in the closet and this different place." I'm like, Okay, well, how did you address it?" "Well, we let it dry," you know? And so I always tell people, "Please address it immediately." And that means if there was significantly wet, rip it out. It's got to go. And so we always tell people that, that is so important, because you can prevent mold in your house. If you do those things, you know.

BR

Blake Reeves

46:00

And I'll add what I would tell people. "If you're going through it right now, you're probably feeling overwhelmed. You probably don't know what to do next, you're worrying about money, health, all the things." And I always tell people when I'm talking to them, is, "You've got to stop thinking about everything, and you got to prioritize your next step. So if your next step is getting out of the home and getting to a safe place, everything you do needs to be that. And then after that you can worry about, 'Okay, are we keeping our stuff?' Like, set steps and focus on one step, get to it, and then focus on the next one. And if you pick the wrong one in the wrong order, who cares? Like you're making progress, right?" So I think everybody gets so overwhelmed. And it's, it can just break you, and you just want to give up. Stop doing that and simplify it for yourself and give yourself one next step. And once you've achieved that, and go to the next one.

KS

Kendra Seymour

46:49

You are so speaking my language, I love it. Yeah, that is very much a wise advice and advice. I tell people that I speak with as well, because you can freak yourself out, and you can hit that analysis paralysis. And so the next step, that's what you focused on. Thank you both so much for being here. If someone wanted to get in touch with you, how could they do that?

LR

Lindsay Reeves

47:13

Um, we have a website, it's HomeSafeMoldNWA.com. And so they can go find us on there connect through that. But we're in Arkansas, in northwest Arkansas, where we do inspections. So that's kind of where we stay. We don't go far out of that. But we do talk to people and do consultations and you know, help people as much as we can so.

BR

Blake Reeves

47:35

And they can reach us at HomeSafeMold@gmail.com. And again, to her point, she has conversations with people all over the country on a regular basis, helping them. And even though we're not there, I mean, look, we're passionate about it. We just want to help people and we don't care if they're in Portland, if they're in Virginia, if they're here. We can't.... probably can't do your inspection. But we can, we can help you from advice standpoint.

KS

Kendra Seymour

47:57

Point you in the right way. Though, thank you so much guys for doing what you're doing and for turning your tragedy into this, like, mission to, to make homes safer for other people. So, I know that resonates with me as well that you never, you know, we can't keep it from happening to everyone. But if we can prevent what happened to us from happening to other people or shorten the time it takes for them to you know, get to the right doctors or to get the right help, then then that's a win. So, everyone, thank you for listening. If you found this interview helpful, please help us spread awareness. Like, follow, and share us on Instagram and Facebook and LinkedIn on our podcast, Your Indoor Air podcast. We want to shine a light on this hidden epidemic of poor indoor air quality and if you want to make sure you never miss an interview or tips or an episode like this, please head on over to [ChangeTheAirFoundation.org](https://www.ChangeTheAirFoundation.org) and sign up for our newsletter. Thank you so much.