



Mold Remediation Part 10: Cleaning the Rest of the Home & Belongings After Mold Remediation

JM

Jessica McQuade

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We know most airborne contaminants eventually land on surfaces, becoming what we know and see as dust. And I think we all understand this concept now, that any particulate, especially microscopic ones like viruses, bacteria, and mold, they don't just evaporate into thin air and disappear. They land somewhere. Typically, on the nearest horizontal surface. So, this is why the goal of the SPC is to remove all historical contaminated dust on the structural components of the home as well as contents (so furniture and belongings) through effective cleaning methods in order to enable the home to return to Condition One, which is "normal fungal ecology", as defined by the IICRC.

KS

Kendra Seymour

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Hello everyone. Welcome to Part 10 of our Mold Remediation Mini Class Series brought to you by Change the Air Foundation. My name is Kendra Seymour, and I'm joined today by Jessica McQuade of the Mold Mentor, LLC. And she's going to be taking us through cleaning the rest of your home and belongings after mold remediation. Now, I have to say this is one of the most overlooked and dismissed parts of the process. And I promise you, if you're going through remediation, you're going to want to watch this episode because this is a step that you don't want to miss. With that said, Jessica, thank you so much for being here.

JM

Jessica McQuade

1:59

My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

KS

Kendra Seymour

2:01

What I love about this stuff, and I love the sneak peek that I saw, is that, these are things that the homeowner and renter can do, you know, largely themselves. Obviously, if someone is experiencing, you know, serious health symptoms, they may want to, you know, bring in family members or consider bringing in some professional help. But even a lot of the stuff you're going to share with us today, I know, are our cleaning practices I use day in and day out. So I love how practical this is. But I know they don't want to hear from me. So, let's have you jump right in.

JM

Jessica McQuade

2:35

Okay. So, yeah. This is something I deal with a lot in my consulting practice, so I'm very excited to talk about it today. The small particulate cleaning (SPC). It is one of the final steps in this whole journey, as I like to refer to it. And so, it can be a pretty like momentous occasion when people finally get to this point. So, let's get right into it. So why is cleaning the rest of the home and the belongings so important? I want to just give a little bit of context first. So, Kendra, you've used this analogy a lot, and I think we can credit Brian Karr of We Inspect with putting it out there because he's like the master of analogies. So, mold is like a factory, and the smoke is what we refer to as Condition Two, which is defined by the IICRC as 'settled spores'. And I want to take the opportunity to point out that this is a bit of a thing. It's important to understand, I think, and I see a lot of misinformation out there about this. So, both active mold — meaning it has a moisture source, it's actively growing — and dormant mold — which I often hear people refer to as 'old' or 'dead' (it's actually dormant): both of these states of being can contribute to Condition Two. Right, like mold does not disappear unless we physically remove it. So, it's either active and sporulating. or it's dry and powdery. Either way, it can easily become airborne. So, just like, let's stop the madness with this whole 'dead mold is not a problem' thing. Anyway, we know most airborne contaminants eventually land on surfaces, becoming what we know and see as dust. And I think we all understand this concept now, that any sort of particulate, especially microscopic ones like viruses, bacteria, and mold, they don't just like evaporate into thin air and disappear. They land somewhere. Typically on the nearest horizontal surface. So this is why the goal of the SPC is to remove all historical contaminated dust on the structural components of the home as well as contents (so furniture and belongings) through effective cleaning methods in order to enable the home to return to Condition One, which is "normal fungal ecology", as defined by the IICRC. So, we're going to go a little bit more into this for a minute. So, you can see she's not looking very happy. She's saying, "Normal fungal ecology, that's not good enough." I think this is the face most people in the mold community make when you say these words.

Normal fungal ecology gets a little tricky for people, especially those of us who have been made sick in our homes. Like, there's a lot of anxiety, naturally and understandably, around all of this, because the one space we should feel safe in is the one that has threatened our family's health and safety, our home. Right? So that experience can easily shake you, like to

the core. So, when someone uses the word 'fungal' in the state that we're aiming to achieve, coming out of this whole experience, it's understandably a bit of a trigger. For people who go through this mold thing, we often get to a point, I see this a lot, and I've experienced it myself, we often get to a point where we feel like we need to control every possible aspect of our environment in order to feel safe. Right? It's like most people that go through this experience that. And what this principle is asking us to do, is basically accept the fact that normal can be safe again. And that can be really hard for people coming out of the trauma of all of this. But I think it's really important to set goals that aim to bring you back to normalcy, because sometimes we can, kind of like, really get outside of what we know is normal, and what we used to experience as normal. So, like, come back. I always say to people. Okay, so let's be clear about what normal fungal ecology means. We're not endeavoring to bring your home to clean room ecology because A, that would be impossible, B, not sustainable, C, it's not healthy...it's not how our immune systems work. Normal fungal ecology means normal, and that's what we want. Normal, what does that mean in practice? Maybe somewhat reflective of the outdoor environment, because we know that what's outside comes in through normal airflow. We also have to account, though, for things that we have inside that we don't have outside. Right? We have a variety of building materials, plumbing, furniture, clothing, food, pets, people who go other places. Right? All of these things contribute to the indoor ecology, and we need to account for that when we're thinking about all this stuff. Okay, so, again, to keep it simple, the goal of the SPC is to remove all of the historical contaminated dust. I want to pause just for a moment and loop back to what I was just talking about, because given the work that I do on the consulting side, it feels like irresponsible of me not to. And that is that, most people who are taking on this momentous task of the SPC, let's just say they've been through some things. Right? Like, so you and I know this well, Kendra. We've been through it ourselves. We work with people every day who are going through it. It's hard, and like life-altering level hard. So, you know, by the time people are getting to this point in the journey, they're typically like physically, emotionally, intellectually, financially exhausted. And I'll be the first to say, this SPC process, it is a bit daunting. It's extremely tedious, and it can be very overwhelming. And I say that because it's true for so many people who will be watching this. And I also want to express before I even explain what it is and how to do it, it does not need to be perfect. It doesn't. No matter what your anxiety tells you, it doesn't. It needs to be better than before, ideally significantly better. And that is the goal. And every little bit counts. So I want to just get that out there because I think it's really important...because I know this can throw people over the edge into like, you know, complete analysis paralysis kind of state. Ok guiding principles, which I think are really important. I'm going to run through these. So one, we are not trying to kill anything because dead mold...well, yeah, because dead mold is still allergenic, is still pathogenic, and/or toxigenic, whatever it might be, based on the species. So we need to physically remove it. That's it. We're not trying to kill dust, we're trying to remove it. Remediation is how we remove the source. So typically, by the time we're doing an SPC, we're usually doing it post-remediation. So by that point, the source has already been removed. Again, with the SPC, we're removing the historical dust that was previously contaminated by the source, that is now gone. Right? And number three, we don't need chemicals to remove dust. We need the right tools, products, and techniques to break electrostatic and oil-based bonds between the dust and the surface that the dust is on.

Ok, so now we get into the meat and potatoes—or the pizza. Sandwiches and pizza! So the main steps of the SPC, and let me start by saying this is my suggested method for doing this. There are slight variations on how you can execute an SPC. The details we're going to discuss today are what I have settled on based on my personal experience, my professional experience, as well as that of my clients, combined with my training and learning from other professionals, all of that put together. So, okay, the term HEPA-Pizza is a play on the original term HEPA-sandwich. Which is a well-known cleaning technique in the remediation world. I'm guessing that was discussed in part seven. That's a HEPA-Vac, which is the bread, the damp wipe, which is the meat, or cheese, or whatever sandwich it is, and then another HEPA-Vac. That's your HEPA-sandwich. The HEPA-pizza, is three otherwise not too exciting layers, coming together, the dough, the sauce, the cheese, to make a whole new food, delicious pizza, or in our case, a whole new home ecology. We believe that the variation on step three, a dry wipe in lieu of a second round of HEPA vacuuming, is what makes this version of the cleaning more effective for the living space. It allows us to get a little more hands-on and therefore a little more detailed, in my experience. In short, the process we're going to follow for the SPC is step one, HEPA vacuuming or dry wipe, and I'll come back to that in a second. Step two, damp wipe with a product of choice. We'll get into that as well. Then step three, a dry wipe. And we're going to use this method to clean all of our surfaces, so all of our structural stuff and all of our hard surface belongings, same process. Okay, so let's dive a little deeper.

JM

Jessica McQuade

12:02

Okay, so step one, HEPA vacuuming or dry wipe. And again, full disclaimer, this “or dry wipe” option is a ‘me thing’. So, people may not have heard this before, and here's why I like to present this as an option. First off, as I said in the guiding principles, we need the right tools, products, and techniques to effectively remove dust. So if you're cleaning, say, a kitchen table, does it feel practical to vacuum it? Like right? I can tell you from experience in testing out all these methods, in most cases, it is not practical to vacuum a kitchen table. Otherwise, we would all be vacuuming our kitchen table all the time, and we don't. Right? We're not doing that in everyday life. We wipe it. So, I want to back up for one second and talk about why we're doing three steps of cleaning. And that's simply because with each progressive step, we're picking up what the previous step may have left behind. Ideally, each step is picking up as much dust as possible, so that by the time we get to step three, we've gotten all we can get. So, let's use whatever method of dust removal is the most effective for that particular surface. Okay, this is why I offer the dry wipe as an alternative to HEPA vacuuming. So, step one is all about what we refer to as bulk dust. This is the dust we can see with our eyes. If we can remove that from a particular surface more effectively with a dry wipe than we can with a vacuum, by all means, do what is most effective, because that's the entire point of doing this cleaning. So, what are we wiping with? There are different schools of thought on this, and it's generally either microfiber or like a dry Swiffer. In my experience, I've seen microfiber be more effective, so that's what I recommend, but people are welcome to use whatever they like. I've tried several, both disposable and regular different brands, different quality levels of microfiber. I always come back to this Moxie brand from Lowe's. That's just my opinion, and I'm not getting

paid for saying that. So, yeah, that's the brand I really like best. One of my IICRC trainers described the right quality of microfiber, as like "Not too soft and fluffy, but not too rough or flat. And you should feel like, a little bit of drag almost, when you pull it and dragged it across your hand." So just to give a little bit of detail there. Okay, so step two is the damp wipe. Notice it says damp. My motto here is damp, not wet. I'll say that again, damp, not wet. And the thing to understand about microfiber is that it's absorbent. Anything that is absorbent has a maximum capacity on what it can absorb, before it stops absorbing. If you wet the microfiber, you've taken up all of its absorbing capacity with whatever you've wet it with. And what we want is for it to use that absorbing capacity to absorb the dust that we're trying to remove. So that's really important. I can't drive that home enough. So what product are we using? I'll take us back again to our guiding principles. We are not trying to kill dust. We're trying to physically remove it. So how can we do that most effectively? We can refer to Kendra's earlier interviews with John Banta for the answer to this. And the answer is surfactants. So, you can go with his recommendation of I believe, correct me if I'm wrong, it's five drops of dish soap to a quart of water. I personally use Branch Basics. I like that a lot. Any surfactant that you're comfortable with, but basically, just soap is like an excellent surfactant. I encourage people to watch the Change the Air interviews with John Banta to better understand the science of why we want a surfactant and not something like, you know, vinegar, ammonia, or even an antimicrobial.

Okay, so long story short here, is that we're using microfiber and a surfactant in a spray bottle. You're spraying the microfiber to lightly dampen it, and then wiping your surface in either one direction or an S pattern, such that you're maintaining the same leading edge. This is the key to picking up dust and not redepositing, it like you will if you go back and forth where you're picking up dust, redepositing it, picking it up, redepositing it, because of the way that the fibers of the microfiber work. You also want to change sides before it's loaded, ideally like before it's super, super dirty so that we're not risking redepositing. That's a lot of to take in that I just rattled off. So, I put together a quick video illustration of what that looks like. I'm going to just play that real quick. It's just a few seconds long.

JM

Jessica McQuade

17:12

Okay, so here's my microfiber. I have marked the leading edge, so I can illustrate that. I'm going to give it a quick spray-spray to lightly dampen it. And first we'll do S pattern. So, we see the leading edge...it maintains its position as the leading edge. The other option is something like this, maintaining that leading edge. Yes, we're picking it up and pulling it back, but just get the job done. We're going over this item three times. The other thing is we said we want to change sides before it's loaded. So, change sides. And then press on. You'll start to see it develop a line of dust. That's how you know when it's loaded and time to change sides.

JM

Jessica McQuade

18:11

Okay. Hopefully that all brought it together easily. Step three is the dry wipe. Easy peasy. You're just using microfiber. We're doing one more pass. At this point, this is the third time that we're working with this surface or this item, and this is just to make sure we've got it

all. That's it. Make sure you're still doing one-directional passes or S pattern if you can, just to refrain from going back and forth or in circles like we all learn to do. Same leading edge. Just keep that in mind and you can't go wrong. Okay, so tools. We need, if we're going to be doing any vacuuming, a sealed HEPA vacuum. I love using mini tools. This is what they look like. They're adorable. You can get little...these are great for tiny little spots. I'm going to show you just for reference. This is a normal size tool. This is the same thing in a little baby version. So, they're super cute. They're on Amazon, and you can get a converter. It usually comes with a converter kit for your vacuum so that you can attach those. You might want an extension hose or a telescoping wand if you're going to be doing ceilings, for example, or walls tops of walls are hard to get to. Attachments, whether they're the baby ones or regular ones, floor, upholstery, crevice, all the tools. Compressed air is another great option. So, you can get this any office supply place or Amazon. Let's see what else. So, microfiber, lots of it! That brand that I mentioned, I mean, get whatever brand you're comfortable with that you feel like fits the bill, but buy a lot of it. The ones I get, a 60-pack. You can get a spray bottle, as you saw in the video. You can also consider an air scrubber. If you really want to up your game, they're available on Amazon. It's basically a giant basic mechanical air purifier, and that can help capture some of the dust that's being aerosolized during the clean, and you would just keep it in each room as you're working in that room. We don't need that to be under negative pressure, by the way. You just have it in the room acting as an air purifier collecting dust. Lastly, PPE. So, I'm a little hesitant on this one to give very specific advice in a forum like this because it's very personalized. It should be based not only on the sensitivity level of the person, but also their health. So, for example, someone with asthma may really need to get medical clearance prior to wearing a legit respirator because it restricts air flow to your lungs. Okay. Technique. All right. There's an eight-sided folding technique for microfiber. I'll go ahead and illustrate it real quick. It's just so that you can get the most out of your microfiber, since you know, it's a detailed process and we do want to flip the microfiber, and you know, make sure we're not redepositing dust, as I was saying. But let's at least make the most out of our...get the most out of it. There's an eight-sided folding technique for microfiber to ensure that you get the most out of it, because we're doing a lot of cleaning, and as I said, we want to change sides pretty frequently to make sure we're not redepositing the dust that we're picking up. So, let's at least make sure we're getting the most out of each microfiber. Okay, so I've numbered it to prove that you can indeed get eight sides. Okay, so here is side one. I'm going to unfold it so you can see. So, side one here. You're wearing gloves, so you can put your hand on the dirty side. So, you'd wipe with side one, flip it, then you're at side two. Then you would open it halfway and fold it back on itself. Okay. Then you have side three, then again, flip it, side four. And then, let's see. Then you open it completely, okay, and then fold it back on itself. And then again, in half...make my numbers line up. Then we have five, flip it, six, open it halfway, fold it back on itself. Sorry, seven and eight. Okay, eight sides.

JM

Jessica McQuade

22:51

Okay, so we've already gone over the technique of how to wipe. I want to, again, I interrupt myself for a second to say, while the S pattern is definitely ideal in principle, because you might drop some dust when you pick it up—like I was doing in the video with the one-directional wipes. But if it doesn't feel natural to you to do the S pattern and you're at risk

of doing, like, not as good of a job, or it just doesn't feel sustainable, do what is most attainable for you. I'd rather someone use a slightly less effective technique and use it really well, than use a slightly better technique and execute it poorly. This principle, what I just said, applies to basically everything in this entire process, in my opinion. Just get it done as best you can, and whatever is the most doable is the approach you should take. Just please remember that as I'm going through all of this detail and you're getting overwhelmed, just get it done. In the best way that you can. Okay, so again, just keep in mind, maintain that leading edge however you can do that. Change sides before it's loaded, lightly damp, and use a spray bottle. We're never using a bucket. Right? We're never taking microfiber, dipping it in a bucket and squeezing it out. A, it's going to be too wet to absorb anything. And B, that water is progressively getting dirtier, so you're not getting cleaner. You're just maintaining the same level of dirty. Okay. Strategize, strategize, strategize again. So, have a plan of attack and stick to it, so that you don't lose sight of where you are, what's next, what have you done, what haven't you done. If you have helpers, game plan before you start and regroup as necessary to adjust the plan, especially in the first, you know, hour or two, as you're getting your groove. A couple of tips to think about. Obviously, I could talk about this for days because there's so many details that go into it. So, I'm just trying to give at least all of the things to think about, even if we can't talk about every possible scenario. So, think about where are you going to start and what's your path going to be? Are you going to start on this side of the house and work your way around? Are you going to start, you know, from the back to the front? Whatever makes sense for your house and for you. Always work top down, because dust falls as we agitate it. So for example, start on the top floor and work your way from, you know, the front of the house to the back of the house, or moving east to west, whatever you decide. But make a plan, have it in your mind, stick with it. Prioritize horizontal surfaces. So, I said this earlier when we were first talking about the principles, we know that dust settles on the nearest horizontal or flat surface. So that would be the surfaces...those would be the surfaces to prioritize. If you cannot handle doing, like, literally every surface in your house, and it may not be necessary for everyone to do every horizontal, and every vertical surface—prioritize horizontal. Those are going to be the dustiest. Plan out cleaning contents versus structural cleaning. So like, will you have a dedicated cleaning room, and then how do you manage that? Will, you split the room in half and put everything in one half, and then clean the other side, and then clean each content, and put it into the clean side? Will you clean your contents in place, and literally just pick up everything, clean it, put it back down? These are all viable options. And again, it's like, what is the most doable? Okay. Are you going to work horizontally across the room from top to bottom, or are you going to do, like, two-foot swaths from top to bottom across the room? It doesn't matter. Just get it done. But think about this stuff so that you don't start and then realize, "Oh, that maybe wasn't the most effective way to do it." So yeah, point is strategized. Details, details, details. As you can tell, there are a lot of them to think about. There are so many details that go into doing a clean like this. And honestly, like I said, most of them you won't think of until you're in it. So you want a clear and detailed plan, and even then, expect the unexpected. Okay. Just know that's going to happen, and it's okay. It's okay. You're just cleaning a house. So. prep as best you can, adjust your process as necessary, and just keep moving forward. Okay. Other considerations. You mentioned, Kendra, you can DIY it. A lot of people DIY this. You can outsource it. You can, you know, find a cleaning company, find a remediation...some remediation companies do this. They offer it. Should

you stay home or vacate for a few days? You know? Should you do it all in one shot or piecemeal it? These are all things that you get to decide. Again, there's like ideal scenario, and then there's reality. And we're not living in ideal scenario, as people who are going through this have realized by now. Things don't always go as ideally as we would like them to. And, you know, just get it done.

So yeah. Some other things, HVAC and duct cleaning. I know, Kendra, you've put together a lot of information on those topics. How and when, that stuff we got to figure out. Walls and ceilings, how critical are they? It depends. There's a lot of it depends in here. Fogging, yay or yay. It depends. Everybody's got their... I have my opinions, my professional opinions on that. But there's a lot of room for different opinions, I suppose, in there, but that's for another episode, I think. I could go on and on. For some of this stuff, like I said, the answer is it depends. Just trying to hit on the main tenants of the clean. Otherwise, this would be no longer be a mini class. It would be a mega class. Okay, so contents, a.k.a. your stuff. So, we have different categories of contents. We have hard surface stuff, porous, semi-porous, carpets and area rugs, clothes and textiles, stuffed animals, all those things are big question marks for people. So, I'd love to get into the disposition of contents because it's a really important topic. But again, probably for another session. What I can say is that most hard surface contents can be cleaned using the three-step process, or some reasonable variation of it as we've outlined here. Porous surfaces are a bit more challenging because they're porous. So, I'm personally not a just automatically throw it all away kind of person, because every situation is different, and I've seen so many different situations and opportunities to handle them differently. And every house, every person who's affected, you know, all of those things come into play, and every situation is different. I find this to be a topic that really needs to be handled at a personal level.

I do generally worry about when I'm thinking about porous item, couches and mattresses are high on the list of things that are of concern, right? Because we sit on them, and we compress that dust through the fabric and into the foam, the cushion, and then can we really vacuum that out at that point? If mattresses...similar concept, and also, like, we spend half our lives and that's when we're supposed to be, you know, recuperating, and detoxing, and all that stuff, like, is it worth it? I don't know. Personal decision, but those and carpet, those are the top three things on my list of like...hmm? If we're doing all this, if we've done remediation, gone through all this stuff by now, we've paid all this money for remediation, you know, like, is it worth keeping those things? Especially if you're somebody who in the back of your you're going to be like, "Every time I sit on that couch, am I going to be uncomfortable?" You know? If that's the answer, then we ought to think about the couch. Carpet, I'll also reference another interview you did with John Banta. Man, we learned a lot about carpet. And once you know how gross it is, it is hard to unknow how gross carpet is.

JM

Jessica McQuade

31:22

I will give, though, just a quick video on the three-pass vacuuming technique that you can utilize on porous items, furniture, couches, mattresses, carpet, area rugs, if you decide to keep that stuff. Here's a video showing this three-pass vacuuming technique. You're going to hear me blabbing for a few seconds here at the beginning before you actually see the

technique. So, just bear with it, but I'm explaining where you can use it.

“The three-pads vacuuming technique we're going to use on wall-to-wall carpet, area rugs, which if you're doing an area rug, make sure you flip it over and be both sides of it with this technique. Porous furniture, mattresses, things of that nature. It's just a bit as you go north, south, east, west, and then on a diagonal. Whether you're using a floor attachment or an compulsory attachment, same rules apply. Why are we doing this? Because we want to lift and agitate the fibers from multiple angles in order to release as much dust and debris as possible.”

Okay, so that's that. Then most clothes and textiles can be washed in the washing machine. I think we could probably do a class just on that. I'll tell you. Yeah, so stuffed animals is another big one. And I get this question a lot because we don't want to be traumatizing kids, like, anymore than necessary going through this process. I'll give a little trick. One of the things you can do with stuffed animals, if you can't replace them easily or if they're really special...you can just split a seam, take the stuffing out, and then machine wash them a couple of times, and then restuff it, close up that seam. So kind of a simple way to deal with that. I know We Inspect has generously allowed Change the Air to share their guide called 'Clean Your Stuff', where they give additional guidance on how to evaluate and clean contents. So that is one of the many, many invaluable free resources that Change the Air provides. I recommend checking that out for more, like, detailed guidance on the contents. Okay, so, just some advice from a Type A perfectionist, who went through this while severely mold sick. You can easily drive yourself crazy trying to get this perfect, and that, I do not recommend. Zero stars for that experience. As I said earlier, it does not need to be perfect. It needs to be better. Ideally, notably better than it was before. And this can be, also, a continuous process. Kendra, I know you mentioned, and I'm the same. I've adopted a lot of these cleaning processes just in my regular cleaning procedures, if you will, in my regular house cleaning. So, it can also be a process, you know, where you get like, “Okay, maybe we get 80% better with this big clean. And then every time we clean, we're getting one step closer, to like, you know, all of that being gone. So, every bit better, is just that. Better than it was before. Forward progress is what we need. Don't let all the details overwhelm you. Just get it done. That is my best advice from my experience with this.

KS

Kendra Seymour

34:25

That was amazing. I think it's so helpful to see, you know, the practical videos that you shared, and your expertise, not just working with your clients...which, by the way, I did miss. I did not give an intro for Jessica when we first started, but we're lucky enough to have her as a Board Member. So if you head on over to our website at ChangeTheAirFoundation.com, you can now check out her bio. But she is somebody who has also lived this experience herself. So, Jessica, there's so many things. I have a few questions, if that's okay?

JM

Jessica McQuade

34:56

Yeah, of course.

KS

Kendra Seymour

34:57

So, I love that you start, you know, really pushing home the message that your job as the homeowner, this doesn't need to be perfect. I always say that this journey is about progress over perfection. And, you know, when I'm talking with people, what some of the best advice I give is this stuff. It's clean, clean, clean. Every time, you know, you're cleaning, whether it's immediately after remediation or those weeks or months following, your goal is to reduce, right, what is settling out over the air over time. And every time you can remove some of that, you know, toxic burden from the environment, the better that it is. I do want to add one more thing for the listener, because you really teed it up there beautifully for us for contents cleaning, because it is so individualized. It's so dependent on, you know, factors like the types of molds and the amounts, the type of material, the health and sensitivity of the people involved, the sentimental value—that it would be numerous episodes when you try to just tackle that. So, if you actually head on over to our website, again, ChangeTheAirFoundation.org, and you go to our Resource tab, we have a Start Here feature that I'm super excited about, and I hope people check out. And it takes you through step-by-step from the inspection to the remediation, to the post-testing. But step four really talks about cleaning your home and belongings. And we linked to that guide that Jessica mentioned. And we've also added our friends at ISEAI have released a content cleaning guide as well, and a small particle cleaning guide, too, that they've generously allowed us to link to as well. So you can download those. And I highly recommend you check those out, because we'll go into a little bit more detail on some of the content stuff. Jessica, for those listening, I'm sure people were furiously taking notes. Like, can you just, like, review for us some of the products you that you mentioned? Your spray bottle and surfactant...and I believe I cut you off. So, what's your go-to non-toxic surfactant these days?

JM

Jessica McQuade

37:04

I've tried all different products. I'm always playing with different products, because I want to be able to experience them myself before I recommend them. My latest venture has been with Branch Basics. I really love their product.

KS

Kendra Seymour

37:22

Yeah. And it's one...oh, no, go ahead. I cut you off.

JM

Jessica McQuade

37:04

Yeah, no, it's just one product that you dilute to different dilutions for different purposes.

KS

Kendra Seymour

37:27

Yeah, and I think people are sometimes blown away that something as simple as a dish soap with surfactant in it, is so powerful. And they think that they need these harsh

chemicals or these expensive things. And really the science is, while, you know, complicated, it's actually quite simple. Right? We have mycotoxins, they can be sticky, they can be fat-soluble, they can be water-soluble. Again, Jessica will link to it. She mentioned the John Banta interviews that we did, because he gets into the science there, so we won't unpack that now. But it's really, really effective combined with those microfiber cloths. What was the brand? Who do you like, again, for the microfiber cloth?

JM

Jessica McQuade

38:06

Yeah. Just in my experience, it's called Moxie, M-O-X-I-E. It's available at Lowe's. I don't really see it anywhere else. I don't think it's on Amazon or anywhere like that, but they have it in a 60-pack, usually. It's by the mops and things.

KS

Kendra Seymour

38:21

When somebody is going through this, though, you said a lot of microfiber cloths. I don't want people thinking you're using one or two or three cloths. You're talking dozens, and dozens, and dozens, and dozens of cloths, correct?

JM

Jessica McQuade

38:33

Oh, yeah. I mean, I would buy that 60 pack to start with. You know, you're buying...I would go to 60, or get two packs of 60, and then see where you land.

KS

Kendra Seymour

38:42

Yeah. It's a process. And, you know, something else that Jessica said, too, and this is reiterated in a couple of our other episodes. The person doing the work, the quality, their attention to detail...you can have the perfect product, right? But if the person doing the work is rushing, or they're not being meticulous, and they're not making sure to overlap their S pattern, you know, that product isn't going to do you good. It can be the best product in the world. So, you know, focus on doing the best you can and doing it well. And I love that you give people permission to, if it's not working for you, then it means you're not going to do it. You'd be better off doing it and modifying it, than not doing anything at all. So that's incredibly helpful. What about a vacuum? So, one of the things that we talk about at the Foundation, we as an organization, don't name specific products, but you gave us a framework. You said a HEPA-filtered vacuum, and it's a sealed-system. And so, do you want to tell people real quick, why that sealed-system is important when you're purchasing or choosing a vacuum cleaner?

JM

Jessica McQuade

39:53

Yeah. I mean, the challenge with this, let's be honest, is that this isn't really a thing in normal society. There's not a website you can go to where it lists all the true HEPA-sealed vacuums. It just doesn't... it's not a thing. So, it is a thing in our community when it comes to

this. This is one of the most common posts that I see in all the Facebook groups. Does anybody have a vacuum rec? I need true HEPA-sealed vacuum. So, I don't have the answer to that either, unfortunately. I wish somebody would, you know, come up...I know, Kendra, you've shared some stuff with me where maybe there was a little bit of testing done, but it's not necessarily for this purpose. So, yeah. I use vacuums that are remediation-grade, so we want it to be sealed. We want it to be HEPA-filtered and sealed because, you know, obviously, in this case, when we're doing this clean, we're trying to remove all of that historical dust, contaminated historical dust. So, it's the dust that's there that we want gone, gone. And so, we make sure we're capturing it as effectively as possible, and that we're not sucking it up with the vacuum, and then exhausting it right back out to the room. That's the purpose of both the HEPA-filtration and the sealed, internally sealed vacuum.

KS

Kendra Seymour

41:14

Yeah, and people can go online. If you Google something along the lines of sealed versus unsealed vacuums, you'll see videos where people have done a smoke test with theatrical smoke, and they run it through the vacuum. The air doesn't only come out of the opening meant to exhaust the air where the HEPA-filter is. When you have an unsealed system, you'll see, and you can actually see the theatrical smoke coming out like the sides, and seams, and where attachments are. And so, what we're driving at here is you want a vacuum that really limits releasing any additional air into the environment, because the only part that's filtered is the part that comes out through the HEPA-filter. So just something to think about. We appreciate, of course, those examples. Yeah. Are there any other last-minute takeaways that you have for people who are about to embark on this journey?

JM

Jessica McQuade

42:10

Yeah, I think it's just the main messages that we hopefully were able to get across here. Just do the best you can, follow the basic, you know, understand the principles. If you really think about and understand the principles, then you can take the tools, techniques, and execute it to your best ability, knowing what your goals are that you're trying to accomplish. So hopefully, we've gotten enough of that information across that people can really just work within that and just do the best they can.

KS

Kendra Seymour

42:43

When I talk about indoor air quality with people, I kind of summarize it in four interventions you can do. You can remove or mitigate the source. So, this cleaning we're talking about, folks, comes after remediation. And we're not talking about, you know, the couch that has physical mold growth. That is not what we're talking about. We're talking about that smoke, those settled spores. So, source removal, improving your filtration, you know, whether it's the filter you have on your HVAC system, or you know, air purifiers or air cleaners, it's your ventilation, the fresh air indoors, and cleaning. People really underestimate the importance and the effectiveness of cleaning, and what that can do to the air in your home. So, I love that because I know that's something I can do. It's time

consuming, but it's also not super costly. Some of these interventions, air purifiers, ventilation systems, are costly and not always within your budget, especially if you're coming off of an expensive remediation, or if you have medical bills. So cleaning, cleaning, cleaning, folks, I think is the name of the game here. Jessica, thank you so much for being here.

JM

Jessica McQuade

43:42

Yeah, my pleasure. Thanks for having me.

KS

Kendra Seymour

43:54

And for everyone listening, I hope you stay with us for the remaining episodes in our series, because I think you're going to find them just as eye-opening as this one. And if you want to make sure you never miss a great episode like this, please head on over to our foundation website, at ChangeTheAirFoundation.org, and sign up for our newsletter—because it really is the best way to get great information like this directly to your inbox. We'll see you next time.