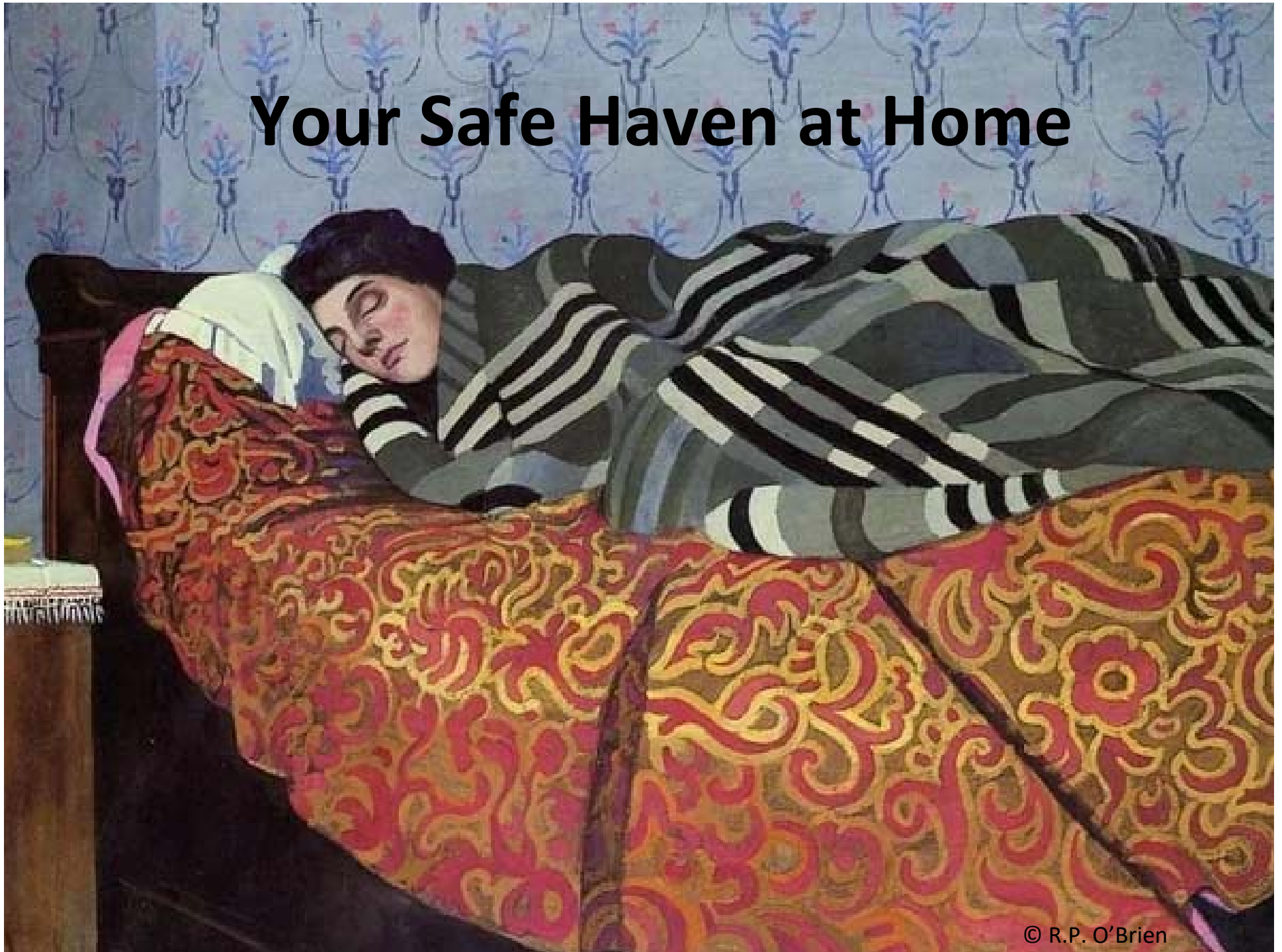


Your Safe Haven at Home



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About Me:

Roselle P. O'Brien,
LMHC, REAT, REACE, ICAT, LPN

Education:

- PhD in Psychology with focus on
Mast Cell Disorders (MCD)
Current Candidate
- MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- MA in Education
- MFA in Creative Writing
- BA in Art/Fine Arts, Education
- Diploma Nursing

Licenses/Certification:

- Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC)
- Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor (LCMHC)
- Licensed Educator
- Licensed Nurse
- Intermodal Creative Arts Therapist (ICAT)
- Intermodal Creative Arts Facilitator (ICAF)

About Me (cont'd):

Roselle P. O'Brien,

LMHC, REAT, REACE, ICAT, LPN

Licenses/Certification (cont'd):

- Registered Expressive Arts Therapist (REAT)
- Registered Expressive Arts Consultant/Educator (REACE)
- Certified Life Coach
- Certified Health & Nutrition Life Coach
- Certified Therapeutic Arts Life Coach
- Certified Group Life Coach

Certificates:

- Eco-Health Support: Medical Professional
- Eco-Health Support: Therapist

The Eco-Health Certificate Programs are for understanding and working with people who have Mast Cell Disorders (MCD) such as Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS), Post-/Long-COVID, being sensitive to multiple chemicals, chronic fatigue, brainfog, EDS, fibromyalgia, and more.

For more information: <https://celacare-ecohealth.online>

About the Work I Do:

Roselle P. O'Brien,

LMHC, REAT, REACE, ICAT, LPN

***Therapy · Case Management · Life Coach · Creative Arts for Health & Healing
Supporting You!***

I am a mast cell specialist with over 13 years experience working with and supporting individuals with MCAS and other mast cell activation related issues and disorders. Visit my websites and learn more about the work I do and the ways in which I provide supports and education!

CELA - The Center for Expressive Living & Creative Arts

<https://celaonline.com>

The Counseling Center at CELA

<https://counselingatcela.com>

Creative Coaching | Facing Future

<https://creativecoaching-facingfuture.me>

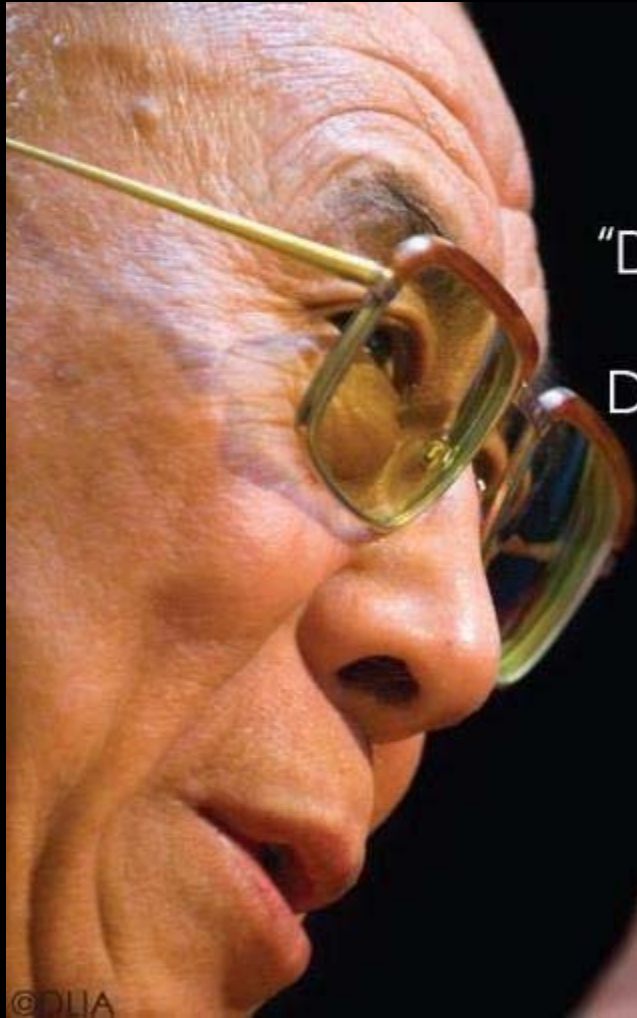
pph.me/creativecoaching

RoadMap:

Part 1: Foundation

Part 2: What is Home?

Part 3: Creating your Safe Haven



"DO NOT LET THE BEHAVIOUR
OF OTHERS
DESTROY YOUR INNER PEACE"

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

In Brief: About Mast Cells

Mast Cells Are:

- A type of white blood cell
- Found in the connective tissue throughout the body
- Found in every organ system including the brain
- Part of the body's immune response
- Part of the body's inflammatory response
- The body's 1st responders to perceived dangers and threats

In Brief: Mast Cells (cont'd)

Mast Cells – What They Do:

- Body's 1st line of defense against viruses, bacteria, foreign substances, pathogens (our immune response)
- Help protect the body against things like bacteria, viruses—it “adapts” to the specific danger it encounters (adaptive immune response)
- Regulate blood pressure
- Regulate wound healing
- Regulate the body's inflammatory response
- & more

In Brief: Reactions & Triggers

Reactions:

The specific symptoms a person experiences when exposed to certain toxic chemicals or substances in their environment, on others, and even on themselves.

Dizziness

Agitation

Cognitive impairments

Brain fog

Flu-like symptoms

Swollen glands & lymphs

Diarrhea, nausea, vomiting

Sudden urge to urinate

Sudden urge to move bowels

Fluctuations in blood pressure

Syncope

Heart palpitations

Visual distortions

Vision issues

Heart skipping beats

Depression

Anxiety

Suicidal ideation

Feeling of impending doom

Hunger no matter what eaten

Rashes, skin eruptions

Tinnitus

Numbness to skin, body

Neurological pain

Fatigue (often intense)

Hearing issues

GI distress & pain

Hair loss

In Brief: Reactions & Triggers

Triggers:

The specific toxic chemicals, substances, or environments (on others and even on themselves) to which a person reacts.

Pesticides

Plastics

Exhaust fumes (car, truck, machinery)

Paint, finishes, solvents, shellac

Inks & dyes

Detergents

Cleaning products at work (industrial)

Household cleaning products

Laundry detergents, dryer sheets

Fabric softeners

Disinfectants, germicides, hand sanitizer

Air fresheners, room deodorizers

Car trees

Extremes in temperature (hot or cold)

Strong emotions (positive or negative)

Carpets

Adhesives

Cooking spices

Fruits ripening

Fermented foods

Shampoos, conditioners

Soaps, lotions, bath gels

Moisturizers, cosmetics

Heating/cooling recycling the air

Gas heating systems

Electrical (stoves, machinery)

Particle board & renovation stuff

Dry cleaning chemicals

Stress

Concentrating (work, computer)

In Brief: Activation & Mediators

Terminology: 5 Words

Activation – the thing that mast cells do when they encounter something they perceive as a danger or threat, they get activated

Degranulate – to crumble (what mast cells do when they've been activated, they degranulate = crumble)

Mediators – chemicals that activated mast cells pump into the body, (of which histamine is only one of hundreds,) as they degranulate

Receptors – “doors” on cells that let things in (specifically the molecules for caffeine, sugar, salt, nicotine, histamine, ginger, chocolate,--for everything we encounter and take into our bodies) enabling those molecules to then interact with our body

MCD – Mast Cell Disorder | **MCDs** – Mast Cell Disorders

In Brief: Activation & Mediators

Mast Cell Activation in 4 Steps:

Step 1: Activation

The mast cells have encountered a perceived threat or possible danger. In fractions of a second they're sensitized and on alert and—bang!—they're activated;

Step 2: Degranulate

The activated mast cells degranulate, they crumble;

Step 3: Mediators

The degranulating mast cells pump out hundred of mediators (chemicals) into the body. These mediators flood the body;

Step 4: Receptors

When mast cell-specific mediators hit their mast cell receptors (“doors”) those substances get in and interact with the body.

In Brief: Activation & Mediators

Mediators:

Histamine:

- Skin symptoms - hives, flushing, angioedema, itching
- Respiratory – cough, wheezing
- GI – diarrhea, gastritis
- Pain – headache
- Acts as neurotransmitter

Leukotrienes:

- Respiratory – shortness of breath, airway inflammation

Prostaglandins:

- Skin – flushing
- Cardiovascular – hypotension or hypertension
- Pain – bone pain, cramping
- Cognitive - brainfog

In Brief: Activation & Mediators

Mediators (cont'd):

Interleukins:

- Regulates the immune system
- Fatigue
- Weight loss
- Enlarged lymph nodes

Tryptase:

- Skin lesions
- Osteoporosis

Serotonin:

- Direct activation of pain nerve fibers

Acetylcholinesterase:

- Muscle weakness

In Brief: Activation & Mediators

Mediators (cont'd):

Galanin and GMA Prepropeptide:

Mast cell mediators can activate the sensory neurons (called nociceptors) that send information about pain to our brain and make us aware of it, leading to pain perception as in, for example, fibromyalgia, migraines, and Complex Regional Pain Syndrome.

Corticotropin Releasing Hormone:

Mediates autonomic, behavioral, and neuroendocrine responses to stress

VGF Nerve Growth Factor Inducible:

- Chronic pain
- Has influence on neuroplasticity (the brain's ability to change and grow as a result of experience) associated with learning, memory, depression and chronic pain

Why does any of this matter?

Mast Cell Disorders (MCDs) are *physical*:

Mast cell activation is a physical process. It happens within the body at the cellular level and affects all organ systems. It is systemic. The reactions a person experiences are a flooding of the whole body including the brain: a storm.

Remove the incitant—remove the trigger—and the reactions come down. They can stop.

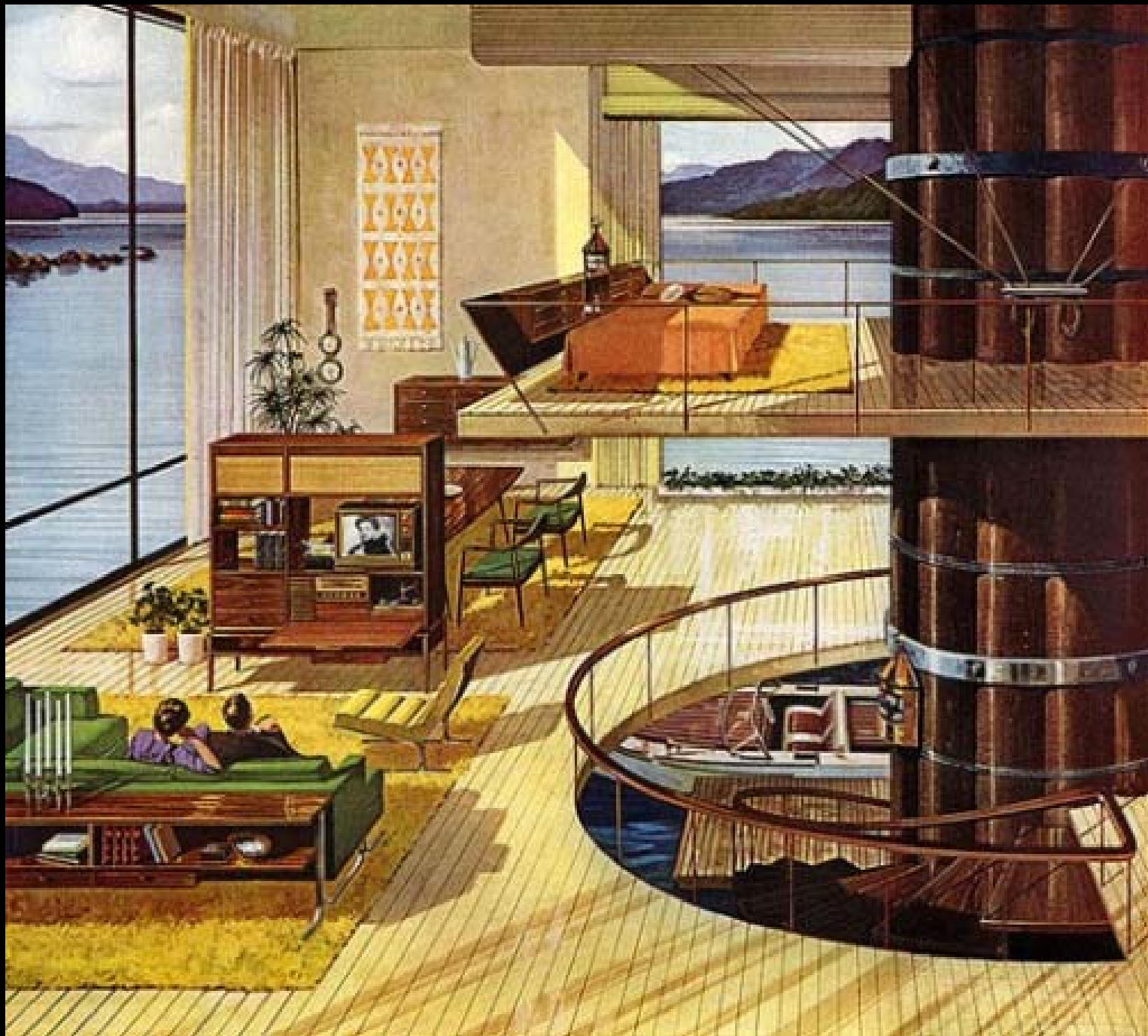
Incitants are many.

Mast cells, in an MCD such as MCAS, are behaving inappropriately. The messages they're sending are askew. They are hyper and responding to everyday exposures to relatively harmless substances (as well as the more toxic ones) as if all substances and all environments were hazards and a danger to our system. They turn them into hazards and dangers through their very processes of protection for our body—our inflammatory responses, our immune responses, and what is, for some, almost instant and potentially life-threatening anaphylaxis.

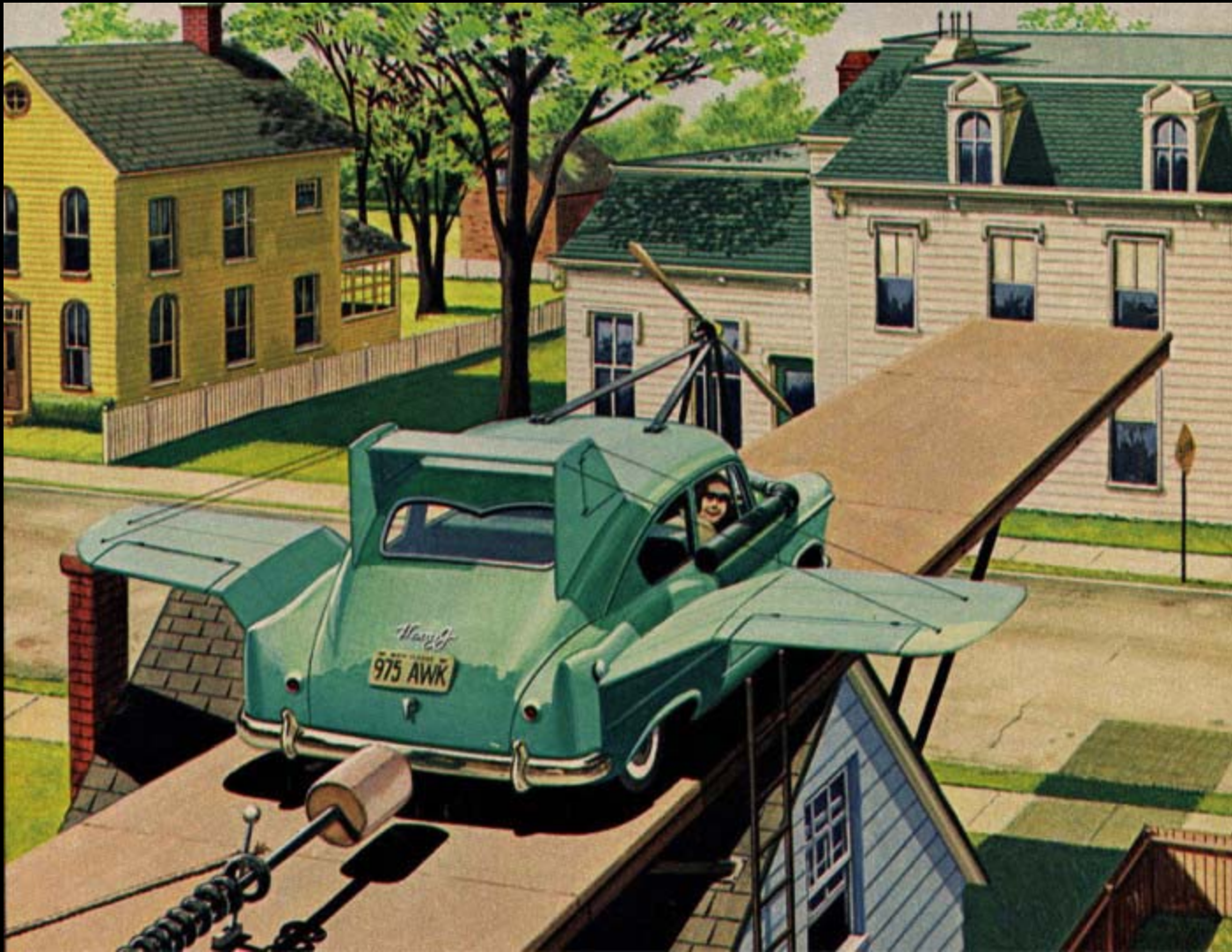
It becomes essential to remove the incitants.

What is Home?









"It's too toxic! I'm outta here!"

Home is.....



Emotional/Subjective:

Security

Safety

Retreat

Shelter from the storm

Comfort

Nurturing

Physical/Objective:

House

Room

Apartment/Flat

Mobile home

Condo

Yert

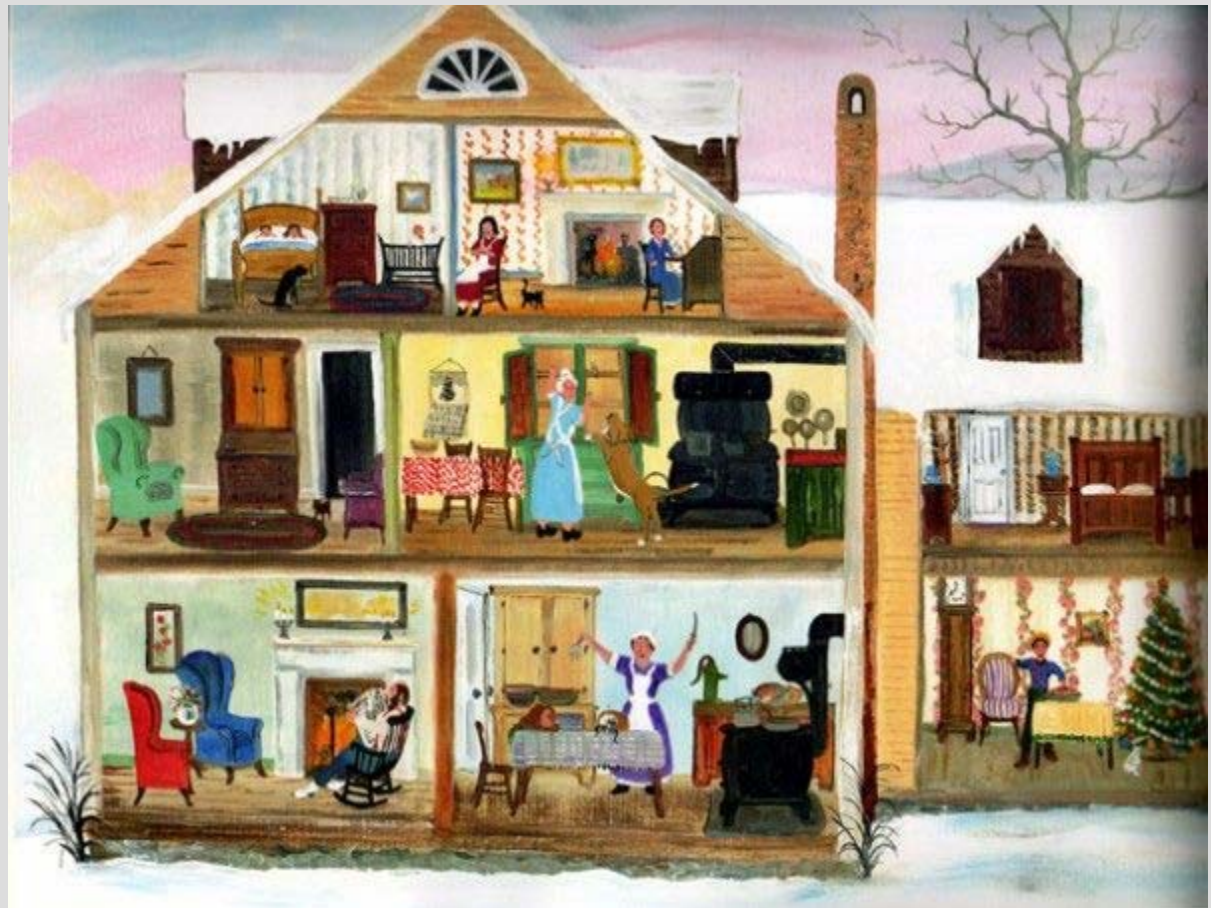
Home is.....

A place to:

Recharge
Regroup
Rebuild

Where we:

Welcome “others”
(friends, partners,
colleagues, family,
pets)



Home is.....

A place we live in relationship with:

We have lots of relationships in our lives—with food, with clothing, with places, with each other, and most importantly with ourselves.

One huge area of relationship we have and live with is our relationship with the natural and built environments.

Natural environment – occurs naturally & shaped by geological and ecological processes

Built environment – created by humans using design, construction, & engineering



Home & Mast Cell Activation

We also live in relationship with our MCDs:

MCDs impact every aspect of our lives and all of our choices. Every day, as we put the absolute essentials we need to have in place to support our health at the forefront of everything we do, we still live at the mercy of the behaviors of others over which we have no control.

External:

- Pollution is on the rise
- An ever-growing plastic universe
- Construction, demolish, rebuilds
- Landscapers (mowers, blowers)

Internal:

- Not everyone understands
- Not everyone supports
- Not everyone cooperates
- Not everyone accommodates



KNOW
THYSELF.

Socrates

Home & Mast Cell Activation

Learn your Triggers. Learn your Reactions.

Avoidance continues to be a primary treatment strategy and intervention for managing mast cell activation symptoms and our health. But avoidance is only one essential piece of the pie.

In tandem with avoidance, additional strategies need to be put in place, monitored, supported, and maintained. These can include:

- Identifying your specific reactions with their specific triggers
- Food as medicine
- Circadian rhythm supports (for our bodies and for our mast cells as mast cells have been found to have their own Circadian Clock)
- Medications (many doctors prescribe cromolyn sodium, H1 and H2 receptor blockers, small amounts of prednisone as needed, aspirin, vitamin C, vitamin D3— and as always this is not medical advice and is being provided as information only)
- Exercise to retrain mast cells
- & more
- Don't stop educating yourself!
- Keep learning about mast cells, about your body, your reactions, your triggers, and how to best support you

Home & Mast Cell Activation

A changed relationship with home:

Everything changes when you have an MCD—a mast cell disorder—such as MCAS, long COVID, chronic fatigue, chemical sensitivities.

However, just because our health status and health needs have changed, and can so often be in an unpredictable state of change throughout each day, it doesn't change our need for shelter, nurturance, comfort, safety, retreat, companionship, healing, and home.

haven noun

ha-ven

a place of safety, refuge;

a place offering favorable opportunities
or conditions



Creating your Safe Haven at Home



"Where do I even begin..."

Safe Haven...

Starts outside the home. Consider your neighborhood through the lens of MCDs for potential triggers:

- Trash day
- Painting (inside or outside)
- Plastic fences
- Paving, road work
- Construction
- Renovation work
- Landscapers (mowers, blowers)
- Landscapers (pesticide treatments)
- Snow blowers in winter
- Traffic & car exhaust fumes
- Vented laundry detergents (into the air)
- Cooking fumes (in the air)



Safe Haven...

The Hardscape of Home:

Hardscape is a landscaping design term. It refers to the solid, non-living elements in a landscape and is made up of functional and aesthetic features; the visual appeal and the practical functions of an area. Hardscape is connected with the built environment.

Hardscape includes the walls, stairways, windows, and physical structure of the space. I am also including as hardscape the furniture, carpets, area rugs.

Potential triggers that are part of a hardscape:

- Materials used to create and build the area, structure, and/or item
- Painted surfaces
- Plastics
- Residual chemicals
- Drafts from windows letting in toxic air from outside
- Heating system (oil, gas, and/or electric)
- Cleaning products residuals and how frequently cleaned

Safe Haven...

The Wellness & Environment Assessment:

The Wellness & Environment Assessment (CC-WEA) is an assessment of how factors in a person's environment may be impacting their health and current levels of wellness and wellbeing. It can be done as a self-assessment or it can be administered by a healthcare professional.

The assessment is not a medical diagnosing tool. It provides authentic information and history regarding a person's exposures to environments, chemicals, substances, and materials to which they may react, the reactions themselves, presentation of symptoms, severity of symptoms, and the impact of the three assessment areas (Exposures & Triggers, Reactions & Symptoms, Health & Wellness History) on their life.

The assessment results can potentially lend support to questions surrounding the possible presence of an MCD such as MCAS.

More information: <https://counselingatcela.com/contact/>



Safe Haven...

Crossing the Threshold:

Everyone carries residual chemicals from where they've been on themselves, on their clothing, hair, skin, belongings. Everyone leaves some of their residual chemicals on the furniture, floors, items in a room, other people from everywhere they go and everything they touch. We bring residual chemicals into our living spaces from the outside the minute we cross the threshold and enter our homes.

Residual chemicals come from:

- Bath soaps, shower gels, shampoos, conditioners
- Deodorants, antiperspirants, personal care products
- A person's clothing (fabrics themselves, how cleaned, where they've been)
- Motor vehicles (exhaust fumes from the car riding in, other cars on the road, on your clothes, belongings, your skin, in your hair)
- Car trees, air fresheners, room deodorizers
- Other people (through their clothing, skin, and hair plus all the places they've been)
- Sitting on furniture, handling objects, being in public spaces
- Riding public transportation, taking an Uber or taxi

Safe Haven...

Strategies:

- Keep clothing worn outdoors separate. Set up a place immediately when you enter your home where you can take off all clothing worn outside of your home to not bring and spread residual chemicals all over your living space
- Bathe immediately when you get home after removing outdoor clothing. Many times it's helpful to leave clothes you'll be changing into ready in the bathroom along with a washcloth that you will only use the one time

Minimizing the residual chemicals you bring into your living space can help to bring down reactions.

Being aware that we can and do react to not just the chemicals on others but to the ones we collect on ourselves and putting into place new MCD-aware habits can help to bring down reactions.

Safe Haven...

Carving out your Space:

MCDs and a person's reactions after exposures are highly individualized. Not everyone shares the same reactions to the same triggers, or the same triggers. At a minimum, we each need at least one room within which we create a bubble of safety. If we live alone, it is often easier to carve out our space, our safe haven, than if we have shared living space. The degree and type of support a person may need depends on the severity of their reactions and their particular triggers.

The task can seem daunting, especially if you don't feel well, are experiencing reactions that can include intense and chronic fatigue, cognitive impairments such as brainfog and trouble remembering, anxiety, agitation, depression, suicidal ideation, despair, muscle weakness, pain, migraines and migraine-like symptoms, general malaise, breathing problems, swelling, inflammation, GI issues and irritable bowel, joint/muscle/bone aches, and more.

But the more we're able to carve out that safe haven through MCD-informed choices, the better we'll feel.

Safe Haven...

Some people may need to:



- Cover the cracks around the main doors, especially if living in an apartment, and sometimes the walls or portions of the walls (depending on severity of triggers and reactions) with aluminum foil as it is nonporous and acts as an effective barrier against toxins
- Get rid of furniture you react to (no matter how attached to it you might be)
- Wash surfaces of items (furniture, walls, floors.) Many times washing with baking soda and/or vinegar and warm water is effective in removing residual chemicals
- Use an air purifier
- Construct their own air filtration boxes

Safe Haven...

What's in the closet? What's under the sink?

Creating a safe haven at home often means getting rid of the things that cause us to react from every room of the house. It means being able to identify the items to which you react. They are incitants and need to be removed from your living space or else a safe haven can't be created. Remember, a safe haven is a space that is as close as you can make it to being without triggers. Things that often need to be removed or replaced can include:

- **Bedroom:** furniture; carpets; curtains; clothing; bed linen; pillows; cushions; plastics
- **Kitchen:** dishes; silverware; containers; pots & pans; utensils; fridge; appliances
- **Livingroom:** furniture; carpets; curtains; cushions; knick-knacks and decorations
- **Bathroom:** towels; shower curtain liners; tub mats; toilet paper brand; toothpaste
- **Miscellaneous:** plastic hangers; baskets; hampers; plants; devices; computers
- **Soaps,** cleaners, detergents for personal care and household use

Safe Haven...

Resources: Links for Home & Self:

Natural and organic options for the home, cooking, clothing, gardening, and personal care:

- Eco Mall - <https://www.ecomall.com/>
- The Real Milk Paint Company - <https://www.realmilkpaint.com/>
- My Chemical Free House - <https://www.mychemicalfreehouse.net/about-this-blog>
- Life Without Plastics - <https://lifewithoutplastic.com/>
- Solmate Socks - <https://solmatesocks.com/>
- & so many more!

For Complete Listing of Links for Home & Self go to:

<https://counselingatcela.com/helpful-links/>

The above links shared for informational purposes only

Safe Haven...

New vs. Existing:

Each person's triggers and reactions can widely differ. There is no formula or one size fits all approach. We each need to grow the tools in our toolbox that work for us. There is no "one" thing that will ease a person's reactivity or the severity of their reactions. It's a combination of things that you need to do every day that work together to help stabilize mast cells and bring down reactions. Paying attention to your "total load," following avoidance practices, making health-supporting choices, and learning to navigate your reactions, what you react to, and the triggers different reactions match up with are all key ingredients in creating a haven at home that is safe.

New items can be problematic for many people with a mast cell disorder (MCD). The challenge of new versus existing impacts multiple life areas, especially when creating a safe haven space.

It's a trade off, the choice we're presented with. Which is worse and more toxic for any given item? Keeping the existing one or getting a new one?

Safe Haven...

Options & Alternatives:

Pots & Pans:

Corel VisionWare is an option for people who react to metals. VisionWare is made out of glass. It is easy to find on ebay.

Refrigerators:

The plastic interiors of home refrigerators can bring on reactions for people with a mast cell disorder. Some people find buying a used, commercial refrigerator like you'll find in stores with doors that slide can be a better choice as their interiors have significantly less plastic.

Clothing:

People can react to both the fabric and the dyes with which clothing is colored. Also, some items can be treated with flame retardant chemicals which can be a problem area. It isn't as simple as making a 100% cotton choice. Not all cottons are the same, there are residual chemicals from the factories, and residual chemicals from the plastics in which they're wrapped and shipped. Many people are successful with purchases from L.L. Bean and their cottons. However, different people do and don't react to the dyes and colors of clothing, bed linens, and other items.

Safe Haven...

Options & Alternatives (cont'd):

Choice of car:

There are allergists who have recommended not buying a new car and instead buying a car that's at least 8 years old. This is due to the amount of time it takes for the plastics, materials, and chemicals in a new car to off-gas and release toxins such as formaldehyde that's used in some car insulation and upholstery (a known human carcinogen) into the air.

Mattresses:

Mattresses and box springs are treated with flame retardant chemicals. Many people react to these chemicals making buying a new bed challenging. Here in the US there have been increasing restrictions on buying used beds. Futons are often a good alternative. Futons are typically made out of cotton. Several futon companies have mattress options that are without chemicals and, instead, have a layer of wool woven into the cotton filling of the mattress as wool has been found to be a natural flame retardant. In the US, for people who react to wool, futon mattresses can be made that don't have the wool but you have to have a doctor's written prescription in order to get one. And like any new item it will need time to off-gas and air out.

TAKE CARE of YOU.
Everything else
can politely
wait its turn.



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Melvin Sokolsky - <https://www.sokolsky.com>

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