

# Pure Facts

Newsletter of the Feingold® Associations of the United States



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## Social Skills

Feingold parents understand what an important part diet plays in behavior. But even after he is successfully on the Program, a chemically-sensitive child may continue to have difficulty relating to other children.

The youngster who begins the Feingold Program prior to age 5 or 6 might escape the destructive effects of being "the kid who doesn't fit in," and may not have trouble socializing. When the Feingold Program isn't started until later, a child may have a hard time catching up with his peers, and may lag behind in social skills.

For some children, social difficulty can be the result of highly stressful experiences (see the story of Jenny), and for others, even after their behavior improves, they just seem to remain out of sync with the rest of the world.

One of the saddest things about social skills deficits is that the child generally has no idea why he or she doesn't get along with other children; and even when the child grows to adulthood, the characteristics can still be present.

Even the most perceptive parent may find it hard to pin down just what it is her child does that grates on her nerves. Parents can take great pains to do all the "right" things as they interact with such a child, but somehow they come away from each encounter feeling frustrated and a little crazy.

This issue of *Pure Facts* attempts to collect some useful information from both parents and professionals as they try to understand and help the child who seems to be a little out of step with the rest of the world.

We hope this will stimulate those of you who have also dealt with this to share your experiences with us. Please contact FAUS; let us know things you have found to be useful in helping your child.



## New Research

Two psychologists have devoted many years to the problem of social rejection, and have developed some practical "how to" strategies which parents and professionals can use to teach the skills a child lacks.

*Helping the Child Who Doesn't Fit In*, by Stephen Nowicki, Jr. and Marshall Duke, is a new book based on many years of work with children. Nowicki and Duke are clinical psychologists at Emory University. (The publisher is Peachtree Press, Atlanta, GA.)

## Dyssemia

The authors have coined a new word to describe the problem: dyssemia. "Dys" means difficulty, and "semas" stands for sign or signal. Together it describes difficulty in using and understanding nonverbal signs and signals.

*Helping the Child Who Doesn't Fit In* describes six characteristics of dyssemia and offers techniques for teaching a child how to overcome them. Here are the problems they describe:

**1. Rhythm and the use of time-** This refers to the child who operates at a different pace than those around him, and who may react with a different level of emotion than others.

**2. Interpersonal space -** Mark stood too close to others when he spoke; when sitting at a shared table, he spread his books and materials out too far; he constantly let his chair bump into that of his neighbor. Mark was unaware he alienated himself from others by his behavior.

**3. Postures and gestures-** Other children did not like the way Julie pointed her finger at them in an authoritarian manner. She folded her arms over her chest and stared at them as if they were supposed to do her bidding.

**4. Facial expression-** Mary was not aware that her facial expression gave the appearance that she was sneering in disapproval at others.

**5. Paralinguistics** (how sound communicates emotions). Marla's shrill abrasive laugh caused people around her to feel uncomfortable and embarrassed.

**6. Appearance-** The child whose style of dress or other characteristics are different will stand out from peers, and may be rejected.

## Other Problems

A major social skills deficit which the authors did not address is the child (or adult) who is awkward in their ability to hold a conversation.

**Planning a response.** When John tries to hold a conversation with another child his mind is so busy planning a response, he doesn't pay attention to what the other boy is saying. John needs to stop trying to rehearse, and focus on what he hears, then respond with a brief reaction to let his partner know his comments were heard

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The Feingold® Associations of the United States, Inc., founded in 1976, are non-profit volunteer organizations whose purposes are to support their members in the implementation of the Feingold Program and to generate public awareness of the potential role of foods and synthetic additives in behavior, learning and health problems. The program is based on a diet eliminating synthetic colors, synthetic flavors, and the preservatives BHA, BHT, and TBHQ.

Special issue on social skills deficits

and understood. Children are not likely to be shunned simply because they don't speak a great deal; and everyone appreciates a good listener.

**The "Uh-huh" factor** - Recent research indicates that the way men and women converse is distinctly different, and can lead to friction. Briefly described, the differences are:

When a group of men speak among themselves, one man is likely to be "in control" of the conversation. Then another gains control and speaks his mind. It's seen as a type of contest over who holds center stage.

Conversations among women, in contrast, are likely to be more like a tennis game, of back and forth dialogue. When two women speak and inject phrases like: "really?" "uh-huh" "Oh my gosh" this is taken by each as a sign the other woman hears and empathizes.

Behaviors that seem so obvious to us may completely elude the dyssemic child.

When a man speaks to a woman and she injects these phrases, he considers it an annoying interruption. When a woman speaks and a man is stony silent, she assumes it means he is not interested or isn't listening.

The dyssemic child — male or female — may show some of the characteristics of the silent male. She may not understand that others feel uncomfortable when their comments to her are met with dead silence. What she believes is polite attention elicits comments such as: "It's like talking to the wind; she makes me feel as though I'm invisible."

**Eye to Eye** Another characteristic of social skills deficits is the child who avoids eye contact. This may be seen as disinterest or dishonesty. Avoiding eye contact is appropriate in some cultures, but considered rude in our society.

The dyssemic child may do the opposite, and stare intently at the speaker, with equally bad results.

It was surprising that these issues were not addressed in Nowicki and Duke's book. Perhaps they will cover them in their new book currently in progress. It deals with the dyssemic adult.

## Jenny's Story —

### Creating Social Skills Problems

Jenny's behavior drove her parents crazy much of the time, but she got along quite well with other children.

She had been an outgoing toddler, and approached anyone approximately her size with a smile and welcoming gesture. Jenny was stubborn, however, no doubt about that! In preschool and later in kindergarten she would select a toy and hang on to it no matter what. "Time to put the toys away" meant nothing to her, and eventually her insistence triumphed over even the most determined adult.



*Jenny's way of protecting herself from the daily assault was to emotionally withdraw, but when the stress was over, when she moved on to the next grade, she remained in her own world.*

She wandered away from her class, and would turn up in unlikely places in the school building. She was the child who could take any harmless toy and turn it into a disaster; it wasn't that she was mean or spiteful. She just did things her own way.

But all of these quirks didn't seem to create problems for Jenny's peers. When her family began using the Feingold Program the behavior extremes disappeared, so she became an easier

child to be around, both at home and at school. Things were looking very good — until she moved from first to second grade. Jenny's first grade teacher seemed to have unlimited patience, and seldom spoke above a whisper. The children were comfortable with her and she was an effective teacher.

Second grade was the opposite. Jenny's new teacher ran on caffeine and seldom spoke below a shout. The little girl who had been confident and interacted easily with the other children began to change. Jenny retreated into a world of her own, as though she had crawled into bed and pulled the covers over her head. Like many chemically sensitive children, she was especially vulnerable to loud noises and constant stress — the atmosphere she was in for about six hours a day.

When she shut the world out, she stopped interacting with other children, and stayed in her lonely isolation for years to come. Her social skills remained at the seven year old level. By the time Jenny eventually wanted to venture back out into the world, she had missed the years and the experiences that would have put her at her appropriate age level. Her inability to interact successfully further isolated her and made it difficult for her to practice the social skills that were so in need of work.

The hard lesson her parents learned is that chemically sensitive children are very vulnerable to stresses of many kinds: loud noises, bright lights, sometimes even to touch. They are generally unable to cope in situations where there is constant tension, especially when it is accompanied by shouting. The younger the child, the greater the potential for harm.

#### Another Resource

The American Guidance Service (AGS) publishes a wide selection of educational materials. Their best known product is the STEP program series for modifying children's behavior through logical consequences.

AGS also has a series of resource materials and workbooks to assist professionals who deal with dyssemic children and young adults. The drawback is that the price of most materials is prohibitive for the individual family. However, you may be able to obtain a copy of their catalog and sample of one of the workbooks. Call 1-800-328-2560.

## Problems at Preschool

Parents of children who have had learning and/or behavior deficits may have difficulty being assertive as they deal with teachers and other professionals.

**F**eingold parents know what it's like to have been labeled, along with our children, and to have been held responsible for our youngsters' problems. Even after our children improve on the Feingold Program, we may continue to harbor doubts about our effectiveness as a parent. Here is where a mother needs to draw upon all her strengths to go to bat for her chemically-sensitive child; he is at high risk of being harmed if he remains in an atmosphere where he is exposed to unfair criticism or excessive stress. Not only will this situation fail to

help him improve his social skills, but it can actually create new social skills problems.

Timmy's family recently began the Feingold Program, and his behavior at home has been good. But the diet is not being followed 100% at home, and he often eats unapproved foods at school. His mother called FAUS, seeking advice. In addition to removing the remaining diet infractions, she needs to become a strong advocate for her child.

### Timmy's mom describes the problem:

**M**y three year old, Timmy, is enrolled in a preschool which he attends two days a week. He is already reading, and advanced in some ways, but I wanted him to have a chance to interact with other children and develop his social skills.

The problem is that his teacher dislikes him and doesn't try to disguise her feelings. I've tried to speak with her, but she generally avoids me, and when we do talk she is very resentful. The other day she said that Eric "choked" Timmy, but that it was understandable since Timmy "is always in Eric's face." It was as though choking was excusable since Timmy irritated Eric. Afterward, Eric's mother and I spoke, and she felt bad about the incident, and suggested we try to get the boys together so we could help them to get along.

Timmy does get too close to other children, and he touches them too much, but he's really a sweet little boy, and most other people don't have a problem with him.

Lately, he's begun to have nightmares, and worries when he goes to bed that he will have more bad dreams. He talks cheerfully about the children and the teacher's aide, but refuses to speak about the teacher, or to even say her name.

I find myself scolding him more at home, as I feel I need to back up his teacher and try to help him to behave when he is at school. It all feels very wrong to me, but my friends all say to give him more time since he's only been in school for a few weeks. They think he will adjust and get along fine. What do you suggest?

### A preschool director/Feingold mom responds

**N**o child should ever have to experience nightmares as a result of attendance at preschool! You have a right to expect the teacher to communicate with you and to discuss any concern you may have, no matter how trivial she may consider it to be. If the teacher is unwilling to work with you, speak with the director.

Be sure the diet is working for your child at home. This will make it easier to track down the causes of any behavior problems. Even a child successfully on the Program may take time to adjust to the new setting/distractions of the classroom. As the newness wears off, he should adjust.

Both the teacher and director should be given information on your child's diet. Stress the importance of following it carefully and explain how your child's behavior will change when he is having a reaction.

Consider having your child's vision checked. If he sits too close to the TV, or tilts his head too close to an activity such as reading or coloring, this could be a clue to why he gets too close to other children. You can have the child look at a picture from several feet away — a picture he hasn't previously seen — and see if he can describe some of the details.

If the above check out ok, Timmy's teacher should use "time out" to demonstrate to the child that certain behaviors are not acceptable in the classroom. She should take him by the hand as soon as the unwanted behavior occurs, explain to him what he did wrong, and have him stay separated from the class for no more than 2 minutes. He needs to know that each time he repeats that behavior the time out will immediately follow. Children don't like to be separated from the class, and the behavior should soon stop.

Parents can reinforce the school's effort. When he is relaxing, watching TV or playing, casually ask how school is going and about his friends there. Ask him if he knows what "time out" means, and if not, explain it to him. If he touches other children too much, explain that bodily contact such as roughhousing with Dad or hugs with Mom are ok at home, but not at school.

What it all boils down to is that when you entrust your child to the care of a preschool you are paying for them to interact and enhance the development of your child.

*Diane Norris*

### One technique for helping Timmy at home

**S**how Timmy "arm's length". Have him hold out his arm, and (getting down on his level) place yourself that distance away. Explain that this is how Eric wants to play and let him practice by pretending that you are Eric. Then switch roles and pretend you are Timmy. Let him tell you how far/close you should be to him. Remind him that "children play an arm

away" and see if the sing-song rhyme of the phrase may be easier for him to remember.

If you and Eric's mom do get the boys together, Timmy will have had some practice. You may want to talk about "an arm away" with Eric and his mom, and ask Eric to remind Timmy if he forgets.



## A Parent's Perspective

FAUS President, Pat Palmer, notes that even after a child is responding well to the Feingold Program, there may be problems because he simply has never learned the appropriate way to behave in some situations.

The child who is now capable of concentrating on schoolwork may actually need to be shown how to do this. Pat suggests using a kitchen timer to mark a short period of time, perhaps a minute or two. Ask the child to focus on his work for just that length of time, and allow a break of a few minutes before he again commits to another segment of work. Each day, increase the study time by a minute or so, until he sees that he is able to do the schoolwork on his own.

Similarly, you may need to teach a child how to have eye contact, or other behaviors which most children absorb naturally.

If a youngster appears to be poor at interpreting facial expressions, Pat suggests you try playing charades with facial expressions. See if your child can tell by your expression if you are angry, sad, etc.

Mirror the child's behavior. For example, if he speaks too loudly, respond to him in a loud voice; then tell him why you spoke loudly. If she leans in too closely, do the same and see if she feels discomfort. Talk about how it makes you feel when someone "invades your space."

When your child has behaved inappropriately, consider using the concept of instant replay. Have him tell you what happened, and encourage him to give you suggestions of numerous ways he may have responded differently, and what the consequences for each choice would have been.

Bedtime is a good time to develop a verbal diary with your child. Have her look back over the day and recall the situations she encountered. Focus on the good decisions as well as the poor ones. This encourages the child to see that "good people" sometimes make bad choices. The day could also be reviewed through drawings the child makes as part of a "Good Things and Bad Things Book". (The term "bad" may make adults uncomfortable, but many children prefer clear-cut distinctions such as this.)

## Feingold Pen Pals — every kid can have a friend!



Feingold volunteer, Kathy Leinen operates our Pen Pal project. To sign up, or to sign your child up, fill out this form and mail it to:

**Kathy Leinen, 344 North Aspen, Rialto, CA 92376**

Please sign me up with a Pen Pal this age:

5 & under w/parent  12, 13, 14 (grades 7, 8, 9)

6, 7, 8 (grades 1, 2, 3)  15 and older

9, 10, 11 (grades 4, 5, 6) I prefer to write to a:  
\_\_\_ boy \_\_\_ girl \_\_\_ either

My name \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Boy \_\_\_\_\_ Girl \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## I thought you'd never ask!

Feingold kids are like any other kids, but just a little bit more so.

They often astonish us when we find they haven't told us about significant things going on in their life. If you suspect your youngster is one who doesn't readily volunteer information, you may have to draw it out of him.

Jerry attended a private school, and his parents believed he was comfortable there. It was only after they moved and he left the school that they learned he considered it to have been filled with "enemies".

You may want to ask your child some leading questions about his school day, such as:

- \* What do you like best/least about school?
- \* What does your teacher do when a child makes a mistake?
- \* How does that make you feel?
- \* What happens when you make a mistake?
- \* Does your teacher like some kids better than others?
- \* Are some of the kids mean?
- \* Who are they mean to?
- \* If another child takes something which belongs to you, what can you do?
- \* If you could change some things about your school, what would they be?

## The New Me

Dr. Feingold often spoke of the problems facing the child whose behavior has improved dramatically, but who is still being treated like a "troublemaker" by teachers or peers.

When a child has acquired a label it can be difficult for those around him to change their perceptions of him. We humans tend to be creatures of habit, comfortable in our old views, interpreting what we see through the many lenses of our own experiences.

As difficult as it often is to remove a child from one school environment and place him in another, Dr. Feingold believed that this is often necessary to give the child a fresh start.

For some families, the choice of homeschooling resolves this problem. There is a network of assistance and support for homeschooling families.

## PIC Report

### from the FAUS Product Information Committee

**Ben & Jerry's Brownie Bars** may be added to your Stage One Foodlist.

Since the publication of our last newsletter there have been some changes reported in numerous luncheon meats which are included in Foodlists.

**The following contain smoke flavoring, and should be removed:**

LOUIS RICH Chopped Turkey Ham, Hickory Smoked Turkey Breast, Smoked Turkey, Turkey Franks, Turkey Ham, Turkey Salami

OSCAR MAYER Bacon, Beef Bologna, Beef Franks, Bologna, Chopped Ham, Honey Loaf, Interleaved Liver Cheese, New England Brand Sausage, Picnic Loaf, Smoked Cooked Ham, Smoky Links, Summer Sausage.

**Also: remove** SCONZA Peanut Brittle (available in Midwest) It now contains artificial flavoring.

**The following products listed in the Stage One section now contain salicylate and should be moved to Stage Two:**

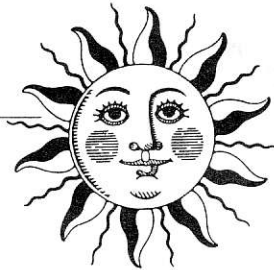
GULDEN'S Spicy Brown Mustard (unspecified salicylate)

OSCAR MAYER Head Cheese (CS,MSG/HVP,N)(unspecified salicylate)

**The following Stage Two products no longer contain salicylate and can be moved to Stage One:**

FRENCH'S Bold 'n Spicy Deli Mustard

FRENCH'S Worcestershire Sauce (CS)



### Staying Beautiful – Naturally

Dear Pure Facts,

I'm very sensitive to synthetic chemicals and want to find cosmetics I can use. There's a store near me called the Body Shop which advertises natural cosmetics, but I don't see them in my Foodlist. Can I use them?

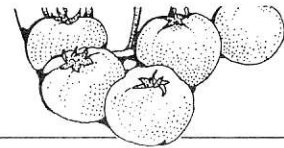
The Association hasn't conducted research on cosmetics available at the Body Shop since their literature indicates so many contain synthetic dyes and the prohibited preservatives.

As an extremely sensitive member, you may want to contact Body Elements, a mail-order company which and offers only products made exclusively from natural materials.

You can request a free catalog: Body Elements, 3320 North 3rd Street, Arlington, VA 22201 (703) 525-0585

Sensitive members are encouraged to cautiously test out non-food products as sensitivities vary.

### Tanning Pills – When natural coloring is too much of a good thing



The FDA warns consumers to avoid tanning pills: "The agency advises that statements claiming the ingredient has been approved are misleading. The ingredient has been approved, at very low levels, for coloring some foods and drugs, but not, at any level, for tanning purposes. Tanning pills are classified as cosmetics.

"Tanning pills commonly contain canthaxanthin (the substance which provides the orange and red coloring in many plants), but labels sometimes also list beta carotene, prepared synthetically or obtained from natural sources. Although these dyes are approved for some uses, this does not automatically mean they are permitted in oral tanning preparations.

"Tanning pills give the body such an overdose of color that some of it accumulates in the blood, skin, fatty tissue, and certain organs such as the liver. The dose is enough to tint the skin even though most of the color passes through the system unabsorbed."

### Natural Foods Available via Mail Order

If you are dealing with food allergies, or if you have difficulty finding the acceptable brands of toothpaste, candy or gum, you may want to send for the National Natural Foods catalog. It lists over 200 pages of natural products, including groceries, bulk foods, books, vitamins and personal care products. The Florida-based company offers a large selection of organic fruits and vegetables which they ship throughout the United States. For more information call 1-800-274-2749.

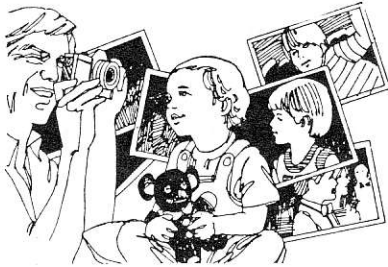
The Feingold® Associations do not endorse, approve or assume responsibility for any product, brand, method or treatment. The presence (or absence) of a product on a Feingold foodlist, or the discussion of a method or treatment does not constitute approval (or disapproval). The foodlists are based primarily upon information supplied by manufacturers, and are not based upon independent testing.

## Hot Tomato

Last month *Pure Facts* described the controversy which has followed the development of genetically engineered foods.

The Campbell Soup Company has announced that it will put off indefinitely the use of genetically engineered tomatoes in its products. The tomato, named the Flavr Savr, has been altered to resist spoilage. It can remain on the vine for a longer time, allowing it to ripen and develop a fuller flavor. Most tomatoes are now picked green and artificially ripened.

Although the Flavr Savr tomato was not as worrisome to critics as the more exotic genetically altered foods, Campbell's decision indicates the mammoth company's awareness that many consumers are nervous about the prospect of radically changed foods, and are critical of the government's plan to allow them to be marketed without safety testing.



## Picture This!

We would like to feature **your kids** in our next School Year Calendar.

Send us photos of your pride and joy for the 1993-1994 edition. We are looking for informal shots of children and teens, and are especially interested in photos that have a seasonal theme. They can be either color prints or black & white. (Sorry, we cannot use portrait photos.)

Mail them to: FAUS Calendar, P.O. Box 6550, Alexandria, VA 22306.

## NIH Explores Alternatives

The National Institutes of Health is currently exploring non-traditional medical approaches, including: acupuncture, Ayurvedic medicine, naturopathy, homeopathy, reflexology, massage therapy, and Chinese herbal remedies.

The work is being headed by Stephen Groft, who notes, "Many scientists are actually excited to see that alternative methods are being scientifically evaluated. It is important to separate those that are working from those that aren't working — for both patients and physicians."

These sentiments were echoed by Naturopath, Dr. Carol Calibrese. "In the alternative medicine field there is real value and there is stuff that's simply wrong. We want to be able to find the social benefit in what we do." Calibrese is the research director at the Bastyr College of Natural Health Sciences in Seattle, WA.

## "Healing and the Mind"

The Fetzer Institute, which has provided funding for a unique television documentary, has asked FAUS to let members know of a five part series to be aired on PBS February 22, 23, and 24. It is called "HEALING THE MIND" hosted by Bill Moyers.

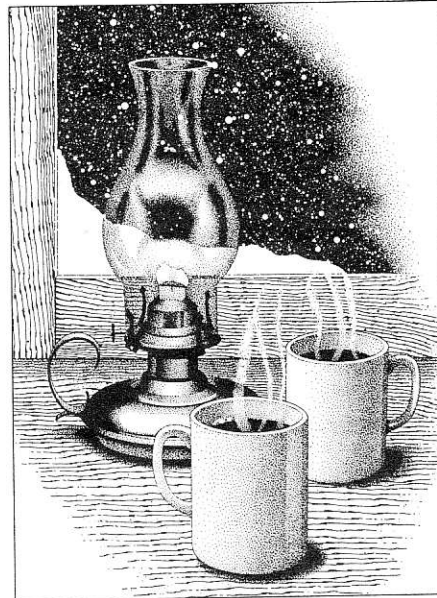
The series will examine a wide range of healing techniques, most of which are outside the mainstream of American medicine.

## No Comment!

Employees at the Decatur Industry and Technology Center in Illinois had a "bad trip" recently when twenty gallons of ethyl butyrate spilled, sending a dozen of them to the hospital.

One worker described it as "like an out-of-body experience", saying she felt numb and tingly, and saw little lights.

The chemical, which can cause vomiting, headaches, nausea and dizziness, has another use. It is a flavor enhancer used to make green apple flavored bubble gum!



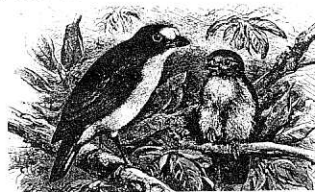
## For the Birds (literally)

The Bird House is a small company in Kalispell, MT with a mission to make a contribution to the earth, and especially to the birds which inhabit it.

They create folk arts and crafts, and fashion bird houses and bird feeders out of recycled materials.

When you order a bird house (\$35.) they will send one to you, take a second bird house and set it out in an area where wild birds can breed, and send a \$5 donation to the Feingold Association.

For more information and a catalog of their crafts, contact Cheryl Smyth, The Bird House, 205 North Somers Road, Kalispell, MT 59901 or phone (406) 857-3521.



## Burning Issues

Now that the Environmental Protection Agency has alerted the public to the health risk of second-hand smoke non-puffers can expect to see their indoor air clear up considerably.

It could bring about improved behavior as well, according to researchers at the University of Rochester School of Medicine (Rochester, NY).

They found that the more cigarettes a mother smokes, the more behavior problems her child is likely to have.

The fumes from burning wood can be a problem for chemically sensitive individuals. If you use a fireplace or wood stove during the cold months, be alert that your Feingold child (or adult) may show signs of a reaction.

Even if burning wood does not seem to trigger a reaction, members are cautioned to be selective about what kinds of wood they burn.

A Wisconsin family used outdoor-grade plywood scraps in their wood burning stove. As a construction worker, the husband had access to large quantities of the wood. Their houseplants began to die, as did their fish, and the family suffered serious health problems from the chemicals which had been used to treat the wood.

As it burned, the lumber produced arsenic, copper and chromium residues. Exposure to these fumes can cause blackouts, breathing difficulties, hair loss, ear infections, nosebleeds and skin rashes.

NOTE: Kerosene heaters are not recommended for chemically sensitive people.

## Pure Facts

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