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Chuck Blumenthal is president of Natural Fitness Inc., one of the country's leading companies that sell environmentally friendly exercise equipment. Blumenthal is active in the environmental education community as well.

Home Gym Magazine sat down with Blumenthal to discuss his thoughts on fitness and environmentalism.

**“People who take care of themselves and their bodies are more likely to take care of the world around them. Making sure that you are healthy involves more than just a good workout – it involves dedication and a lifestyle.”**

**HOME GYM MAGAZINE:** The word "greening" is popping up a lot. How do you define the term?

BLUMENTHAL: Greening is a fine term used to describe the transition from our environmentally destructive, wasteful, chemical and petroleum-reliant lifestyle to a lifestyle that is more natural and sustainable; meaning utilizing renewable, recycled and/or natural materials and products that are non-toxic and less energy intensive for the person and our planet.

The process of greening your home includes removing toxic materials such as most carpeting, chemical furniture finishes, PVC and foam products that out-gas toxins. It means doing what you can to limit the amount of trash that you produce by intelligent purchases of long lasting reusable items rather than disposable ones and then recycling everything you can from paper to glass, metal and plastics. It means buying organic foods to limit the amount of pesticides that we pump into our air, our soil and our water and foods without lots of useless packaging. It means buying eco-friendly products or better yet purchasing fewer products. It also means supporting companies that care about the environment through their business practices and avoiding those that do wasteful business as usual.

**Aside from your work with Natural Fitness Inc., what background or expertise do you bring to environmental awareness? What motivated you to become involved?**

I have always been a saver of materials and energy, always trying to get more usage from things. My father grew up during the Depression and instilled a sense of economy within me, not necessarily for saving money but saving resources. As a teenager I learned to repair broken wooden baseball bats for my Dad's semi-pro baseball team; bats were costly for an amateur team so we repaired them when we could. I was a solar energy contractor in the 1980s

which was very rewarding and saved energy and pollution and now I use biodiesel in my car which not only reduces greenhouse gas output to zero but requires no imported oil. I am a founding member of [ChicagoBiofuels.org](http://ChicagoBiofuels.org) a non-profit promoting and providing biofuels to likeminded co-op members.

I started and continue to operate a sustainable products business called Bean Products; we manufacture natural, organic and recycled home, yoga, meditation products from materials like hemp, organic cotton, and recycled fiber from soda bottles.

My wife and I have three young children that will unfortunately inherit a very sick planet unless I and you and everyone else starts making some real "green" changes in our lifestyles now, not later or next year but right now. I want my children to experience coral reefs, polar bears, islands and coastlines ... these things will be gone if we continue on our unsustainable path.

**Your company prides itself on promoting environmental awareness along with physical fitness products. How do you merge the two?**

People who take care of themselves and their bodies are more likely to take care of the world around them. Making sure that you are healthy involves more than just a good workout – it involves dedication and a lifestyle. We at Natural Fitness are all interested in taking care of our health and taking care of the earth and we wanted to provide to other people the premium quality items that we would want to use ourselves.

We are hoping that not only will our products allow people to "green" their workout but it will alert them to the importance of making these changes in other areas of their lives as well, such as eating organic food, wearing organic clothing, ending the disposable lifestyle. We support many environmental non-profits and have created a green studio

program for yoga studios and will soon be launching a new program for health clubs to go "green."

**In a typical home gym environment, what would you see as the most common anti-green offenders?**

Throw-away water or sports drink bottles rather than purifying your own tap water and using an old fashion glass or cup (horribly costly to the environment). Carpeting (lots of toxic out gassing from synthetic dyes, fibers, foams and glues). Wall and ceiling paint with high VOC's (volatile organic chemicals, which are toxic to the indoor environment), choose low VOC safe paints and coatings. Big heavy complicated workout equipment that degrades the environment during manufacture, transportation, and disposal.

Halogen or incandescent lighting rather than high efficiency fluorescent or LED lighting. CRT televisions use lots of energy and produce heat that will require more cooling for the room, consider using LCD televisions that require 66 percent less energy. This might seem antithetical to a magazine about home gym equipment but ... also consider outdoor power walking, jogging in fresh air or taking the stairs at work before purchasing a big bulky and non-recyclable treadmill or stair-stepper. If you need the machines, try to find the most energy efficient machine and the best design for a smaller size and better durability. Living minimally is a first step to a green lifestyle.

Rather than a thousand pounds of dumbbells consider lightweight, efficient, transportable natural latex resistance tubes that are made from sustainable rubber, which will biodegrade in your garden once you're done with them several years later.

**Beyond the equipment itself, are there other environmentally unfriendly products or actions associated with the fitness industry (interior environment, energy usage, clothing choices, bottled water and so on)?**

Some of this is answered in Question 4. Petro-chemicals have worked their way into almost every product that we come in contact with every day. At this point in our green development it's tough to avoid, but it can be done.

Buy fitness clothes made with bamboo, hemp, organic cotton, recycled poly-fiber. There is technology available now that makes high-performance workout wear out of very sustainable resources. Instead of buying bottled water, buy a stainless steel canteen that is not only better for your health because plastic bottles can contain toxic phthalates.

Having a home gym can be considered "Green" in itself. Being able to workout at home when you want to means no more trips to the health club, saving fuel and reducing pollution. Handheld fitness items such as what Natural Fitness provides will always benefit the environment if they are used to reduce driving trips to workout facilities.

**We've seen many stories over the years about food products that people mistakenly thought were better for them - muffins, salad bars, granola snacks. Are there similar misconceptions in the environmental area? Are people doing things under the mistaken impression that they are actually being environmentally conscious?**

I think so, but the impression that muffins, salad bars, and granola snacks are not healthy is inaccurate. These food products are unhealthy only if they are processed and mass produced using chemical preservatives and large amounts of sugars and unnatural fats. It does not have to be that way if we choose organic and more natural and more local choices.

The main misconception is "consuming our way to environmental sustainability." While it is true in many respects, that is why we have been discussing sustainable choices, it can only work if we reduce consumption. Manufacturing, transportation and disposal of products have the largest negative environmental impact so we need to reduce consumption first then we should choose eco-friendly products from companies that have environmentally conscious business practices.

**What are some steps fitness enthusiasts can take to be more environmentally conscious?**

Fitness enthusiasts can make many changes right now to be more environmentally conscious. Use a stainless steel or glass canteen and get rid of those disposable plastic water bottles

(by recycling them of course). Allow yourself to get sweaty while you're working out instead of keeping the air conditioner on so high, this saves energy and reduces greenhouse gas production. Keep plants in your home gym to help clean the air for you while you work out. When you're ready to buy new clothes or equipment look into eco-friendly options and used equipment that's been refurbished. The important thing about the green movement is that it is making people aware of the impact that their lifestyle is having on our environment and solutions are now being offered to us that require little sacrifice and will improve our health.

**ON THE NET:**  
[www.naturalfitnessinc.com](http://www.naturalfitnessinc.com)

## 7 TIPS

### HOW TO HELP THE ENVIRONMENT IN YOUR HOME GYM

1. Continue to take care of your body (medical care is environmentally destructive)
2. Clean your equipment with eco-friendly cleaners. Switch to organic cotton, hemp, bamboo clothing
3. Use a steel canteen or glass jar and stop buying plastic water bottles
4. Purchase eco-friendly products from companies that are trying to make a difference
5. Workout at home more, drive to the gym less
6. Clean your equipment with eco-friendly cleaners
7. Switch to organic cotton, hemp, bamboo clothing