



Enlightened
Voices *for the*
Environment

The **Environment**
and **YOU:** Making the
Connection to
Conflict, Crime
& Violence

The Environment and You

Making the Connection to Conflict, Crime & Violence

CVVC's EVE Project (**E**nlightened **V**oices for the **E**nvironment) explores the environmental risk factors that contribute to conflict, crime and violence. EVE offers you an opportunity to become enlightened by learning ways that you can help and improve your and your loved ones' health and well-being. Scientific research shows that many of the foods we eat and products we use increase aggression, nervousness, acting out and even contribute to the onset of early puberty in girls.

When you have access to healthy foods, fresh air, household and personal care products free from toxic chemicals, you are more likely to remain calm and are more likely to make choices that prevent conflict, crime and violence. These choices can also aid in your healing process after you have experienced a stressful or traumatic event.

The educational component of the EVE Project is based on scientific research that shows the connection between environmental toxins and our health. *(Please refer to our Reference and Resource section at the end of our brochure for more information.)*



Environmental Toxins and Factors Affecting You

YOUR FOOD AND DIET

Whether you want to reduce the effects of environmental toxins to prevent negative feelings and behaviors, or increase your ability to heal after a traumatic experience, selecting proper foods is the single most important way to make healthy changes.

- **Nutrition**

The first organs to be affected by poor nutrition are the nervous system and the brain. When the central nervous system is not working properly, you will not have the best responses to conflict and stress.

- **Food Ingredients & Additives**

Processed and fast foods contribute to chemical imbalances in the brain. These imbalances make it more difficult to maintain a calm and reasonable response to stress and trauma in our lives. The following food ingredients and additives are scientifically proven to impact mood and behavior:

- **Sugar/Carbohydrates**

Restless, aggressive and even violent behavior has long been associated with hypoglycemia, which is low blood sugar. Our brains need steady blood sugar levels to work properly. When we eat large amounts of refined white sugars, corn syrups and products made from simple carbohydrates like white flour, our bodies overreact by producing insulin, which can make our blood sugar levels drop. Without the proper nutrients, our brains are deprived of the energy it needs.

- **Food Dyes**

Artificial food dyes like Yellow 5 & 6, Red 3 & 40, Blue 1 & 2, Green 3 and Orange B have been shown to cause hyperactivity and other behavioral problems, especially in children. Most candies and foods for children are artificially dyed bright colors. Artificial food dyes are also present in many processed foods adults buy and consume.

- **Preservatives**

Foods containing artificial flavorings and the preservatives BHA, BHT, and TBHQ have been linked to learning behavior and learning problems. Many pre-packaged and processed foods, unless marked otherwise, are treated with dangerous preservatives.

– Salt/Sodium

Salt and sodium increase blood pressure, putting you at greater risk for strokes. Too much salt can also cause your body to store water, making you feel sluggish and bloated.

- **Hormones in Meat and Dairy Products**

Hormones added to food products like milk, eggs, beef, pork and chicken can be harmful to your health and are believed to contribute to early puberty in young girls. Early-maturing girls are more vulnerable to sexual victimization, depression and anxiety.

TOXINS IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Every day we come in contact with toxins. They are in the air we breathe, the soil in our communities, and in the water we drink. Research shows that children are considerably more vulnerable to toxins than adults because their bodies are fragile, still developing and have not yet built up immunities. These environmental toxins and factors can forever change the development of their brains and affect the way they learn and act.

Here are just a few toxins that you can do something about:

- **Lead**

Lead can cause learning, language and behavioral problems such as ADHD, lowered IQ, reduced school performance and increased aggression. Lead can be found in household paint, toys, lipstick and toothpaste. Its effects are most significant in pregnant women and children (*See Reference and Resource section*).

- **Household Products**

Common cleaning solutions are loaded with chemicals that are unhealthy and/or create fumes that can increase agitation, asthma and affect brain chemistry. Try using common household items for cleaning, such as baking soda, white distilled vinegar, lemon juice or Tea Tree oil (*See Reference and Resource section*).

- **Cosmetics**

Did you know that many cosmetics—including lotion, makeup, hair dyes, relaxers and even baby shampoo contain chemicals like mercury, lead and fragrances that may be harmful to your health? (www.safecosmetics.org)



While cosmetics used by all consumers can contain harmful ingredients, products marketed to women of color contain some of the most damaging toxins such as:

- Hydroquinone used in skin lighteners
- Coal tar used in hair dyes
- Hormones used in hair relaxers

It is also believed that the additional chemicals and hormones in cosmetics used by African American girls are contributors to the onset of puberty earlier than their white counterparts. Girls entering puberty early are more vulnerable to sexual assault and situations in which they are not ready to cope with.

To lessen your exposure to cosmetic and environmental toxins, use fewer commercial products less often and skip fragrances all together. (See *Reference and Resource section*)

The Environment and You: Healing From Stress and Trauma

After a traumatic or stressful event, you are more vulnerable and in need of ways to soothe and comfort yourself. Environmental stressors such as traffic, air pollution, rude people, racism, classism, unemployment, exposure to violence or crime, or feelings of isolation can increase stress, sadness, and in some cases, incidents of acting out or violence.

It is not uncommon for people who experience stress and trauma to experience:

- **Anxiety:** Feeling overwhelmed and on edge.
- **Sleep Changes:** Getting too much or too little.
- **Low Energy:** Your body does not have enough fuel. You're tired and can't get moving.
- **Sadness:** Feeling blue or depressed.
- **High Blood Pressure:** Which can lead to strokes.
- **Snapping Out:** You are angry and you take it out on others.
- **Hopelessness:** You feel like you have no power over your life.

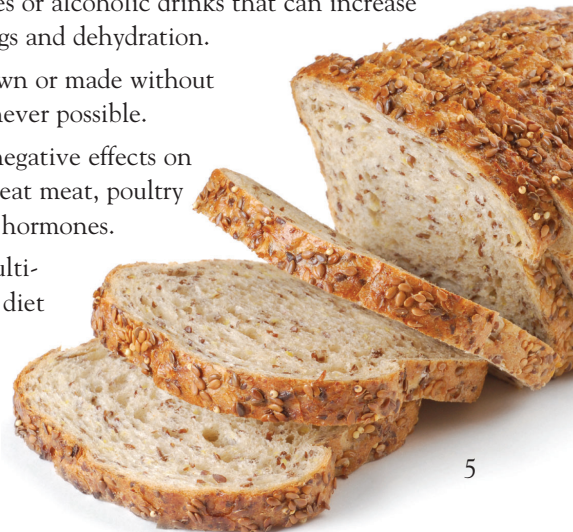
Symptoms of stress and trauma can be increased or decreased by the foods you eat and factors in your environment. You deserve to feel the best you can, so make small changes that can make a big difference. For important ways to support your health and healing, see “Quick Tips for Improved Health, Mood and Behavior.”

Quick Tips for Improved Health, Mood and Behavior

EAT WHOLE FOODS

The food you eat is an important part of how you heal and respond to others. Healthy foods are full of nutrients and come directly from nature. They are called “whole foods”. They are not processed and are produced without chemicals. Many studies show that when we eat these foods, there is significant improvement in mood, behavior and our capacity to make better choices. Include these foods in your diet:

- **Fresh fruits & vegetables:** are high in antioxidants and vitamins that can help you calm your nerves and get the rest you need. Eat these foods alone, in salads, or with other healthy foods in place of high sugar items and processed or fast foods.
- **Whole grains:** can reduce your risk of stroke and help you manage your weight. Choose pastas, breads, pancakes, and muffins made with whole grains.
- **Water:** Your body is 75% water. Drink filtered water in place of high sugar sodas, caffeine rich beverages or alcoholic drinks that can increase restlessness, agitation, mood swings and dehydration.
- **Organic foods:** Choose foods grown or made without chemicals and preservatives whenever possible.
- **Hormone Free:** To reduce their negative effects on your mental and physical health, eat meat, poultry and dairy products free of growth hormones.
- **Vitamins:** Take a good quality multi-vitamin daily to supplement your diet and give your body the best nutrition possible.



READ LABELS

Reading labels can help you make better decisions about the products you buy and the food you eat. Here are a few tips about reading food and product labels:

- On any food label, the most prevalent ingredients must be listed first or close to the top. So don't buy foods where the first few ingredients are:
 - Sugar, corn syrup, salt, sucrose or refined white flour
 - Trans fat or hydrogenated corn, cottonseed, canola or soybean oil
 - Salt (sodium)
- Avoid foods that include:
 - Artificial dyes like Yellow 5 & 6, Red 3 & 40, Blue 1 & 2, Green 3 and Orange B
 - Preservatives such as BHA, BHT, and TBHQ
 - MSG
- Shorter is better. If the name of an ingredient or item is long, sounds like a chemical, or you can't pronounce the word, it is probably not natural or good for you. So, look for foods and products that:
 - Have short ingredient lists
 - Have lists with natural sounding ingredients
 - Baked and not fried



GET MOVING

Any form of moderate exercise like walking, swimming, biking, playing tennis, etc. can cause the release of chemicals in the brain called endorphins that give you a feeling of happiness and positively affect your overall sense of well-being.

Suggested References and Resources

The following is a partial list of resources that CVVC used to create this booklet; they can help you begin to look at healthier alternatives when choosing food, self-care and household products. There are many more reliable resources; we hope this list gets you started!

50 Ways To Sooth Yourself Without Food by Susan Albers, Psy.D
(New Harbinger Publications. 2009)

Food Is Elementary: A Hands-on Curriculum for Young Students by Antonia Demas, PhD (Food Studies Institute. 2001)

Sugar Blues by William F. Duffy. (Grand Central Publishing. 1986)

Toxic Beauty: How Cosmetics And Personal-Care Products Endanger Your Health And What You Can Do About It by S. Epstein & R. Fitzgerald
(Benbella Books. 2009)

By Any Greens Necessary: A Revolutionary Guide for Black Women Who Want to Eat Great, Get Healthy and Look Phat by Tracye Lynn McQuirter, MPH (Lawrence Hill Books. 2010)

Squeaky Green: The Method Guide to Detoxing Your Home by Eric Ryan and Adam Lowry. (Chronicle Books. 2008)

Diet, Crime and Delinquency by Alexander Schauss (Parker House Enterprise. 1981)

The Falling Age of Puberty in U.S. Girls: What We Know, What We Need to Know by Sandra Steingraber (San Francisco, CA: Breast Cancer Fund. 2007)

Food & Behavior: Making the Connection by Barbara Reed Stitt, PhD
(Natural Press. 1997)

WEBSITES

Skin Deep: www.cosmeticsdatabase.com

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics: www.SafeCosmetics.org

Lead in Consumer Products: cpsc.gov/businfo/leadguide.html

Pittsburgh Farmers Markets: [www.growpittsburgh.org/
growpittsburgh/Resources/FarmersMkts](http://www.growpittsburgh.org/growpittsburgh/Resources/FarmersMkts)

Buy Local PA.: www.buylocalpa.org

By Any Greens Necessary Blog: www.byanygreensnecessary.com

Allegheny County Health Department: www.achd.net

Clean Water Action: www.cleanwateraction.org

CVVC Radio Archives – WellWoman Radio Retreat™ and
Peace -It-Together Pittsburgh®: www.cvvc.org

Check phone and web directories for local markets and stores that carry organic and/or fresh healthy food options and green household and personal care products.

DVDs

Impact of Healthy Food on Learning and Behavior (2004).
info@naturalpress.org

Unnatural Causes...Is Inequality Making Us Sick? (California Newsreel. 2008)
www.newsreel.org



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The EVE Project “She Who Learns, Teaches”

The mission of CVCV’s EVE Project is to develop and implement an awareness initiative that examines the environmental risk factors that contribute to violence, crime and conflict. The project has two primary focus areas:

- The impact of diet, household and personal care products on health, wellness, trauma recovery and violence prevention.
- The impact of diet, household and personal care products on precocious puberty and the connection to sexual violence.

Because of their continuing health disparities, unresolved historical trauma, chronic stressors, violent injury and premature death, the EVE Project places special emphasis on outreach to African American women.

Join us to become involved and informed about these issues:

Visit our website, attend an EVE training and/or participate in our EVE Circles.

EVE Circles are monthly gatherings of women of color and their supporters who are learning together to practice self-care and then share their knowledge about environmental impacts and healthy alternatives with others.

Become a part of the movement of “Enlightened Voices for the Environment.”

Call CVCV at 412-482-3240, or check our website at www.cvcv.org

The EVE Project, an initiative of The Center for Victims of Violence and Crime, is funded by The Heinz Endowments.

If you have been a victim or witness of crime,
have concerns about safety, or need help resolving
conflict peacefully, call us today!

24-Hour Assistance Helpline
412.392.8582

1.866.644.CVVC (2882)



www.cvvc.org