



Growing up in Pasadena, Hillary Peterson was aware of the role that toxic environments could have on one's health. Living just outside of Los Angeles, she remembers the air pollution that often lingered over the city. "The smog was so bad that on many days, we couldn't play sports outside after school. I'd go home and have to stay inside, and I remember my parents saying that it was so harmful, wondering if we should move away. Living near the ocean, plastic pollution was also on the top of my mind."

When she was just 32 years old, Hillary's world came to a screeching halt when she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. "I was perplexed, because I had always gone to great lengths to live a healthy lifestyle. I ate organic foods, meditated, spent my free time in nature and at the ocean." As a young mother of twins, she was desperate to discover what could have led to her health crisis so that she could protect her children. "I was so concerned," she says. "I knew that if this could happen to me, it could happen to anyone." Thinking back to her own childhood, she began to wonder if her unhealthy environment had contributed to her disease.

Hillary was shocked to hear on an NPR radio program about a study by the Environmental Working Group that had found that toxic chemicals found in women's personal care products were being found in their babies' blood. "When I researched endocrine-disrupting chemicals, I discovered they were in all of the products I was buying to look and feel beautiful. How could the beauty industry be selling products with these toxins in them to the people they are claiming to want to help look and *feel* better?"

With a sense of both indignance and determination, Hillary embarked on a mission to fill the gap that the industry was so callously ignoring. That is how, and why, she began True Botanicals—a non-toxic beauty enterprise "to give people the chance to look and feel better because they were using a product that was actually making their skin *healthier*." With Hillary's rigorous dedication to using non-toxic ingredients and employing sustainable business practices, True Botanicals quickly became a guidepost for the cosmetics industry. Because of her unflinching standards, she has gained the support of a wide range of environmental advocates and celebrities like Laura Dern and Olivia Wilde.

"When I opened up my email to see a message from Laura Dern, I was floored!" Hillary says. "She loves our products, and our story, and what we stand for." As it turns out, Laura grew up near Hillary: she too had experienced the smog and other kinds of pollution and saw how they were impacting children's health. This is the reason she has always used her platform to lead on important environmental issues. "It really matters to have people with a reach stand up for causes that empower a sustainable future," Hillary says. "Laura has helped expand the reach of True Botanicals with all the dynamism I could've expected, and more."

For Laura Dern, the issues a leader and her company embody are just as important as the integrity of the product itself. "It's one thing for me to support this sustainable company as a customer, but it's another thing to then meet Hillary, and discover the origin story of the company, and the passion that comes with wanting to make products that are good for you, good for your children, good for the planet—and to care deeply about it. I was interested in continuing the story," Laura says. "As women, and as activists, we're working to show people that you can use your voice to be true, to live with an authentic story and not hide behind shame—which is a perfect parallel to wanting to serve people with a company. What we're all doing is leading with the truth."

Hillary credits the flourishing of True Botanicals to the authenticity of their people, process, and products, which she constantly puts to the test. Every product at True Botanicals is certified by Made Safe® certified, a nonprofit that screens products against a list of harmful chemical ingredients like behavioral, developmental, reproductive, and neuro toxins; carcinogens, endocrine disruptors, fire retardants, heavy metals, pesticides, toxic solvents, and harmful volatile organic compounds (VOCs). True Botanicals has the distinction of being the first entire cosmetic line of products to have the Made Safe® certification. Hillary is proud that her company is also Leaping Bunny certified, the gold standard for cruelty-free, non-animal testing in all stages of its product development.

Sourcing sustainable ingredients is another important guiding principal for Hillary, and to achieve this she works with a large network of entrepreneurs with a similar worldview, who lift one another up through collaboration and education. “Whether it's Birdsong Herb Farm from Vermont, and their organic calendula, or Hudson Hemp from New York, and the oils from their regenerative farm, we source from a healthy, organic, regenerative cycle, and our products reflect that ethos. This is how you build communities. By supporting the businesses out there that are doing the right thing, and educating those that want to join. There are more than you might think. I urge everybody to pitch in. It all makes a difference.”

Hillary hopes True Botanicals can continue to influence leaders in the cosmetics industry, as other sustainable pioneers have done in their industries. She draws inspiration from leaders like Zach Bush of Farmer's Footprint, who works to spread awareness of regenerative farming practices. “Zach says he is not concerned about fixing conventional farming, because it's a dinosaur going by the wayside,” she says. “Regenerative farming is the movement of the future, and that's where he can make an impact, so that's what he is doing. At True Botanicals, we are about showing a better way forward and how it can be done profitably. That is our important work. If conventional beauty product companies don't want to be obsolete, over time they will have to adapt to what we are doing.”

What makes Hillary so sure that her stance is sound is the demand for just and sustainable cosmetics from consumers themselves. “Our industry has a term for our highly educated consumer base: ‘skintellectuals’,” she says. “With such widescale concern about the health and safety of the cosmetics we use, there is no question that in the coming years, eventually ‘clean’ will be the new standard across the board. It will not be the exception, but the rule. And I will be ecstatic to have played a role toward creating a more balanced, and healthy cosmetics ecosystem.”

It has now been 25 years since that life-changing event when Hillary was diagnosed with cancer. While she needs to take synthetic thyroid every day, she says there is no doubt that the biggest impact her diagnosis had was on her life path and the opportunity to create a meaningful role as the founder of True Botanicals. “My twins are now 26, and are both passionately working to have an impact of their own, my son as an officer in the Marines, learning all that he can about mentorship and leadership, and my daughter as a staff editor at the New York Times, telling stories that must be told. And our younger daughter is studying neuroscience in the hopes of attending medical school. My children and their peers give me so much confidence that a more thoughtful, sustainable future is within our reach.”

For those looking to introduce sustainable measures into their businesses, Hillary offers some simple advice. “Wherever you are headed, it's always one step at a time. It's critical to just get started. Everything can't happen at once, and depending on the type and size of business you want to manage, your approach will be different. Even so, what is true for us is true for any business. *Any* business can analyze its processes and pursue the sustainable option: cut down on packaging, go organic, or root out the source of ingredients to ensure that the supply chain is just and regenerative. Every bit of good helps.”

For youth who are interested in building a more sustainable future, Hillary knows the task at hand is a mighty one. “When you look at climate change, there are so many issues of great importance that face us today. I'm sure for the next generation, who are just getting their footing, this can feel completely overwhelming. I've learned that it can be easy to get weighed down by these challenges.”

As great as the challenges might seem, she urges youth to focus on what they can do, because she knows they have the ability to do something extraordinary. “Whether it's through my professional work, or in my own personal journey, I focus on what's possible, and work to make it a reality. It feels like a really positive way to spend my time,” she says. “So, when we find ourselves getting overwhelmed by challenges, it helps to shift our focus to possibilities. Seeing the possibilities is an important step that can lead us all to a more sustainable future.”

*For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued;
it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side-effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than
oneself.*

Viktor Frankl

Call to Action: Help Hillary inspire more businesses in the personal care industry to pursue sustainability by visiting <https://truebotanicals.com>.

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