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Interview with eco-designer Robin Wilson

by Andrea Hill on 03.08.12

Worldways Strategy + Creative is proud to participate in the [Third Annual Blog for International Women's Day](#) on March 8th. Today we speak with renowned eco-designer Robin Wilson about how her childhood health issues have shaped the woman she is today.

Robin Wilson grew up in Austin, Texas. With the lush beauty of the trees, expansive lawns and floral landscapes, she often refers to it as the "Allergy Capital of the World". Robin suffered from both allergies and asthma, and her parents did all they could to try to alleviate her suffering. Their first home had tile floors instead of wall-to-wall carpet, the pet was kept outside, and her diet was limited in processed items and focused on healthy whole foods.

Fast forward several years, and Robin lives every day introducing beauty and wellness to others through her firm [Robin Wilson Home](#). She serves as an ambassador for the [Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America](#) working to "increase awareness of indoor air quality issues that affect wellness in residential and commercial spaces." We caught up with Robin on the eve of the launch of her hypoallergenic bedding line to discuss how those early challenges served to help guide her in her life's work.



Robin's mother worked to ensure a healthy environment for her asthmatic child

AH: You are about to launch a line of [hypoallergenic eco-friendly bedding](#). What lead you to this evolution of your brand?

RW: As a child, I remember Mom doing the weekly wash and always focusing on bed linens, as she would say that 'pollen from outside is gathered in your pillow'... and she is right. People spend one-third of their lives sleeping and rarely think about the toxins that they bring into their homes on their shoes, clothing and hair. Our product line is an option for those who want to be aware of making an impact on their family's health – with a simple solution of pillows, mattress pads, comforters

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and fiber beds. All at reasonable prices and woven to prevent penetration by allergens. The first product in the line is now available at Bed Bath and Beyond – our [hypoallergenic mattress pads](#)

AH: Beyond your exposure to a healthy environment, how else did your childhood contribute to your success today?

RW: I come from a family that believed in a strong work ethic. My mom's family is more entrepreneurial with real estate, businesses and farming/ranching. My dad's family were more working-class and worked with their hands. From both sides, I have been able to have an appreciation for those who have different skills, yet a focus on achievement of goals. Since I was a sickly child, a lot of adults were patient with me and allowed me ask a lot of questions about what they did, why, and how. And those bits of knowledge continue to resonate today when I am confronted with a business problem.

AH: You spent some time as an executive recruiter and dabbled in real estate – a bit of a change from what you are doing now. What were some challenges in reinventing yourself?



RW: O magazine did a profile on me in 2007 which chronicles my ["career change" from an executive recruiter to entrepreneur](#).

Transitioning from a regular paycheck to an entrepreneurial mindset means that you have to understand cash flow, and you might make a lot of money, but your liabilities affect your bottom line. There have been many times when I paid everyone else, and did not pay myself. It is a sacrifice you must sometimes make when you chase your dream.

AH: What sort of advice could you have used as a young woman to help you along your path?

I wish that someone had told me to find a hobby I love and to get good at it (like tennis, piano, cooking) so that it would always be an outlet during moments of stress. As well, I wish that work-life balance had been discussed more, rather than an emphasis on always working harder. There were five years where I shut down my personal life to work 100% – and while I am grateful for the business progress, I wish that I had found my husband earlier...and he was in my social circle, but I was too busy at the time. Thank goodness, he and I connected just at the time my self-imposed work focus was transitioning.



Robin has learned to take time for stress-relieving hobbies

Rather than find herself limited by health problems, Robin applied her experiences to space design and product development. She was inspired by those who demonstrated a strong work ethic but took the time to answer a young girl's questions. Robin herself is an inspiration, the second African-American woman to launch a branded line of textile products to the mass market, and we appreciate her taking the time to share her learnings with us.

To celebrate the launch of her bedding collection, Robin is giving away several pieces as well as a virtual bedroom makeover over on

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