



Bringing *nature home*

By Esther Etkin

Florence Niemann's business premises don't emit the stale smell of yesterday's coffee and copy toner that often pervades office environments. Instead, you're welcomed by a heady waft of ginger and the uplifting scent of rosemary. "It's the Healing Bath," says Florence, founder and Managing Director of The Fountainhead, a dynamic company that specialises in products that help restore the body and soul. And just like the refreshing smell of bath salts, Florence brings a refreshing attitude to the sometimes sterile worlds of both health and business. She aims to empower her customers and employees,

and has held on tightly to her beliefs in the power of alternative health and natural healing products along the way.

Florence has always prided herself on finding health products that are unavailable locally, and "ones that genuinely work," she says ardently. It is precisely this ability to recognise innovative products, together with her husband's acute business sense that have proven to be a successful formula in firmly establishing her young company in the pharmacy retail business. The Fountainhead is so successful, in fact, that she is now moving to larger premises, which includes a new warehouse painted in healing colours and reiki symbols to hold the energy of her

As the 'fountainhead' of a vibrant health products company, Florence Niemann has transformed her passion for the healing properties of nature into a successful business – one that seeks to uplift people and improve their health.

products. But it was from humble beginnings and the launch of a single product that put her on her current path to developing an ethical empire of offerings she hopes to one day export to people across the globe.

Three years ago, Florence discovered detox foot patches while working as a therapeutic reflexologist. Armed with the knowledge that healing responses can take place through the foot, she decided to try the patches on herself and some of her clients. The results were astounding, especially with diabetics who could measure immediate results with their blood sugar diagnostic machines. The Fountainhead Chi Detox Foot Patches have since become the company's cornerstone product, recommended by doctors for cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, as well as to insulin dependent people. But the patches are not just for chronic conditions. They can also be used by those who want to rid their bodies of toxins but lack the willpower or discipline to commit to more complicated detoxification routines.

"Our Detox Patches are sincerely the easiest way to detox," she says with palpable confidence in a product that she regularly incorporates into her own busy lifestyle. "It's good to use them at night when you are sleeping because this is when the body is already naturally repairing itself."

While Florence is certainly delighted at the commercial success of the patches, she seems to gain even greater pleasure from knowing that they utilise some of the principles of reflexology at a time when people neither have the time nor money to benefit from this effective alternative therapy. "We were meant to walk bare foot on the earth. Your feet would be massaged by the earth and stones, and far infra red rays would penetrate you to feed your body," she says. "With reflexology, the therapist is giving you the energy transference and massaging your feet. The patches work in a similar way," she adds, "with eucalyptus that gives off infra-red rays."

Getting back to nature and all it has to offer, especially now that we are increasingly living artificial and antibiotic lifestyles, is clearly what propels Florence and the choice of products she feels fit to include under The Fountainhead name. "I was watching Oprah when I heard about pomegranate and just couldn't get any locally."

She explains that the antioxidant-rich fruit has been used for its healing properties since ancient times. "You don't see pomegranate trees anymore," she says almost to herself, and so Florence decided to bring pomegranate to the South African public, even if only in supplement form, beginning with her own family. Explains Florence, "My husband is a smoker and had high blood pressure, but after taking the pomegranate the doctor says his blood pressure is now textbook normal."

She might not have immediately found herself in the holistic health arena, but it seems Florence was destined to land up in the business of healing from early on. Born in Cape Town to a Swiss mother and German father, her family moved to Switzerland when she was three-years-old.

But it was not long before her parents missed the African sun and so decided to relocate to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). A bush baby at heart, she still enjoyed visiting her grandparents in Switzerland for what she describes as 'Heidi'-type holidays fetching milk from the co-op in milk cans. This was also where

she was to receive a profound introduction to natural remedies. "My grandmother would bend down to pick some little plant that would remedy this or that, and that to me was truly amazing. I wasn't just in awe of how intelligent my grandmother was at knowing all these things, but really thought that nature was so clever to put healing energy within plants," says Florence.

It was only after the culmination of various work experiences however, that Florence felt ready to enter the health and wellbeing industry and her amazement at the therapeutic potential of plants was re-awakened. With ample experience as a secretary, bookkeeper, an advertising production manager and accounts executive, and after studying Reiki and reflexology, she finally knew the time was right to run a small health company – The Fountainhead. "I think life is just perfect," she says. "Everything comes together beautifully when you are ready for it."

Having now reached a stage in her life where she has tapped into her own personal power, Florence is determined to share this sense of empowerment with others as her company continues to grow.

"We believe that it is in widening our family circle that we can each make a difference," she says about her efforts to assist those in need of financial as well as spiritual upliftment. The Fountainhead products are packaged by the disabled and the company aims to include more products that are produced locally to play a greater role in the South African economy.

Although Florence has big plans for her company, it's the simple things in life that keep her grounded and inform her health choices – whether it be for herself or her customers. She sticks to pure drinks and herbal teas, and believes in supplementing your diet to remain in peak condition and prevent health problems.

"I meditate for a few minutes every day just to get into total silence and become centred. Most of my great ideas come after meditation. Most importantly, I try to be happy, look for the good and be kind," she says with an infectious effervescence that is about as rare in the business world as the healing crystal hanging from the ceiling behind her office desk. ☺

