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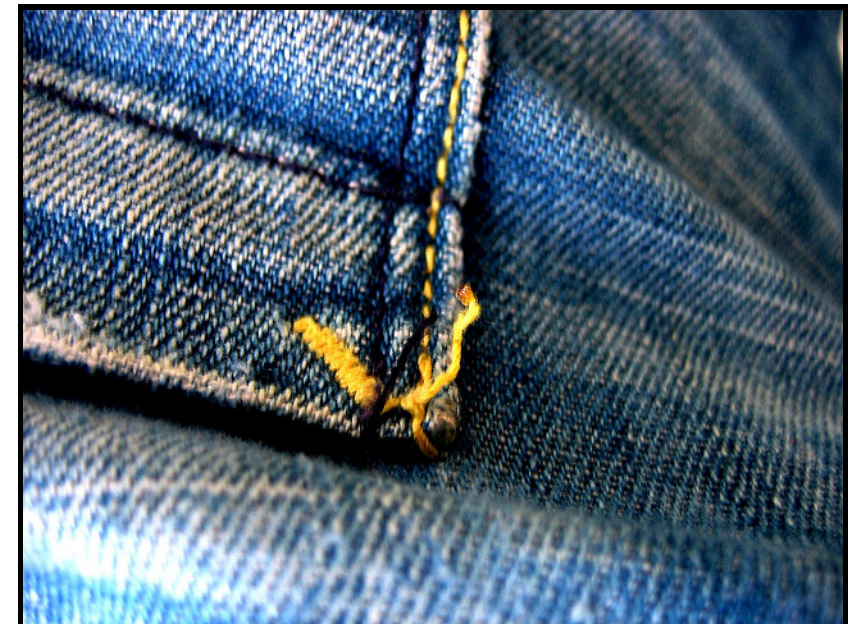
Save A Life, Distress Your Jeans

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If you've ever wanted a simple trick that saves lives, helps the planet, saves you money, and keeps you looking stylish, then distressing your own jeans is that trick!

For starters, you or your friends probably have several pairs of jeans sitting in the back of your closet that you don't like anymore – with a little upcycling they could save you from buying new and cut your textile waste.

Even better, distressing your own jeans save a life – people laboring in sandblasting factories overseas to make distressed jeans die from an incurable lung disease, silicosis, because of improper protection. This is a straightforward issue that is easily solved with a little creativity and compassion. It's the kind of three-in-one eco solution we love here at Hearts!



The Connection Between Jeans and A Deadly Disease: Silicosis

- **Killer jeans and silicosis:** Sandblasting (using high pressure sand) is used to give jeans their distressed or worn in look. ^[i] Bangladesh has about 2,000 workers using sandblasting full time. Every year they produce about 200 million pairs of sandblasted jeans for export.^[iii]

- **Greatest silicosis risk – breathing without protection:** Sandblasters contract silicosis from the inhaling silica dust while working without protection, which creates a compromised respiratory system.^[iv]

- **How silicosis kills jean distressors:** People suffering from silicosis experience breathing difficulties, swollen lymph nodes, and inflammation of the lungs; those with acute silicosis can experience permanent lung scarring and eventual death.^[v] People who have been exposed to silica dust may not exhibit silicosis symptoms for up to 10-15 years after exposure.

- **It's not just jeans: Silicosis also kills miners, glass makers:** Any silica dust exposure without proper protection can lead to deadly silicosis. ^[vi] ^[vii] ^[viii] ^[ix] ^[x] ^[xi]

- 3+ million American workers are at risk of developing silicosis; six die each month

- 25% of gold miners in Lesotho test positive for silicosis

- 288,000 new silicosis cases of silicosis are reported in South African miners annually

- 79.9% of workers with 10+ years laboring in glass and ceramics factories develop silicosis

- 61% of coal miners who work for 20+ years also develop the disease

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Take Action! Prevent Silicosis, Create Distressed Jeans with these DIY Tricks

1. **Mark where you want distressing:** While wearing your jeans, determine where you'd like to see distressing by bending at the waist and knees (for instance) to see where the jeans would wear naturally. Then using a white fabric pencil, mark these areas for reference.
2. **Use an Eco bleach to add fading:** To make your jeans look well-worn and faded, soak a new sponge in an oxygen or eco-friendly bleach ([avoid chlorine](#)) and then lightly rub your jeans where you'd like them to look faded and worn. Patting usually gets the best results.
3. **Use a cheese grater:** Place a solid object between the two layers of a pant leg (like a rock or piece of wood). Targeting the area where you want distress, hold your jeans down over the cardboard and use your other hand to fray your jeans with the cheese grater. Check out this [video on the process](#).
4. **Use a sand paper or nail file:** Again, place a hard surface under the area where you'd like to create distressing and start to wear away the jeans in that place with the sandpaper or nail file. This video on [using sandpaper and nail files](#) will give you a clearer idea on the technique.

5. **Wash to finish it off:** After you've completed your work of upcycling, wash your jeans to remove any bits of fabric and the bleach.

Take Action 2! Still Save Lives, Alternatives to Distressing Your Jeans

1. **Buy Clean Clothes Campaign jeans:** If you don't want to take the time to distress your own jeans, buy from companies that have signed the *Manifesto Against Killer Jeans* through the [Clean Clothes Campaign](#). These companies have agreed to abolish sandblasting. For a list of brands and their position on sandblasting jeans, refer to [this list from the Clean Clothes Campaign](#). If your favorite jeans are made by companies that refuse to sign, tell them you refuse to buy their products until they abolish sandblasting so by writing an email or making a phone call. Go one step further and [sign this protest letter](#) against those brands that refuse to take action.
2. **Look for jeans distressed that use alternatives to sandblasting:** Ethical fashion companies can provide that distressed look without sandblasting. For jean distressing, [carbon dioxide \(CO2\) lasers can take the place of sandblasting](#), as can hydrogen peroxide, sandpaper, or stone washing. Look for labels that indicate ethical fashion processes that have been used instead of sandblasting.
3. **Make Eco shopping choices for mined products, ceramics, and glass:** Let's make silicosis a thing of the past by choosing ethical products that ensure workers in the mining, glass making and ceramics manufacturing industries are protected from silicosis. Look for the [Rapaport Ethical Certification](#) or [fair trade certified products](#) which protect human rights standards in these various industries.

Keep Digging:

- Read up on how [Versace Bans "Killer" Sandblasted Jeans After Activists Push for Change](#).
- For more statistics on silicosis, check out the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) or this [report from Right Diagnosis](#).
- Go through the detailed [report of the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) on the threats of crystalline silica.
- Read up on the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's [Respiratory Protection Recommendations](#).
- Learn more about the work of NGOs like the [Inter-American Human Rights Commission](#) and [Oxfam International](#) to stop unsafe working conditions in the mining industry worldwide.
- Protect your family from silicosis when doing home renovations by installing systems for dust-collection to minimize silica particles that might get released into your indoor air. In particular, when mixing concrete, use a product like [The Bucket Lid](#) to prevent silica dust from infiltrating your indoor air.
- Find out how proper masks protect you and contractors from silicosis: [Respiratory Protection Program of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#) standards.

Images by: [Hugo-photography](#)

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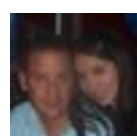
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Tomas Gotes

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