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Stabilizing Stones – or – As the Chrysocolla Crumbles

This is adapted from a forum posting originally found here:

<http://www.gemcutters.org/LDA/StabilizingTurqOpal.htm>

and is offered as a convenience to club members without any guarantee of success or suitability to your purposes.

Please read, understand, and respect all safety information provided with any materials mentioned in this article.

Question:

I've noticed the term "stabilized" used with respect to turquoise and certain opals, and I assume this is a process of curing flaws in a stone so as to be able to shape and polish it without getting a lot of cracks and pits.

What are the commonly used stabilization processes?

-- bsmith@infodial.net

One response to the question is as follows:

Greetings, Friends:

The most common method I'm aware of is using a 3-1-1 (two part) epoxy and acetone mixture.

Materials needed:

1. Epoxy 330. Two parts, one hardener, one resin.
 - a. Water Clear Epoxy - example here: <http://tinyurl.com/lxp94dk>
2. Acetone: One Pint. Available in the paint supplies section of Lowes or Home Depot
3. Chemically non-reactive and tightly-sealable container
 - a. Examples:

- i. Empty paint can from Lowes or Home Depot
- ii. Glass jar with tight fitting lid (but no plastic seal - acetone melts most plastic)

Procedure:

1. Mix both tubes into Acetone ***very thoroughly***.
2. Place stones into mixture and seal tightly.
3. Allow stones to steep for 7-10 days.
4. Swirl brew around about every other day.
5. Remove stones and let them set for a minimum of one week prior to further activities. Good ventilation is exceedingly important! Outdoors if the climate allows.
6. Place extracted stones on a surface that no one's going to mind if it gets a little crudded up (wife's china - DON'T DO IT!).
7. Keep the mixture sealed when not in use and in an area that's cooler than my back yard during the month of July. If sealed tightly, it will last quite a long time.
8. Places NOT to keep it:
 - a. Near the water heater or other sources of heat that could emit either sparks or open flames (acetone is very combustable).
 - b. Where the children can find it, if you're still blessed to have them in the house. "Daddy! Look at these beautiful blue rocks I found in this jar!", goo dripping from their fingers, on the wife's carpet, trailed through the kitchen. Trust me, no one's going to be happy at this point!

-- Vincent, Vybt1@aol.com

[Edited for length and clarity]

