

ThreadTherapy

Text and photos by Cindy Scraba

Whenever quilters and stitchers discover I'm a Thread Educator, many admit to needing my "help". It is comforting to know whatever ailments appear to be terminal on the onset, are generally curable with some vital thread therapy. After all, it's just thread, right?

Thread quality is paramount to how well it can perform and a good DNA is its first line of defense. Here are some healthy habits when choosing and using thread types:

1 Within the thread world you get what you pay for IF you know what you're looking for. Consider the various threads types available on the market and what they're typically used for. Some basic types include: cottons, polyesters, silks, metallics, and decoratives. The raw materials used to make these ranges from low to superior grades. Product labels are not a comprehensive reference. However, when choosing a cotton thread for example, do seek out the extra-long-staple, Egyptian grown reference to ensure the highest grade of cotton, which provides optimum performance and minimizes health issues for your machine. In comparison, the other lower to mid-grades of cotton thread are widely available. Some brands are notorious for lint buildup and are common causes of premature aging for both machines and stitchers. When you become more experienced and gain the knowledge to help you recognize thread quality, you'll realize the differences are not subtle, but obvious.

Q Green Thought—I've noticed when we choose a quality thread at the onset of a project and are familiar with its usage; it becomes a more economical choice than any "bargain brand" that never gets used. Quality verses quantity is a healthy green choice.

2 The proper needle choice for your stitching methods and fabric will ultimately deliver a higher level of performance. Quiz questions: Would you sew silk with a large needle intended for canvas? Would you repair jeans using a fine appliqué needle? Well, that depends...and as a thread coach I have seen these scenarios and my approach towards thread therapy continues to evolve to accommodate the creative needs of quilters and stitchers. There's always more than meets "the eye"—pun intended.

For over a decade now, the topstitch needle design has received widespread acceptance and become #1 amongst quilters for several reasons. When Organ Needles™ partnered with Superior Threads™ almost 3 years ago, they began to manufacture and distribute a revolutionary titanium nitride coated topstitch needle for home machines.

a. The Topstitch design boasts a sharp point with a wider eye to freely accommodate more thread types so you can conveniently use the same needle for nearly all tasks.



b. The shaft has a deeper groove, protects your threads as it pierces the fabric repeatedly. This is good news for metallics and decoratives, which often need more TLC and therapy to control their personalities.

c. The titanium nitride coating provides an anti abrasive benefit, which equates to dozens of hours of sharpness (50-80 hours) for continual sewing without shredding and breaking your threads! www.organneedles.com

d. The second photo compares 5 X #90/14 needles of similar designs. Centered is the Superior Topstitch needle with the microscopic titanium coating: Left to right are Schmetz needles: jeans, microtex, topstitch, and metallic. Basically, other needle designs share some of the desirable features of the topstitch design as noted; however, they lack the endurance benefits of the titanium coating.

Q Green Thought—It's possible to simplify your needle inventory while reducing your costs.

e. The most popular needle sizes range from fine (e.g. #70/10) to thick (e.g. #100/16). The larger number relates to the metric system and the diameter of the shaft. The smaller number is the North American equivalent. A brand new assortment package (available June 2011 from Superior Threads™) has some of each size and allows you to be prepared for a variety of projects and most thread types. I consider this a standard prescription for pain free sewing and addictive!





3 There is a comprehensive Superior Thread Reference Guide for Home Machines, listing over 2-dozen thread lines, which I rely upon and suggest to customers ongoing. This guide is also in their catalogues if you have one. For convenience, this thread guide is posted on my website in a printable PDF format: www.cindysthreadworks.com/links or visit www.superiorthreads.com under reference guides for both Home Machine and Longarm Machines. For other thread makers please visit their respective websites for reference tools.

Q This issue of *The Canadian Quilter* supports the green theme. I believe, by making healthy thread choices, along with a

multi-tasking needle design that rivals the ever-ready-bunny, we are celebrating quality and minimizing the waste factor.

In my next column, I'll prescribe more painless, natural remedies for your stitching ailments if you email them. Plus, I'll be including some hands-on tips for:

- How-to successfully use different thread types you have in your thread collections.
- Choosing compatible bobbin threads.
- Deciding on thread types and when to use them.



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