

# *From the Heart...*

*...Lifeskills for Today's Family*  
*By Sharon L. Benedict MS*



## ***My Wellness Declaration, part 2***

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, August 5, 2016)

In the previous article, I shared my own wellness declaration and those early growing up years with little or no childhood memories. One of the greatest lessons of life I continue to learn today from my declaration that my plans and the steps ordered to get there are not always the plans God has in that order. And for those who know me so well, I was “the planner, the organizer.” I tackled each idea and vision with gusto.

After moving from California to Texas in between birthing my daughters, I pursued advanced degrees in art and industrial arts education. With each day that followed various ailments became more prevalent. I found my health progressively deteriorating for inexplicable reasons. The pain was continuous, and life was becoming a seemingly unsolvable mystery. Sharon came to a stop! But not without finishing my master’s art project from bed, supervising a weaving student of mine with the finishing touches.

I actually graduated with my masters and continued seeking solutions to my medical mysteries, while planning what art to do next. By the time I was thirty-six years old, I was experiencing degenerative episodes with my neck, spine, and jaw. My digestive tract was continually in an upheaval with high level pain from one end to the other. I was also jaundice, bruising down my arms and legs, and my hair was thinning.

Eventually in my thirties I became hypoglycemic to prediabetic, had osteoarthritis, and continued general nerve, tissue, and spinal degeneration. I was also developing macular degeneration in my eyes, at 36 years old no less!

I had other things going on as well, such as hair falling out, uncoordinated at times/bumps into things, nails brittle and peeling, and spontaneous bruising and capillary breakouts on extremities. And my own emotional state wasn't too good either!

At 36 and not able to do much of anything no matter how I tried, I finally sat down and had a long talk with God. My first question was "Is this how it's going to be?" Not necessarily expecting an answer, I was definitely surprised with what I heard. "Are you going to trust Me?" My response . . . "Wow, ok, what do I have to lose?" That was the day I made my Wellness Declaration and started my journey to being the whole person I am today.

As the journey began, I could have never imagined what would surface in my memories and come my way toward wellness, including a few more diagnoses. Doctors love giving diagnoses but often fall short of how to deal with it beside pain killers, tranquilizers, and "go on a vacation." Yet, God had a different plan.

I was ever surprised along the way as to what was to be done when and in what way. I learned some things need to be done first before the big giants are to be faced and won. And that it is still a moment to moment process with each step. Other diagnoses came my way such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome, severe Malabsorption Syndrome, Achlorhydria (very low or absent hydrochloric acid in stomach and other digestive organs), Fibromyalgia, and pre-Lupus. Autoimmune disorders can affect almost any part of the body, including the heart, brain, nerves, muscles, skin, eyes,

joints, lungs, kidneys, glands, the digestive tract, and blood vessels. There were just too many things going wrong with my body; and with this world of specialists, few if any collaborated. It also seemed like when doctors didn't know what to do with me, they always tagged me with a syndrome or pre-this and pre-that.

What was my first step? Actually, it was my husband's idea. John simply came home one day when I was in high-level pain in my digestive tract, he handed me the Encyclopedia Britannica! He said, "If you can't eat, you will starve to death. Let's find out how a normal digestive tract functions first. Then go from there." No doctor, no hospital ever did that. They simply said, "We know you are deteriorating but don't know what to do." So, I went home and "trusted" some more. That's when my John stepped in.

The next step was when a doctor showed up at John's work after attending a business luncheon and handed John his business card. Dr. Ayers said he never gives out his card when visiting guests but felt he should. John just simply responded, "You are an answer to prayer for my wife." That next step was a thorough allergy/sensitivity testing for chemicals, foods, inhalants. Some help showed up.

The next key step happened with a phone call from my sister in California. Paula said she found a metabolic disorder center in Pasadena and recommended I try them. So, off to California I went. At the Currier Metabolic Center, Dr. Currier did tests that no other doctor or hospital did. He summarized that he wasn't going to diagnose me any further but will help me find out what isn't working and try to get it to work again. He only stated I had what is called "an inborn error of metabolism" spiraling into layers of degenerative autoimmune responses. The term "metabolic disorder syndrome" wasn't in vogue at the time, nor were they tied to autoimmune problems yet by conventional or

even some alternative practices. In the early 1970s and 80s the work of Dr. Currier and others were actually pioneering this field at the time.

Dr. Currier also connected the dots between the here and now and my childhood ailments more likely caused or at least were accelerated by my parents being chain smokers and heavy drinkers, even while pregnant. I not only inherited a degenerative predisposition but with severe malabsorption my stomach had little or no hydrochloric acid being produced nor was my pancreas, intestines, and related organs barely producing sufficient digestive enzymes to break down proteins and fats, in particular via the magnesium-activated metabolic steps. That was why I was basically starving to death and the body was trying to compensate by feeding off my muscles, tissues, and bones. I went from 170 lbs to 114 lbs within months when I showed up at Dr. Currier's doorstep.

The center also did extensive allergy/sensitivity testing to augment what Dr. Ayers, my local allergist, did to insure the most effective and synergistic treatment plan going forward. I was so doctor-shy, hospital-shy by then I wasn't sure if I really wanted to trust or try what Currier put before me. It would take life-altering discipline and commitment not just for months but possibly the rest of my life. Yet, I remembered my words "Wow...what do I have to lose?" when God asked me, "Are you going to trust me?"

Keeping on, keeping on, was only possible with learning those moments of trust that kept me on track and on pace toward regaining my life and wellbeing. I was learning what to give up to gain. So, I went home with a life-changing regimen of pills, potions, lotions, and avoidance/rotation eating pattern. Upon arriving home, I also had

to go through every product on the shelf and in the refrigerator and start with the most benign regimen of daily routines.

The journey continues . . . next week, to regain my life and health one meal at a time, one life-changing day at a time.

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Sharon L. Benedict, is a speaker, author, and weaver, and loving it! She is available for speaking engagements, free-lance writing, and will even weave you a one-of-kind creation, just for you. Sharon also welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at [seekreachachieve@gvtc.com](mailto:seekreachachieve@gvtc.com). Visit her website at [www.celebratingyourjourney.com](http://www.celebratingyourjourney.com).

# *From the Heart...*

*...Lifeskills for Today's Family*  
By Sharon L. Benedict MS



## ***My Wellness Declaration, part 3***

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, August 12, 2016)

As mentioned in previous article, after returning home with a life-changing regimen of pills, potions, lotions, and avoidance/rotation eating pattern, I also had to go through every product on the shelf and in the refrigerator and start with the most benign regimen of daily routines. The overall transformation included housecleaning products, laundry detergents, body lotions, makeup, even my own toothpaste.

Dr. Currier's regimen of food rotation by food families came from a book he gave me called "*The Rotary Diversified Diet*" developed by Theron G. Randolph, M.D. and Ralph W. Moss, Ph.D (source: *The Alternative Approach to Allergies: The New Field of Clinical Ecology Unravels the Environmental Causes of Mental and Physical Ills*). This rotary diet involved five basic rules:

1. Eat whole unadulterated foods, simple foods.
2. Diversify your eating pattern.
3. Rotate your eating pattern.
4. Rotate food families every 2 days.
5. Eat only foods to which you are not allergic, at first.

He also introduced me to another reference, *Brain Allergies: The Psychonutrient and Magnetic Connections* by Dr. William Philpott. The book also had a seven-day and four-

day rotation chart of foods plus other challenging claims, but I persevered taking each day as it came. I used both references to create a tailored rotation to my situation.

Testing out every step and with a lot of help from my scientist husband, I learned about food families for every vegetables, animal protein, fruit, herbs, spices, sweets, you name it. As time went on I modified the rotation to accommodate any food avoidance still necessary. I typed my own chart and posted it on my kitchen cabinet for the next five to seven years.

To reduce exposure to offending food substances, starting a seven-day rotation routine was very hard at first. All the cravings started coming as I went into withdrawals from so many foods I couldn't even list here. I had to initially avoid all the basic foods we eat every day, such as wheat, beef, all dairy, eggs, soy, you name it. Read any food label on the product you use. Guess what? There are about 12 basic foods you eat several times during the day every day. Where is the variety?

I discovered a whole new, fascinating world of culinary wonder with foods I thought didn't exist! After five years, I fortunately was able to gradually reintroduce most all offending foods as I was able to handle them and continue with a four-day rotation. It made it so much easier creating menus and recipes that fit each day. Keep in mind, this was not a fad diet. It didn't deal with extreme eating patterns, such as eating only one food group or food family for weeks or months at a time. This rotation supported the basic rules of quality nutrition in every detail.

Imagine all the surprise meals my family encountered! With some meals, they actually enjoyed the concoctions. There were those days, however, especially Day 3, that didn't go over very well! But love conquers all, and we were in this adventure

together. And yes, there were times (which I only heard about in later adult years) my daughters pitched their lunches in the trash at school and got in the cafeteria line or sponged off friends any goodies they could get!

Along with this mealtime adventure, I also began a nutritional supplement regimen Dr. Currier prescribed with the most benign sources available in the nation at the time for chemically sensitive people. Not knowing how my body would react I started taking only a third of the amount prescribed. I eased my way experimenting with each week one more supplement to add, waiting on how my body would react. I eventually learned to recognize changes and new plateaus in how I felt. I also made corresponding changes in my nutritional needs, exercise, and daily activities.

Some amazing things started to happen over a period of months, although I didn't notice it myself at first. My husband, John, actually noticed I didn't panic eat my food at each meal. I didn't have the pale, pasty look of pain on my face as much, and I didn't immediately lie down to endure high level digestive pain for an hour or more after eating.

I continued phone consults with Dr. Currier until I felt I needed someone nearby to keep me moving along. While working with Dr. Currier, I got to know many wellness and functional lab resources. A variety of periodic chemical/food allergy testing was done using different methods. In addition, an amino acid analysis was done to help monitor my progress with malabsorption. Other metabolic and chemistry screens were added. These tests were done through a team effort by local physicians and specialty labs around the country. Most of the coordination of these tests was my responsibility since few physicians knew of these tests nor knew what to do with the results.



Much of the consultation was done through medical directors and lab consultants who held Ph.D. degrees in chemistry, immunology, and nutrition-related disciplines, not conventional physicians. Fortunately, I was able to connect over time with a number of incredibly gifted integrative MDs and PhDs whose unique skills in integrative medicine and nutrition were just what the doctor ordered. The next step coming next week.

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# *From the Heart...*

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## ***My Wellness Declaration, part 4***

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As the months and years rolled on I was getting stronger and stronger. I was working hard at taking care of my body with my food rotation/supplement routine, exercise, and recurring monitoring. As I improved, I was able to reduce the number of supplements, potions, lotions, and other concoctions. Keep in mind, I couldn't use perfume, makeup, or be around it in the earlier years.

In the beginning I used olive oil as hand lotion and beet juice as make up, can you believe! I was a frequent visitor to the health food stores and learned to be a very committed label reader! So much fun!! Sure! Although, I must say, as I improved and the pain levels went down, this new way of daily life became quite natural to me. I was actually have some genuine fun with it. I was learning that giving up some things actually brought multiple gains in my life in every area.

The year 1988 came around. I had just finished a consult with an oral surgeon who said I had little or no cartilage in the TMJ condyle of my jaw. It was bone against bone for the most part. By that time I was grinding my food in a blender to reduce the pain level from my jaw. Coping with severe myofascial pain syndrome wasn't working out very well. So he suggested surgery as an option. However, I definitely heard, "no thank you" and continued to "trust." Five years later, the oral surgeon told me it was one

of the best decision I made for my own health and wellbeing based on my condition and the risk that surfaced from the procedure on other patients.

I was being prepared to peel off two more layers of that proverbial onion from life's challenges. Again, I was to revisit "trusting" like never before. The first poison was a physical one. I was watching a TV program one day and a physician from Oregon was being interviewed. The discussion covered recent information coming before a medical convention she attended. One of the subjects was metal toxicity, specifically, from dental amalgams. My interest was sparked, and I decided to study the information available on the subject. My dentist knew very little about the subject except that the American Dental Association (ADA) did not support or validate the research and clinical evidence coming in from around the world and in the United States.

I realize, even today, this topic is still controversial within some healthcare arenas. I only ask you do not automatically apply this to your own situation solely on the basis of my experience nor the limited information provided here. I encourage you to do your homework as I did those many years ago. Study both sides of the ongoing debate. Yet, today, you may fortunately find the dental profession in some circles have made giants leaps in the right direction since 1988.

After about a year of researching I decided to be tested and there appeared to be some evidence of metal toxicity from mercury and tin. I wasn't certain what dentists to use locally or to go out of state, particularly because of my TMJ-myofascial history. But after watching me over the years, my family dentist who knew my dental history in every detail stepped up to help. I am certain it was not an easy decision for him to make, but I knew it was the right one. In order to protect the integrity of my bite and TMJ, I had to

have him directly involved. Again, I learned to “trust.” My dentist gained more myofascial training and equipment. He then tested his facility for any mercury residues. He was then able to monitor my muscle and facial nerves before and after removal over a six month time period as amalgams were removed. He said my muscles and nerves were remarkably now in sync and stronger.

When the first quadrant (25%) of fillings was replaced, I began to experience bursts of energy for about a month and then leveled off. While the final quadrants were replaced, my husband, John, began to notice some of the moles on my back were disappearing and my muscles around my shoulder blades and back were larger. I wasn't as skeletal. When I went to my family physician for my regular checkup, he noticed the green or yellow cast to my complexion was gone. As the amalgams were removed, they were found to be badly corroded.

My dentist felt their condition was in itself a health risk. He was also considering the possibility that some form of detrimental galvanic action was taking place in my mouth. The presence of two dissimilar metals in the mouth can act as electrodes which can generate an intraoral electrical current. This “galvanic action” can create a variety of unpleasant and disturbing side effects in some people.

Within the first six months after replacement, I saw further strengthening of my muscles and mental concentration. I could even start mowing our 2 ½ acre lawn—on a riding lawn mower of course! In addition, my 114 lbs settled in at 138 lbs. The dentist continued monitoring muscular function around my jaw. He found a significant improvement in muscle activity after replacement and further bite modifications were made. My extremities, especially my hands and feet became warm. My eyestrain was

less, neck and shoulder muscles were less tight, fewer electrical-like tingling, less tender to the touch with overall body, metallic taste in mouth was gone, and my teeth were not as sensitive to hot and cold. I continued to still have some joint grinding and popping to the right because of the loss of cartilage in the condyle. But who's complaining!!

Another interesting correlation occurred. Two years after the amalgam removal I went in for my regular eye checkup. My doctor had been monitoring my eyes during these years. He stated I had developed definitive visual symptoms of senile macular degeneration usually prevalent in people 70 years or older. For most people, this means a gradual visual impairment that may end in blindness. He asked what I had done, if anything, over the last two plus years since he had noticed these degenerative symptoms had subsided and only a tiny scar in one eye remained, without any visual limitation.

He indicated he had never seen a reversal of this magnitude of these inevitable symptoms of deterioration on the macular part of the eye. He described the change as a dry and brown field of grass that turned lush and colorful again, confirming that macular degeneration was no longer present.

Now, it's time to move on to the second poison in my life mentioned earlier in part one article. The journey continues . . . next week.

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# *From the Heart...*

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## ***My Wellness Declaration, part 5***

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Here we are at the end, for now, of my wellness declaration journey with you. As mentioned in previous articles, the journey has taken us through multiple cascading adventures with a body that was breaking down but also a promise of wellness to come . . . if I would just “trust” and commit my life to the wellness declaration I made over 30 plus years ago. In part 4, I mentioned one of two poisons to be faced. With the first poison I discovered the world of dentistry in a whole new light, as I had the amalgams removed in my mouth and experienced further acceleration of healing and wellness.

Now it's time to revisit the other poison I mentioned in part one that reached deep into my heart and soul. Believe me, what began to surface in 1987 was harder for me to face than anything I went through thus far. I was about to regain my lost childhood memories. Having no memories of the childhood abuse for much of my young adult life, I woke up one day with a flood coming at me. Amazingly, for some reason I was ready to face this one. It was like every battle I faced up to this point was my “trust” training ground for what was ahead.

Yes, I definitely resisted believing and accepting initially. My first thought was “It’s just my imagination turning into nightmares.” I promptly ignored it all until one day I was again watching a TV program and a family therapist was being interviewed about her

childhood abuse. I turned it off. The next month, same program...there she was again telling her story. I turned it off. The next month, there she was again! I had a choice to make. Was I willing to step in, willing to trust with this? I knew I wouldn't hear Jan Frank's story for a long time. I said yes, listened, and cried alone for three days.

My family didn't know what was happening. The pent up emotions, grief, and the ugliness of the initial memories flooded through me. The Pollyanna world I lived in was shattered. But something else also started. The irony and wonderful mystery of it all was I felt free like I never felt in my life. That little girl was let loose from her prison and poison, and was growing up!

I was beginning to "trust" at a deeper level I never felt brave enough to try. But this time was different. I then got up the courage to tell my husband. He simply said "I always knew it was true. I love you." I then called my sister. Her heart just couldn't hear at first, but later she apologized and said to do whatever necessary to get through this.

Memories of my home life came in waves, both good and bad. I remembered how Sundays were the safest days, with barbeques, some laughter, and playing with my sister and brother. Other days were filled with locked bedrooms and bathrooms, and hiding in closets whenever I heard steps coming my way.

As pieces of my past continued to surface, I began to also realize how the response to my husband, my own children, and friends were influenced by my childhood. There were so many walls of protection I helped erect to keep from risking and trusting. As a child, those walls of forgetfulness and fantasy were a vital way some children escape without being able to physically run away.

Each of us as children respond in a way suited to our own experience and temperament. Working with Jan Frank made all the difference toward becoming whole in every area of my life. In Jan Frank's book, *Door of Hope*, she summarized the different ways our memories respond to trauma—repressed (no memory at all), suppressed (remember an incident but then forgets everything), oppressed (remembers the trauma but thinks it is resolved). Frank's practical approach to this painful and, unfortunately, controversial issue brings clarity to the steps taken to heal the heart. Her book and counseling practice followed these steps:

- Step 1. Face the problem
- Step 2. Recount the incident
- Step 3. Experience the feelings
- Step 4. Establish responsibility
- Step 5. Trace behavioral difficulties and symptoms
- Step 6. Observe others and educate yourself
- Step 7. Confront the aggressor
- Step 8. Acknowledge forgiveness
- Step 9. Rebuild self-image and relationships
- Step 10. Express concern and empathize with others

These steps must not be taken lightly and without counsel. Lives can be destroyed if one just superficially tries to follow these steps. This is not like baking a cake! Lives are deeply involved. The goal is restoration of the whole person and the family/persons involved.



For me, my Dad had already passed away at the time I was getting help. My mother was still with us and struggled saying anything negative about Dad. As I worked through the steps and found a nearby counselor I felt safe with, opportunities came in later years to confront Mom with love and respect alongside my husband, sister, and brother. The healing of family and my own heart continued through the years. With those years and loving patience, my Mom experienced seasons of forgiveness, love, and peace at her passing.

Today, I couldn't count how many miracles I have witnessed in my marriage, my children, my sister and brother, and so many others who took this journey with me. And the journey continues with other more recent challenges offering me another opportunity to "trust" and commit to my wellness declaration of 30 plus years ago. No matter what, it's a good and grateful life!

Thank you for hearing my story. As you continue your wellness journey, my prayer and hope is you also find your way to "trust" God toward seeking, reaching, and achieving your wellness declaration. May you and your family truly experience your own Wellness Declaration in every area of your lives. Today is your new day.

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