

From the Heart...

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



Housekeeping . . . who cares anyway?

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, June 3, 2016)

I love my messy house! I know where everything is in each pile. And who cares about those dust clods in the corners? No one really ever sees them anyway. Is that what you usually say when it comes to housekeeping? Well, I know I still do on several occasions. In fact, I am saying it right now as I write this article. Even when I pass by a dresser, I quickly wipe off the dusty surface with my blouse sleeve. Yes, I confess. The vacuum has also been out for at least four days now. As I pass it, I tell it, "I'll be with you shortly, I promise!"

You are probably thinking, "This can't be so for Sharon. She's just too perfect a lifeskills coach and does everything with precision and perfection!" Well my friend, now you know the truth. I am like everyone else with my more sanguine personality who would rather have fun with a friend, work on one my stories or writings. Anything but housekeeping! Yet, over the years, I have improved from what it used to be many years go. My hubby, John, will attest to that! Also, I found I really couldn't coach someone else very well who has a "messy" personality without walking my talk. And when I coached one of those "cleanie" personalities, it would have been really hard to even relate to their long to-do list they so expertly checked off as they finished one job after the other in appropriate order!

Do you know there are actually different behavioral bents for us “Messies?” According to Sandra Felton, founder of Messies Anonymous, there are nine types of messies. *Perfectionist Messies* have very high standards for individual jobs. Yet, they are indecisive about approach to tasks. So, they decide not to decide. *Rebellious Messies* know what they need to do but refuse to do it. Sometimes they are determined to be independent from the way “Mom” told them to do it way back when.

Relaxed Messies rationalize that the world outside is hostile and home is their place to relax. So things are let go. The home then actually becomes hostile with clutter...actually making others and sometimes themselves feel unwelcome in their own home. *Sentimental Messies* believes every scrap brought home is precious and valuable. You never know when you will need it. So, the piles grow and every drawer has loads of undeveloped film of precious memories.

Spartan Messies cut out or lock up the things they need because it will just mean more to care for. They usually don't get rid of things just exclude them from care. Out of mind; out of sight! *Clean Messies* feel as long as things are clean they can be left out...like clean clothes in a basket, not folded; dishes washed but left out on counter. But they are clean! *Safe Messies* leave bed unmade so it can air out better. The floors are not waxed because they might slip and fall. Dishes not dried by hand because air drying is more sanitary; so they stay out. One cannot be too careful.

Then there are the *Old-Fashioned Messies* just love to do things the old-fashioned way...like scrubbing the floor on their hands and knees. *Idealistic Messies* have their heads in the clouds...great thoughts and ideas but results either don't appear

or are disastrous. They are more tuned to loftier things and seldom notice the relationship between their messy home and their fading dreams.

I used to be a combination of Sentimental and Clean Messies. Fortunately for my family I am now a recovering Messie bordering on a full-fledged Cleanie. And I have no plans to make any longer lists of to-dos for me to regret not doing.

What have you discovered about yourself? Include any thoughts or desired changes in routine; and share them with family or a close friend. If you want to make any changes, start small to be easier on yourself. Commit to one desired change in the week ahead and ask someone to keep you accountable to this change. You just may find your “who cares anyway” attitude change to “I care and now enjoy my home even more.” In the next article, Five Starter Housekeeping Tips will be covered.

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From the Heart. . .

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



Housekeeping . . . tips good for you and nature, part 1

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When every day seems to be filled with “to do’s” from work and home, most of us simply race by a store aisle while grocery shopping, grab a cleaner, any cleaner. We then rush home to put groceries away, and pull dinner together as fast as possible. We often pick up something that we think has a decent fragrance so we won’t have to tolerate that bleach or ammonia smell. Yet, we seldom don’t consider what it may do to our counter tops, furniture, and our health.

The way the media flood us with ads about making sure your home is free of germs, along with the news picking up on Center for Disease Control alerts, can get anyone anxious about protecting house and home. Yet, the downside for some can result in phobias ruling each day.

According to Mayo Clinic (<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/>), “A phobia is an overwhelming and unreasonable fear of an object or situation that poses little real danger but provokes anxiety and avoidance. Unlike the brief anxiety most people feel when they give a speech or take a test, a phobia is long lasting, causes intense physical and psychological reactions, and can affect your ability to function normally at work or in social settings.”

About 8.7% of the US population suffers from a variety of phobias, with about 23% of those cases being severe, as reported by the National Institutes of Mental Health's noted in their article, "Specific Phobia Among Adults." The good news is most phobias are quite treatable and can free one from a debilitating life of misery.

Germs are everywhere including on our body. They exist in the form of bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protozoa. Yet, keep in mind some germs, like bacteria, are not all bad. Some bacteria are good for our bodies — they help keep things in balance. Some stimulate our body's immune system to do its job. Good bacteria live in our intestines and help us use the nutrients in the food we eat and make waste from what's left over. We couldn't make the most of a healthy meal without these important helper germs! Some bacteria are also used by scientists in labs to produce medicines.

For those of us who haven't gone over the germ cliff yet, let's see if these five starter housekeeping tips will bring some balance to your everyday cleaning chores and life.

Tip 1 - The Simple Solutions = use soap, vinegar, lemon juice, baking soda, salt. You can get a variety of cleaning recipes from this Good Housekeeping link, <http://www.goodhousekeeping.com>. Create your own glass window cleaner, scrubs, etc. And yes, some include bleach or ammonia for those of us who don't shy away from a few harsher items. Earth Easy link also have some formulas you may want to try, http://eartheasy.com/live_nontoxic_solutions.htm .

But no matter how these products are considered nontoxic, always consider your own condition and preferences; and always test out the formulas on some other surface other than your precious tabletops, counters, flooring, etc. This will insure your home

surfaces will be able to handle those formulas. And by all means open your windows to bring in fresh air not only while you clean but often when your home needs some refreshing ala natural! The next article will continue with Tip 2.

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From the Heart. . .

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Housekeeping . . . tips good for you and nature, part 2

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, June 17, 2016)

At the end of previous article I gave you a hint at what Tip 2 would be as you go about one of your least favorite tasks, housecleaning. Tip 2 is "Open your windows to routinely air out house and clean all filters.

We all know there are indoor as well as outdoor pollutants. The question is "How do I keep a balance inside my home that is healthy for my family and good for the outdoors too?" According to Denise Mann, *Having a Bad Air Day? Improve Your Indoor Air Quality* (WebMD Feature article), "Indoor air quality can be worse than outdoor air quality in almost every case,' says William J. Calhoun, MD, professor of medicine and vice chair of the department of medicine at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston."

Mann continues to quote Calhoun with a question. "What could be polluting the air in your home? The pollutants that lurk outdoors can be found indoors as well, where they can and do join forces with other irritants. Those can include fumes from combustion devices and gas-fired appliances, not to mention allergens such as pet dander, house dust mites, and mold, Calhoun says."

Calhoun includes space heaters, ranges, ovens, stoves, furnaces, fireplaces, and water heaters that emit gases and particulates in the air. Then add your pets, house

dust mites, and more. When you have chronically poor air quality inside your home, a variety of symptoms can surface, such as coughing, chest tightness, sore throat, watery or itchy eyes, shortness of breath, headaches, longer lasting colds, bronchitis, possibly a full-blown asthma attack, says E. Neil Schachter, MD, the medical director of respiratory care at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York.

Schachter offers three steps to better indoor air quality. First, **Increase ventilation in your house**. He adds that we either keep our windows tightly shut or swing them all open. Neither is a solution by itself. Only a very few of us living in a pristine air environment. He adds that “Outdoor air contains by-products of gas emissions from cars and trucks, industrial pollution, as well as dirt and mold.” He advises a “trickle ventilation” solution by using “. . . 10-inch high screen with extra filters . . . It adjusts to most windows and allows fresh air in, helps escort indoor pollutants out.”

Although I open our windows on a regular basis, this trickle ventilation solution seems to be a good compromise for wherever we may live. And for those who live in the Texas Hill Country and have trouble with cedar and other pollens, this solution may make all the difference, particularly if you definitely do not want to move someplace else. There is always a risk that the someplace else will introduce you to other pollutant problems you never had before. So, trying to make the most of where you live seems to be the easier way.

Step 2 is to **Turn on the AC**. Use an air conditioner in the summer, Schachter says “Many pollutants are water-soluble, and as air conditioners remove water from the atmosphere, they remove these pollutants, . . . Air conditioners also remove pollen and

particulate matter.” Step 3 is **Install a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter.**

The air conditioner can be even more effective with a disposable HEPA filter.

For many homeowners and builders, having what is called “tight construction” is preferred. Healthy House Institute, *Tight Houses: A Healthy Idea*

(<http://www.healthyhouseinstitute.com>), provides some perspective on having a tightly constructed home. They consider that “Most new houses today are too tight to give you the amount of fresh air you really need, but too loose to keep pollutants out effectively.” HHI offer three categories for tight construction: things inside the living space, things outside the living space, and the people in the house.

HHI continues, “To minimize the impact of air pollutants, you have three choices . . . **Eliminate, Separate, Ventilate:** These are the three basic principles of a healthy house.”

To eliminate means to assess anything your family may have problems with and eliminate them from the indoor environment. When deciding to build a home, consider all the materials being used. Are they ok for your family’s health, such as paint, flooring, insulation, cabinet finishing, furniture, cleaning products?

To separate means, according to HHI, building a tight house can eliminate some of the problems, such as radon from the soil, mold in the crawl space, automobile exhaust, pesticides from your neighbor's fruit trees.

To ventilate means you are dealing with “. . . metabolic pollutants released by the people or animals in the house. [Ventilation can also dilute the concentration of pollutants released by materials found indoors that can't easily be eliminated, such as

cooking odors, tobacco smoke on your guest's clothing, or fragrances clinging to your mail.]”

HHI discusses two types of mechanical ventilation for healthy houses. Most houses have what is called “Local Ventilation.” This type of ventilation happens with kitchen range hoods and bathroom exhaust fans. Moisture or odors are removed rapidly to avoid them from moving through the rest of the house. General Ventilation is the second type, which is missing in most homes. Fresh air is needed in all rooms on a continuous basis. HHI explains this type of system. “A general ventilation system slowly brings in fresh air, and simultaneously exhausts an equal volume of stale air, so the air in the entire house is kept fresh. [General ventilation systems can be simple or complex, but basically they involve using one or two fans to bring fresh air into the house and, at the same time, expel stale air..”

So, if you are thinking about building your dream home, you may want to consider general ventilation and other possibilities for creating a healthy home, along with the cost. But, by all means, always feel free to open your windows to air out the house on those beautiful Hill Country days. In the next article, Tip 3 will be covered. Here’s the hint: Breathe In, Breathe Out.

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Housekeeping . . . tips good for you and nature, part 3

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Remember Tip 3 “Breathe In, Breathe Out.” When it comes to any housekeeping chores, Tip 3 is always a general rule to keep your home free of unnecessary inhalants and highly toxic products. At least, we should lock up these inhalants and other toxic products, safe from children’s curiosity and any leaks or out-gassing.

What are some of these products? Although every household have their own preferences on products, there are some basic cleaning items and products that most homes have around. You will have dusting, mopping, polishing supplies, and a vacuum. You will have storage items for your trash, maybe even some baking soda to absorb odors, and hopefully recycling containers.

You will undoubtedly have all purpose cleaners, sponges, towels, scrubbers, and gloves for the kitchen and bathrooms. You will probably have a variety of specialized cleaners for glass, stone, wood, upholstery/leather furniture, appliances, and laundry. And let us not forget that within the portals of your garage, there are some of the more odoriferous and potentially toxic products.

I can’t stress more the importance of reading the labels for ingredients, use, and storage to insure you are properly using any products or item and keeping your family

safe and healthy. I would also highly recommend you choose the least toxic cleaners available free from perfumes and other nonessential ingredients.

How do we then store them? Simple Home Organization resource offers ten helps for storing these items in your home (*10 Tips for Safely Storing Cleaning Supplies at Home*, <http://simplehomeorganization.com>).

#1: Always place cleaning supplies far out of reach of children by placing the containers in storage cabinets mounted high above the floor, even dishwashing liquids.

#2: Install child-safety locks and child-proof latches.

#3: Store all cleaning supplies in their original containers.

#4: Keep flammable cleaning supplies in a cool dry location in your house, and never near a flame, an electrical ignition source, or in sunlight.

#5: Acids and bases are substances that are totally incompatible with each other.

#6: Use cleaning supplies only in a place that has proper ventilation. Make sure the storage space you are using to store your cleaning supplies is also ventilated.

#7: Never ever leave a bottle or container of cleaning supplies open and unattended while you're doing your cleaning.

#8: Do not ignore any warning that says you should use such protective gear such as gloves or goggles.

#9: Properly dispose of the materials that touched the cleaning chemicals.

#10: Keep nearby a first-aid kit that includes any emergency-wash liquids.

You are encouraged to read their helps in detail online to insure you and your family can safely breathe in and breathe out.

I close out this month's lifeskill, Housekeeping, with two other tips. Tip 4 is "Recycle everything possible!" And Tip 5 is "Get the whole family involved." Happy and Healthy Housekeeping this Summer!

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