

From the Heart. . .

. . . Life Skills for Today

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Holding On – Hold On!

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, January 1, 2010)

For some inexplicable reason, this first day of the New Year makes me feel like I need to just keep *holding on* to what is most important to me; and to *hold on* for some more surprises in 2010. Since I consider myself an optimistic realist, let's balance out the holding on and the hold on with a hopeful attitude in us all.

One of the first rules of the road for holding on is to give ourselves dedicated quiet time each week to reaffirm what is most important to us. For most of us, we know deep down that our core values keep us holding on quite well. Our core values sustain us through rough and smooth winds. Our core values also help us choose relationships that support what is most important in our lives.

We then can be much more confident that we can hold on to what's coming our way—a sure mix of some good surprises and maybe a rough one on occasion. What is this mix called? **LIFE**. Life always brings both. Yet, for optimistic realists, these folks are always determined to not just wait for the “hold on” times to show up at their doorstep; but find a way to bring the good ones a little closer, a little sooner for themselves and others. That way, when the rough times show up, “holding on” is much easier to do.

What creative ways are you bringing the good ones to yourself and those you care about? Whether at home or at work, start today to envision how you want to *hold on* as life comes your way. Then, reaffirm ways you have learned over the years for

holding on to what is most important to you. In the meantime, here are some *holding on* and *hold on!* thoughts to consider as you begin your 2010 New Year:

HOLDING ON—

“All the art of living lies in a fine mingling of letting go and holding on.” Henry Ellis

“All good writing is swimming under water and holding your breath.” F. Scott Fitzgerald

“An Englishman's never so natural as when he's holding his tongue.” Henry James

“A love of books, of holding a book, turning its pages, looking at its pictures, and living its fascinating stories goes hand-in-hand with a love of learning.” Laura Bush

“Courage is fear holding on a minute longer.” George S. Patton

“The greatest discovery of all time is that a person can change his future by merely changing his attitude.” Oprah Winfrey

“Always keep that happy attitude. Pretend that you are holding a beautiful fragrant bouquet.” Earl Nightingale

“Every great work, every big accomplishment, has been brought into manifestation through holding to the vision, and often just before the big achievement, comes apparent failure and discouragement.” Florence Scovel Shinn

“I believe managing is like holding a dove in your hand. If you hold it too tightly you kill it, but if you hold it too loosely, you lose it.” Tommy Lasorda

“Relationships-of all kinds-are like sand held in your hand. Held loosely, with an open hand, the sand remains where it is. The minute you close your hand and squeeze tightly to hold on, the sand trickles through your fingers. You may hold onto some of it, but most will be spilled. A relationship is like that. Held loosely, with respect and

freedom for the other person, it is likely to remain intact. But hold too tightly, too possessively, and the relationship slips away and is lost.” Kaleel Jamison

HOLD ON!—

“One of the greatest discoveries a man makes, one of his great surprises, is to find he can do what he was afraid he couldn't do.” Henry Ford (1863 - 1947)

“Formulate and stamp indelibly on your mind a mental picture of yourself as succeeding. Hold this picture tenaciously. Never permit it to fade. Your mind will seek to develop the picture... Do not build up obstacles in your imagination. “ Norman Vincent Peale

“One ought to hold on to one's heart; for if one lets it go, one soon loses control of the head too.” Friedrich Nietzsche

“Hold fast to your dreams, for without them life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly.” Langston Hughes

“Never bend your head. Always hold it high. Look the world straight in the eye.” Helen Keller

“Never think that God's delays are God's denials. Hold on; hold fast; hold out. Patience is genius.” Comte de Buffon (1707 - 1788)

“One's life is not as fixed as one believes. Surprises may lie in store for you, the unexpected often tends to happen, sometimes bringing in its train the most delightful change in one's life or circumstances.” Elizabeth Aston, *The Darcy Connection*, 2008

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Stretching the Holidays

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, January 8, 2010)

Did you get to experience everything you wanted during the holidays? I know I didn't since we went out of town for Christmas. So, when we got back, we still had some of our favorite Christmas movies recorded; and are still watching them. Every few days I also hear upstairs Christmas music ringing through the halls from my husband's office.

So, if you weren't able to bake those Christmas cookies or send off Holiday greeting cards to everyone, how about stretching the holiday spirit into January? For most of us, when January hits us we may often say, "Thanks goodness, the hectic holidays are over!" And we quickly move on to the fast pace of the New Year, balancing our checkbook to see how much debt we got ourselves into, and quickly putting away all the holiday decorations.

For others, January may be a welcomed slower pace. Whether fast or a little slower, this month would be the perfect time to slip in one of those holiday experiences you missed. I actually began to think about all the ways I could celebrate what I missed after a reader shared this idea with me. Thank you Michele.

What would you like to include in your January moments of celebration to stretch the holidays? Maybe, since January lifeskill is focused on *Relationships/Core Values*, did you miss someone's company during the holiday rush? I know I did. My California daughter and grandson were not able to come for Christmas this year. So, I have

decided to finally setup a webcam so I can visit face-to-face with them. I'm really excited to see their smiling faces and hear the latest from my four-year old grandson. Another thing I wanted to do during the holiday but wasn't able to was cruise down Main Street to see some of the latest items on display in the local shops. They always have something fun to see and maybe even buy. Then I'm going to visit with my best friend I missed during Christmas time.

Take a moment right now to choose your own special way for stretching the holidays that will give you cherished time to reflect on those relationships that support your core values and stretches your holiday blessings throughout the whole New Year.

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By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Relationships—smooth sailing or fast dive from the skies?

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, January 15, 2010)

With all relationships, whether at work or at home, the journey can be a smooth sail, a little bumpy one, a roller coaster ride, or a fast careening dive from the skies. I bet we all have experienced a sample of all these relationships at some time in our lives—that is, if you just wait a little longer, at least for you young ones! The journey involves every facet of life where four realms of reality in relationships play their roles. Let's look at these realms a little closer.

Kenneth Earl Wilber Jr. is an American philosopher who developed the "integral theory of consciousness" based on four quadrants of relationships or development. Over the years, his integral theory has touched many theoretical and practical applications in our world and relationships, whether in business and business leadership, international development, and even marine ecology. Here's a basic chart representing every kind of relationship we may have.

	<u>Interior</u>	<u>Exterior</u>
Individual—	<i>I</i> INTENTIONAL (Subjective) Self, Mental, Emotion, Spiritual	<i>IT</i> BEHAVIORAL (Objective) Physical Body/Physiology
Collective—	<i>WE</i> CULTURAL (Intersubjective) Relationship, Community, Collective Values	<i>ITS</i> SOCIAL (Interobjective) Systems, Institutions

Not all agree with his theories or perspective on life and the universe. Yet, I believe we can agree that relationships are the heart of *Celebrating Your Journey and your best life*. The foundation of all relationships is our core values. Our core values are then reflected in our life dreams and goals. Therefore, all relationships help us live our daily lives in synergy and balance.

These quadrants are interrelated and impacted by our belief /mindset about ourselves, others, even God. Every mindset has an Interior component (I, WE) and an Exterior component (IT, ITS). In other words, you are a human being (I), living in a physical body (IT), relating to family and community (WE), working with and impacted by systems and institutions (ITS).

Although the emphasis may be different with each mindset or belief, each component produces a “ripple-affect” on what you believe. With every breath, you are interacting with all four quadrants/components of human experience and relationship.

Ultimately, mindset is yours to calibrate in order to live in your purpose and life design.

When considering each quadrant, ask yourself this question: “How are my relationships supporting my core values in each realm of relationships? Give yourself at least one hour quiet time to reflect within each realm. Then write down your responses and share them with your family or close friend. Ask them for feedback. Relationships are all part of your own personal life journey. I encourage you to insure that those relationships support your core values, dreams, and goals. In the next article, we will delve into those core values and those dreams you have held onto for years.

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Core Values & your life dreams—do they match up?

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, January 22, 2010)

What are your core values? How do they match up with your life dreams you have held onto for years? Have you just about given up on those dreams even though you have held firm to your core values? Life surprises and challenges always seem to come our way to sidetrack us, maybe even give up.

Gandhi was quoted as saying, *"Keep your thoughts positive, because your thoughts become your words; Keep your words positive, because your words become your actions; Keep your actions positive, because your actions become your values; Keep your values positive, because your values become your destiny."* We often forget in the midst of challenges that there are multiple possibilities in front of us to choose from. Yes, we can give up and give in to the negatives. And experiencing loss is a real part of life and needs to be seen as it is...your current reality. Yet, how about finding that positive in the midst to help recharge your core values toward the destiny of your long-held dreams?

No matter how young or old, dreams that merge with our core values offer us that "special spark" to keep on keeping on. Sometimes we can pick up and move onward from within ourselves...hearing that divine whisper of hope and resolve that says, "Everything is going to be alright." Often times, a friend, even a stranger, may say or do just the right thing at the right time to get your attention again on the possibilities. You seemingly get up the next morning and start walking toward your life dream again.

Yes, your life dream may come true. Yet, it might be somewhat different than the one you had as a youth. And that's not a bad thing. In fact, it just may be even better than what the young mind and heart thought about in those growing up, maturing years. So, when you consider where you are right now and where you want to be, take time today to write down on a 3x5 card your top five core values you want to have with you for your entire life. Then place at the top of the card the one long-held dream you want to experience in the years ahead. On the back of the card, place five steps in order of priority you believe you need to take to not only support your top core values but are all centered around that one long-held dream. Do they match up?

If they do, congratulations! You are on your way. Take a moment to ask yourself, "How do I feel when I read what I have written down?" Share your thoughts with your family or a close friend. Find a mentor or life coach to support you on your journey—helping you to stay focused, accountable, flexible, and motivated from within.

If they don't match up, garner quiet time to review what you have written. Reflect on your core values you chose. What changes do you see that need to be made? What about your long-held dream...is it really the one you want to spend your life moving toward? Or is there something else hinting at you right now? And how about those five steps you want to take in support of that dream? What changes do you believe need to be made there—either with the steps or the order in which you placed them? Then, rewrite your card and put it in a prominent place to view on a regular basis; even put it in your wallet or purse to pull out whenever a hint hits you to look it over.

You can delve more deeply into your core values, dreams, goals, and your own life satisfaction score by obtaining a copy of my *Celebrating Your Journey, Lifeskills in Synergy* self-paced manual on my website, www.harvestenterprises-sra.com. As the

years move on, you may want to change what is on your card. It's called LIFE—where we stay focused but also flexible with life's surprises. Enjoy your journey of discovery!

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How's the altitude of your attitude?

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, January 29, 2010)

For every one of us, there are three basic human needs—to be accepted, secure, and significant. There are also three basic attitudes that can make or break a relationship. First, let's remember that "*The Altitude of our Gratitude often depends on our Attitude.*" How's your altitude these days on both your gratitude and attitude?

With the tough times most of us are having with our nation's economy, keeping a higher altitude on our gratitude is definitely a challenge. Have you heard your co-worker, friend, or spouse say something not so nice about your attitude recently? If so, I've learned that checking out my gratitude score is the first stop on the road to change an edgy attitude. I take some time to mention out loud what I am grateful for in my life. I try to name at least five things—my children, my health, my husband, my skills at what I do, my best friend. I focus on those areas for awhile until I start to soften my edgy attitude. My apologies will come next to those who have had to feel the brunt of my venting.

It might be a little uncomfortable to move through this process. Yet, it feels so good on the other side once you swallow some humble pie. I have also learned that there are three basic attitudes to practice afterward. They are Patience, Harmony, and a Sense of Humor. I focus on a situation, a person that I haven't handled too well; and begin to practice ways to show genuine patience with that person or situation. Then I invite harmony into the relationship or situation by asking how they are feeling today and really

listen and show empathy. Then I find a way to laugh a little or a lot. I have to be careful not to offend by laughing at someone who won't appreciate it. More often, I really need to just laugh at myself and my own behavior at time.

Here is no truer tenet of life that... "*You Behave as you Believe!*" Our behavior is driven by what we believe about ourselves, others, even God. When we dwell on the negative about ourselves, others, even God, it spirals us downward; and definitely doesn't help our attitude at all. First, I encourage you to take time to write down what you believe about yourself, others, even God. For those who read that last article, you already have a focus on your core values, dreams, and goals. Now, consider how your beliefs impact your behavior and attitude.

There are five key behaviors to practice that make all the difference in experience wholeness in your life about yourself, others, and God. The five behaviors are practiced by Being specific, Being in agreement, Being consistent, Being helpful, and Being flexible. Write on a piece of paper one primary way you have difficulty in those areas of attitude and behavior. By all means, if you believe you are doing great in any, say so! Share your results and thoughts with a close friend, spouse, or mentor coach to encourage you to incorporate friendlier, healthier attitudes and behaviors in your life.

In the next article, the focus will be on the big dialogue question: "How do you communicate?" What are your typical listening filters; and how do you communicate when the stakes are high? See you next week.

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