

# *From the Heart. . .*

## *. . . Life Skills for Today*

*By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC*



### **Housekeeping—No way! It's Summertime!**

When it comes to living by the motto, *Clean enough for Healthy, Dirty enough for Happy*, summertime says it all! Who has housecleaning on their summer list of things to do—those tasks never quite done during the traditional “spring cleaning” season?

Oh, I forgot! For those *Cleanies* out there, you undoubtedly have already transferred your spring cleaning undone list to your summertime list! In addition, you have probably already assigned those important organizing and cleaning jobs to your troops at home—and have them neatly marked in *RED* on the family calendar. But remember, you will need to catch them *before* they fly out of the house with swimming and kayaking gear in tow—heading for the Guadalupe or Frio Rivers! If you don't, you will undoubtedly be the designated doer of all those summer tasks you are determined to complete.

Then, there are the rest of us! For all us *Messies* who are perfectionists at heart, we may have the list before us. We always have the best of intentions! Yet, it's all too overwhelming to choose which one to start and who to share the load with. You also don't really want to spoil their summer fun and be the bad guy. Even our own motivations are destined for some river fun too! So, let's start

the summer out right. Kayaking first; maybe Fiesta Texas next; then, we'll really get down to that housecleaning list. Just don't misplace it as you fly out the door!

**How do you see yourself—as a *Cleanie* or a *Messie*?** Both are generally very creative, intelligent and nice people. For the cleanie, there is no such thing as clutter or dust. Yet, experience tells us that many times the difference between order and clutter is simply our perspective. For a messie, clutter can become almost invisible after living with it so long. And we all know that chronic clutter does more than anything to drain one's energy, motivation and commitment.

Talking about perspective, let's look a little closer at the distinctions between a *Cleanie* and *Messie*. Sandra Felton, the master maven of housekeeping for messies (<http://www.messies.com/>), defines a variety of styles—Perfectionist, Rebellious, Relaxed, Sentimental, Spartan, Clean, Safe, Old-Fashioned, and Idealistic.

How we do housekeeping has everything to do with whether we are a “messie” or a “cleanie”; and how our personality styles impact our perspective and attitude. Felton, founder of Messies Anonymous, defines each as follows:

**Messie** = We all know them. They are the people who never seem to get control of their housework and their time, the type who need all day to accomplish nothing. They live in dread of opening a closet door, for fear they will be buried under an avalanche of canned goods, flashlight batteries, tissue boxes, and stockings with only one run that might come in handy someday for something. (Well, you never know.)

**Cleanie** = Unlike Messies, Cleanies have mental schedules they themselves are not aware of. Their minds are like computers going down their list of things to do. The power that activates the computer is in the eyes. Again and again they say, “When I see...” or “If it looks dirty, I....”

Messies learn the “how to” best by observing cleanies in action. So, find a “cleanie” friend and get the grand cleaning tour in action; and start setting up your own committed routine. And of course, involve those in your family. Who wants to do it all by themselves? Surely, not us messies!

In the next issue, you will have an opportunity to more clearly pinpoint how you see yourself—either as a *Cleanie* or a *Messie*; and if a messie, which style you may favor the most. In the meantime, for those who hate housekeeping, ask yourself this question, “How can I change my perspective of housekeeping from being an intolerable chore to put off as long as possible, to pacing myself into an established routine, bringing order & harmony into my home and surroundings?”

#### Resources:

Davidson, Jeff. *The Joy of Simple Living*. 1999.

Felton, Sandra. *Living organized, proven steps for a clutter-free and beautiful home*. Revell. 2005.

Felton, Sandra. *Messie No More, Understanding and Overcoming the Roadblocks to Being Organized*. Revell. 2004.

Felton, Sandra. *The New Messies Manual: The Procrastinator's Guide to Good Housekeeping*. Revell. 2000.

Haley, Graham and Rosemary Haley. *Haley's Cleaning Hints*. 2004.

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## ***Cleanies & Messies***

**How do you see yourself—as a *Cleanie* or a *Messie*?** Remember, I asked this question last week. You also were given a glimpse into the perspective and distinctions between them. Let's now look a little closer at these distinctions coined by Sandra Felton, the master maven of housekeeping for messies (<http://www.messies.com/>).

*Cleanies* have very definite routines. The word, Organized, is actually their calling card—bordering close to perfection, hopefully without being chronically obsessed and a pain in the you know what for everyone else. They have well defined “to do” lists, notebooks, boxes they work with to keep themselves and others organized and on schedule. They are also flexible enough when certain jobs can't get done but can easily be moved to another day and time. They then just easily get back on schedule. Although there may be times when certain items are out of place but not for long, there really is no such thing as clutter or dust. Yet, again, experience tells us that the difference between order and clutter is simply our perspective.

Felton defined *Messies* in a variety of styles—Perfectionist, Rebellious, Relaxed, Sentimental, Spartan, Clean, Safe, Old-Fashioned, and Idealistic. Although both *Cleanies* and *Messies* can have the same positive qualities, such as creativity,

intelligence, kindness, and generosity, there are significant differences between their housekeeping behaviors. Again, how we do housekeeping has everything to do with whether we are a “messie” or a “cleanie”; and how our personality styles impact our perspective & attitude.

So, here’s your chance to discover whether you are a *Cleanie* or one of a variety of *Messies* styles like most of us. Check out the scoring chart accompanying this article. In the world of housekeeping, we can score ourselves anywhere from 0-10—zero meaning disaster, ten meaning perfection, and average somewhere around six. *Cleanies* routinely rate themselves from 7 to 10. *Messies* rarely get close within the low side of 7-9. You decide. Extremes of zero or ten are never a desirable goal. Yet, like with all other daily life skills, you can find balance in this world too.

So, take this moment to rate yourself according to Felton’s description of a *Cleanie* and *Messie* ([www.messies.com](http://www.messies.com)). You will notice that *cleanies* are in a singular category of their own; no need for subcategories. By all means, if you are one of those wonderful *cleanies*, say so and be proud of it! We *messies* need to learn all your special tricks. Whether you consider yourself a *cleanie* or a *messie*—after you mark your scores, write down what you have discovered about yourself and any changes in routine you may want to make, if any. Then, share your thoughts with your family or close friend.

Remember, *Messies* learn the “how to” best by observing *cleanies* in action. So again, find a “*Cleanie*” friend and get the grand cleaning tour in action; and start setting up your own committed routine. And of course, involve those in your family. Who wants to do it all by themselves? Surely, not us *Messies*!

Felton asks us to keep in mind,

***“Learning to keep house is like learning to dance. If there is no feeling for the music, there is only mechanical movement.”***

Even with housekeeping, being present in the moment makes each job a little easier and actually enjoyable. ***So, when the music is turned on and the mop is out, dance along, be in the moment!***

## Are you a Cleanie or a Messie?

(score how you see yourself; then write down what you have discovered.)

Description	0	1-3	4-6	7-9	10
<p><b>Cleanie</b> Have very definite routines. Organized is their calling card—have well defined “to do” lists, notebooks, boxes. Confident at using cleaning shortcuts. Flexible enough to move a task to another day and time; then just easily get back on schedule. On purpose, uses those “little minutes” to keep things clean and orderly to avoid cleaning marathons. Visually oriented &amp; aware—something is never out of place too long; really no such thing as clutter or dust. Don’t understand how <i>Messies</i> survive.</p>					
<p><b>Perfectionist Messies</b> Very high standards for individual jobs. Yet, indecisive about approach to tasks. So, they decide not to decide.</p>					
<p><b>Rebellious Messies</b> Although they know what they need to do, they refuse to do it. Sometimes determined to be independent from the way “Mom” told them to do it way back when.</p>					
<p><b>Relaxed Messies</b> Rationalizes 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 home.</p>					
<p><b>Sentimental Messies</b> 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.</p>					
<p><b>Spartan Messies</b> They 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!”</p>					
<p><b>Clean Messies</b> 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!</p>					
<p><b>Safe Messies</b> Leaves 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.</p>					
<p><b>Old-Fashioned Messies</b> Just love to do things the old-fashioned way...like scrubbing the floor on their hands and knees. Some are appropriate but not just for old-fashioned sake. They lose out on new technology or simple ways to ease the task.</p>					
<p><b>Idealistic Messies</b> Their heads are in the clouds...great thoughts and ideas but results either don’t appear or are disastrous. Tuned to loftier things, seldom notice the relationship between their messy home and their fading dreams.</p>					

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## ***Cleanies, Messies & Personality Style***

Is it only procrastination, disorganization or both that causes clutter? Is there another reason for being a *Messie* or a *Cleanie*? Might your personality style influence your housekeeping “want to?” I think so; and so does Sandra Felton, the master maven of housekeeping for *Messies* (<http://www.messies.com/>).

Remember those DISC personality styles covered in an earlier article? Well, both *Cleanies* and *Messies* can have any combination of personality styles—one primary and another more secondary. Whatever combination, we all have certain behavioral strengths and weaknesses depending on our values, genetics, and childhood through adult life role models & experiences. In addition, your style will be altered somewhat by your focus or setting—personal or professional, workplace, home, school, social. Yet, the strength and weakness with each style for the *Cleanie* and *Messie* are played out differently. *Messies* have to work harder at encouraging their strengths and working with or around their weaknesses.

As a short review, DISC is an acronym for the four personality styles created by Hippocrates around 400BC (Choleric, Sanguine, Phlegmatic, Melancholy); then developed by Dr. William Marston, one of the foremost psychologists of the twentieth century. Dr. Marston extensively studied the characteristics, patterns and responses of thousands of individuals. From



this research, Marston wrote “The Emotions of Normal People.” He then developed an assessment to measure these four important behavioral factors. Marston’s acronym, DISC, represent these four personality/behavioral styles—**Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, Compliance.**

DISC is a universal language of behavior that has been validated in over 25 countries since Marston introduced the model in 1928. DISC provides a neutral language to allow the discussion of individual behavioral differences; it is not a "label" that is placed on individuals. DISC identifies how four behavioral factors interact and emphasizes the strengths and uniqueness of each individual; and helps us to more successfully navigate relationships and life.

For the primary **Dominant personality style**, they are direct, decisive, problem solver, risk taker; self-starter, innovator, and excellent organizer. They challenge the status quo. They, however, may overstep authority, display an argumentative attitude, dislike routine, and attempt too much at once.

For the **Influential style**, they are enthusiastic, trusting, optimistic, persuasive, talkative, impulsive, and emotional. They are also creative problem solvers, great encouragers, motivate others to achieve, have a positive sense of humor, negotiate conflicts, and are peacemakers at heart. Yet, they may be more concerned with popularity than tangible results, are inattentive to detail, overuse gestures and facial expressions, and tend to listen only when it is convenient.

For the **Steadiness style**, they very good listeners, team players, possessive, steady, predictable, understanding, and friendly. They are also reliable and dependable, a loyal team worker, compliant toward authority, patient and empathetic, and good at hold a grudge, sensitive to criticism, and have difficulty establishing priorities.

For the **Compliance style**, they are accurate, analytical, conscientious, careful, fact-finders, creative, precise, have high standards, and are systematic. They also contribute perspective, are an anchor of reality, conscientious and even tempered, thorough in all activities, define situations, & gather, criticize and test information. However, they may need clear-cut boundaries for actions/relationships, are bound by procedures and methods, get bogged down in details, prefer not to verbalize feelings, and will give in rather than argue.

So, how do these styles fit for a *Cleanie & Messie*? Most *Cleanies* express a combination of Dominant, Steadiness, and/or Compliance. For these cleanies, they are generally focused, on task to get the job done. For **Dominant cleanies**, they are generally optimistic, take-charge, goal-oriented people. Yet, they tend to be dictatorial and impatient with others if the job isn't done their way and on time; and do not want to be taken advantage of. As you can probably imagine, they may be a "do it myself in order to do it right" kind of person or job it out with clear, required outcomes. They are hard to change. So, if you live or work with Dominants, and they are interfering with your life by their abrasive approach, you need to let them know about it. On the other hand, *Messies* really need the organizational abilities of Dominants once the tension between them is resolved. As long as the *Messie* asks for help, then Dominants can be a real asset.

For **Steady cleanies**, as long as they are affirmed and secure, they do a great job in housekeeping and stick to the schedule. Remember, Steadies are easygoing people, low-keyed, patient, and accommodating. Yet, they may not be easily motivated and do not have much get-up-and-go; and can easily become a *Messie*. They tend to have a low-energy level and are indecisive at times. Planning major projects or marathon cleaning is not in their vocabulary; and may, at times, border on laziness. They just don't want to commit to something that will require more work

than they really want to do. Sometimes, they really don't care if it's neat or not. They prefer to *think about things* rather than actually do the job. So, clear, continuous affirmation and encouragement with any task, taken one step at a time, is on the top of the list for working with a Steady as a cleanie or messie. Otherwise, they will feel overwhelmed; and that only amplifies their stubborn streak that may surface.

For the **Compliant cleanie**, the order that things are done and the details to get them done are paramount. Their focus is "how do I specifically get this job done and is the time line realistic?" If so, they are on task and on schedule to the very last detail. They live their best in a home that is orderly and serene. When it comes to housekeeping, they are perfectionists, and nothing a *Messie* does may be good enough for them. They may also be more critical and hurtful, which is the very same thing they are sensitive about. That sensitivity only amplifies their self-criticism as a perfectionist. They will then tend to procrastinate and slip into being a *Messie* themselves. Again, affirmation and clarity are the keys to getting Compliant back on task and secure.

Now, for the **Influential cleanie**—is there any such a person out there? I'm not certain. Although Influentials have so many great qualities, they are often inattentive to detail. While they love people and genuinely live in the moment, they also tend to forget things that need to be done, particularly when not convenient.

In other words, most *Messies* are basically Influentials. All the perfection the other personality styles live and breathe by drive Influentials crazy and even discourage them from trying. Yet, they need to balance their own primary behavioral characteristics with the others to stay on task. One solution for Influentials is to hire out to get the job done and enjoy the interactive relationship all at the same time.

Although, I have rarely hired out, I consider myself a reformed Influential *Messie* now *Cleanie*. Over the years, my secondary Compliant with a little Steady style has kicked in to keep me on task! There is no telling what I would be today without this blend—probably thoroughly enjoying people while having clutter and chaos when I walk into my home. Another reason for my willingness to change over the years is my Compliant/Steady and at time Dominant style hubby who helped maintain a standard I would never be able to sustain alone. That’s for sure! While he worked on “the way” he communicated with me, I worked on actually “getting the job done!—and sharing the load with him, of course!”

Felton has actually added her own fifth temperament, *Messies Temperament Personality* combining many of the behavior characteristics of the other four. She also categorized *Messies* styles with terms such as Perfectionist, Rebellious, Relaxed, Sentimental, Spartan, Clean, Safe, Old-Fashioned, and Idealistic. These varieties were covered in the earlier article. Feel free to check out the archives if you missed it; or contact me, and I’ll be glad to send a copy your way via email.

Felton generally defined her *Messies Personality* style as frequently confused and frustrated by their own temperament, encompassing a “combination of conflicting characteristics of the other groups in varying combinations.” Yet, they are basically Influential or Sanguine. These *Messies* can utilize their positive qualities for self-encouragement, sensitivity, and desire for true values of life such as art, beauty, and learning held by those styles. We *Messies* can then more fully experience the joy and rewards of becoming a genuine *Cleanie*.

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### ***Housekeeping is Easy Compared to House-Moving a Double-wide!***

Recently, we started getting “Dad, Help!” calls when our daughter decided to have her precious double-wide home moved from Kingsville to Corpus Christi, Texas—just a couple miles from her work as a clinical psychologist. At first, we thought, “No big deal. Sure, we’ll come down and lend a hand.” Then, she started to tell us about her eventful experience watching her house move down the highway—as certain parts came loose and flew away. All the time, she was writing down the list of “to do’s” to get her home back in shape.

So, my husband, John, started to fill the back of the truck with every conceivable tool he may need—from assorted wrenches, saws & saw horses, clamps, paint, ladders, water power sprayer and, of course, duck tape! We then threw our luggage on top of the pile, our miniature schnauzer, Daisy, in the back seat, and we were off—Sir Galahad to the rescue!

Once we arrived, the adventure began. We were given the grand tour of her “to do” list. From closets, to living room, bathrooms, and utility room, John’s analytical skills started spinning. The tour then continued to portions of the attic, roof, and under the house. We all gave out a torrential sigh and started to take inventory of the

available skirting to be reinstalled first. Then early the next morning, off to Lowe's to purchase additional parts. Forman John lined up his crew—myself, daughter, and her boyfriend—and assigned various construction and layout tasks.

As the day, 95 degree heat and humidity worn on, we all wondered if we would last one more hour. Yet, by 9:30pm we sat down and dutifully congratulated ourselves on a job well done. Husband, John, was even amazed at my memorable and Herculean skills hammering eight inch penny nails through the 4x4 landscape timber set in place on the ground and used to mount the skirting track around the house. At the young age of 62, I even amazed myself with any number of construction and cleaning tasks inside and out of the house.

The next several days were filled with remounting the crown moldings on the living room ceiling, the wall seam moldings, counter sinking the nails, and caulking down each piece. In addition, the air conditioning system needed to not only get back on line but get cooler. By the next late afternoon, it was cool enough to continue working. While John worked on the A/C and duct work (where the ducts and plumbing of two house-halves didn't quite come together right), I became the housecleaning maven. From ceiling fans, kitchen stove, refrigerator, bathtub, to toilets, I scrubbed, rubbed, and polished wherever my hands could reach. And don't forget how I magically removed caulking, sealing foam, and paint from the carpet!

By the end of five days, John had finished a quick seal of the roof eaves at risk of rain penetrating the house, and I power sprayed the vinyl siding to a beautiful white again. Our daughter came home from work that day and hope of having her home

back returned. With tears of relief and gratitude, she barbequed us a fantastic chicken and ribs dinner.

During those five days as we worked on each job, we came away with a more conciliatory and respectful attitude toward the movers. As we worked up close and personal with each part of the house, we were astounded how they were able to transport two house halves and actually have the walls, roof, and corners still in tact for the most part. Considering what could have happened, what we did in five days could almost be considered window-dressing! But not quite!

From all the scratches, bruises, broken fingernails, sunburn, and muscle workout, I have come away with a hearty respect for those who do hard physical labor every day. But in the end, we really enjoyed ourselves together as a family helping our daughter regain her homestead and clean house.

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### ***Housekeeping—Walking the Talk, most of the time!***

Recently, our friend Ron handed my husband, John, a listing of a house for sale he thought we may wish to check out in our community. Ron knew we had been looking for awhile but haven't yet found what we want and can afford. He also dropped a friendly hint through John that if we are continuing our house hunting, I may just need to do all the things I write about in my articles.

So, friend, does that imply I don't do them or what? Ron hasn't been the only reader or friend who has wondered if I really do what I write about. So, I am going on record right here to say, "Any life skill tips I give in my articles do NOT imply I do each and every one. Just ask my husband, John! Who can anyway? Human beings are not designed to be perfect, even if we think we are!

Although I try to do as many as my skills, motivation, and budget allow, I much prefer to share the load with someone else. It's a lot less stressful and much more fun for us people personality styles. I am also more than ready to hire out if the mood, budget, and John mutually agree—to have a "real" expert repair some part of our house or do the taxes. John surely knows that when I sweetly say, "Honey, this really needs to get done, and you are much more talented in this area than me."



So, if you are looking for perfection, you sure won't find it here. I'm just like the rest of you—finding a way to do the best job possible living life and keeping the right balance. In this context, I honestly do try to walk my talk with each life skill and article I write, most of the time. I also continually learn something I need to personally adopt with each article I write.

So, I'm right there with you—being encouraged and challenged to seek and support healthy and lasting relationships; use my time and money wisely; be proactively engaged in my career; take care of my home, possessions, and health; learn the latest healthy meal tips; stay connected with my children; definitely have fun with recreation and entertainment; and take hold of special moments to reflect and celebrate the life I have with the family who loves me, and the friends I am honored to have in my life. Oops! And don't forget the ever present housekeeping duties I love to share with those eager to *keep my house clean enough for healthy, dirty enough for happy!*

Finally, Ron, thank you for the chance to have a little fun here as I take your witty reminder to heart, and pull out the HUD House Buying Wish and Check Lists to use in our continuing house hunting adventure. And yes, I haven't used it as of late. Thanks for the reminder!