

# *From the Heart. . .*

## *. . . Life Skills for Today*

*By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC*



### ***It's summertime—who wants to clean house?!***

Not me, that's for sure! I would much rather be gardening under the shade of a tree or lounging along the banks of the Guadalupe. In fact, I have a very long list of other preferences. So, how do I get my attitude in line for more than just picking up some clothes off the floor, doing the dishes, or fluffing the pillows? Maybe I should just take my husband's advice and "just do it."

Ok, I give in. I promise I'll start with vacuuming more than the center of the room. I will finally get out those attachments and actually use them in the crevices of bookshelves, behind the toilet, between the refrigerator and counters, and behind the window blinds. Can you think of any other hidden spots where dust and mites have accumulated? Well, since this is Housekeeping month for my byline, here's a list of those cluttered caves I inventoried in my house to pay attention to.

- Two-inch floor areas on both sides of refrigerator
- Behind toilet and cobwebs up the pipes
- Both sides of window blinds
- Corners of window and sills for flies die and dust hides
- Window screen sills where mud, dirt, and bugs find their resting place
- Under the upholstered couch, chairs, and side tables

- Picture frames, particularly those ones with very fancy scroll work
- Your printer/copier tray and scanning glass
- Your phone
- Lamp shades (inside and outside)
- Part of drapery hanging on the floor that never gets moved for cleaning or vacuuming
- Rod iron railing with all its curves.
- Book shelves—not just in the front but on top of all the books
- Entertainment equipment in and around, not just the front facing
- Bric-a-brac everywhere (e.g. knick-knacks, curios, ornaments)
- Ceiling fan and hanging lights
- A/C filter unit and cover plate that turn a dingy brown of dust
- Top of bed headboard and between board and bed frame that never seem to get dusted
- All the kickboard around the house that also might have a slight lip that accumulates dust
- Marks on walls from kids, shoes, furniture moving, and more
- The grime building in all trash and garbage cans
- Top of Refrigerator thick dust and grime, let alone what's growing inside the refrig!
- Grease collector attached to fan unit above stove
- Mildew accumulating on bottom of shower door around rubber insulation
- Clusters of dust globs under cabinet kickboards

The list goes on that's for sure, particularly the larger your home and possessions. Take this list with you as you cruise through your own abode to see if any seem to be on the brink of saying, "clean me or I'll show up in the most embarrassing moments when guests arrive or your mother-in-law shows up unexpectedly with her white glove!

Feel free to get your kids and spouse involved too. Share the list, turn some music on, and start dancing through each crevice and hidden pile of who-knows-what! And always remember, those "who-knows-whats "are always there no matter whose house it is...even mine! And I encourage you to put this housekeeping motto on your refrigerator or bathroom mirror—

***Keep it clean enough for healthy,  
dirty enough for happy!***

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## ***Recycling your house & work stuff***

When cleaning and throwing out your trash, do you ever stop to think where it goes and who has to take care of it? Do you have an idea of how many bottles, can, and plastic alone would be piling up on your door step if your trash collectors didn't come by your house every week? And how much of it do you actually recycle?

This next week, grab a notepad and pencil. Make four columns on a couple sheets of paper—activity, item used, threw away, recycled. For the next week, wherever you go, whatever you do, whatever you use, make a note on something you used, and check whether you threw it away or recycled it. At this end of the week, write down those items you wish you could recycle but your community recycling service doesn't offer it.

According to Keep Boerne Beautiful (<http://www.keepboernebeautiful.com/links.html>) where I live, "Texans throw away enough trash each year to fill the Astrodome every two weeks. . . . The average Americans throws out an average of 7.8 pounds per day. The United States, with only 5 percent of the world's population, generates 50 percent of the world's waste." Most of our trash goes into landfills lined with clay or huge sheets of plastic; then when full is covered with soil, moving on to another hole in the ground to start all over again.

Much of what's under that soil is still there in one piece after 20-35 years at least. You can actually read a 35-year old newspaper, and an ear of corn or hot dog is easily identified!

So, what do you recycle? The most common items are newspapers, certain plastics, glass, cardboard, and cans. It all depends on what your recycling service is able to handle. For my community of Boerne, acceptable items include aluminum cans, envelopes, newspaper/junk mail, tin and steel can, brown paper bags, colored paper, wax paper, computer paper, glass bottles and jars, plastic bottles and jugs, and white ledger paper. They currently cannot accept aluminum foil, batteries, light bulbs, paper towels, porcelain, ceramics, catalogs/magazines, auto glass, film canisters, painted/treated wood, plastic grocery bags (grocery stores accepts them), Styrofoam, plastic wrap, and phone books. For more information on Boerne recycling, you can contact Boerne Utilities/Recycling, 249-9511 or Kendall County Terry Anderson, Program Coordinator, (201) 249-9343 or (830) 249-7442.

Beyond your weekly curbside recycling, there are other simple things you can do in your home and work to invest in a *green way of living*. The state of Texas has a variety of resources and tips to help you on your way to a more complete lifestyle of recycling (<http://www.texasonline.com/portal/tol/en/nat/8/5>). According to Take Care of Texas nonprofit (<http://www.takecareoftexas.org/>), here are some simple tips to adopt right at home and at work:

## **In and Around Your Home**

- **Buy Recycled-Content Products** (made from or packaged in recycled materials. content means fewer virgin materials were used to manufacture the

product. You can usually spot products made from recycled paper, plastic, and other materials by reading the labels.)

- **Recycle Electronics and Batteries** (Electronic waste is growing at three times the rate of other municipal waste. Texans discard 1.5 million computers annually. On average, we depend on six wireless products daily. You can help by reusing, donating, and recycling your electronics. Most rechargeable batteries can be recharged up to 1,000 times, then recycle them. If every Texas household recycled five rechargeable batteries a year, we could keep more than 39 million batteries out of landfills.)
- **Cut Back on Your Amount of Mail** (annual junk mail produces 4 million tons of solid waste. By taking your name off of marketing mailing lists, you can help reduce waste. You can also help reduce waste, save on postage by banking online.)

## In your Yard

- **Collect and Use Rainwater** (Lawn and garden watering make up nearly 40% of total household water use during the summer. By collecting rainwater for use on your lawn, plants, flowers, trees, and shrubs during the peak summer months, you can save 1,300 gallons of water. If all Texas households collected rainwater for their watering needs, we could keep more than 10 billion gallons of water in our aquifers, lakes, and rivers.)
- **Leave Grass Clippings on the Lawn** (Allow grass clippings to remain on the yard after mowing; they can act as a slow-release fertilizer to your lawn while helping to retain moisture in the soil. This reduces the need for watering and

could eliminate the need for fertilizer. Plus, it helps keep fertilizers out of storm drains and as a result, out of rivers, lakes, and bays.)

## **In Your Kitchen**

- **Recycle metal, plastic, and other compostable** materials (Each Texan generates about 7 pounds of this kind of garbage every day. Recycling these items can reduce waste, help conserve energy, and preserve our state's natural resources. In the U.S., recycling creates 1.1 million jobs, \$236 billion in gross annual sales, and \$37 billion in annual salaries. If Texans recycled and composted all recyclable and compostable materials, we could divert almost 90%, or over 26 million tons a year, of all municipal solid waste from Texas landfills.)
- **Recycle Paper Products** (including newspapers, food packaging, cardboard boxes, junk mail, and office paper, saving dollars. Recycling paper fiber is cheaper than growing, harvesting, and processing trees. Recycling 1 ton of paper is the equivalent of making paper from 17 to 31 trees and saves 7,000 gallons of water and 4,000 kilowatts of electricity (enough power for the average home for six months.)

## **Out and About w/ your Car**

- **Recycle Used Motor Oil** (Two gallons of recycled motor oil can produce enough energy to power the average Texas home for one day, cook 48 meals in a microwave oven, blow-dry your hair at least 215 times, vacuum a house for 15 months, or watch television for 7½ days straight! Whenever you change your oil or other vehicle fluids at home, make sure you recycle them. And

NEVER pour used motor oil down storm drains, because the drains will carry the oil directly to Texas waterways. The used oil from one oil change can contaminate 1 million gallons of fresh water, a year's supply for 50 people. Visit [www.cleanup.org](http://www.cleanup.org) to find a recycling center near you.)

## At Work

- **Around the office—Recycle Paper Products** (including newspapers, paperboard boxes (like cereal and cracker boxes), cardboard boxes, junk mail, and office paper all save money.
- **In the copy and supply room—Reuse Office Supplies** (When choosing office supplies, choose items that can be reused. Some, like refillable pens and pencils, folders, and envelopes, can be reused many times. Also, find out if your office printers will accept remanufactured toner cartridges. By using these or by recycling cartridges, you can help eliminate waste.
- **Buy Recycled-Content Products** (Buy products made from, packaged in recycled materials, including office supplies. Recycled content means fewer virgin materials were used to manufacture the product. Give preference to items with acceptable percentages of recycled content, especially post-consumer.)
- **Recycle Electronics and Batteries** (Electronic waste is growing at three times the rate of other municipal waste.)
- **In the Break Room—Use Reusable Dishes** (Stock your office kitchen or break rooms with reusable glasses, plates, and flatware instead of disposables. Encourage employees to reuse coffee mugs and dishes daily by washing and



drying them on a dish rack. To further reduce waste, invite employees to bring their own tableware and napkins to office luncheons and parties.)

- **Try Composting** (Try setting up a bin in the break room to collect coffee grounds, vegetable scraps, and fruit scraps. Instead of throwing out those scraps and leftovers with the garbage, recycle them by composting. Compost serves as a soil conditioner that can help improve landscaping and reduce water usage.)

These are just a few ways to start living “green”. For national stats and information on recycling, access the following resources:

National Recycling Coalition, <http://www.nrc-recycle.org/>

US Government EPA, Municipal Solid Waste, <http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/recycle.htm>

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## ***Successful Housekeeping Attitudes***

Did you ever consider that successful housekeepers have certain characteristics or attitudes? Are you one of them? According to Sandra Felton, founder of Messies Anonymous, here are six attitudes that seem universal:

1. **Successful housekeepers want their houses to look nice** in order for the house to work well...not the other way around.
2. **Successful housekeepers are nice to themselves.** They believe they deserve a nice house and that it is ok to have what they need and want if the budget can handle it.
3. **Successful housekeepers trust their feelings.** They have good instincts about what to keep and what to get rid of; and are more casual. They do not love things in a way that they must keep, no matter what. They don't fear making a mistake, not having an important item, or giving away something they will want later.
4. **Successful housekeepers are alert to the house.** They know when it is cluttered, full, empty, pretty, etc. They have a feel for the condition of the house.

5. **Successful housekeepers live in the present.** They don't think about or worry much about the past, and limit the memorabilia stored in their house. They also don't usually micromanage their future either. They tend to decide to do something; then do it without a lot of long-term planning. It just seems to flow. They just know where to find the information and take action and were happy with their choices.
6. **Successful housekeepers work with detachment.** They don't wait until they feel like doing the job. They shift into automatic moving through certain routines on a regular basis.

Felton recommends for us perpetual or occasional unsuccessful housekeepers to get into a routine. "Make a schedule for morning, evening, and various points during the day. Follow it consistently without even thinking about it. While you are wondering how it is happening, your house will change slowly but surely before your eyes."

Next week, I will offer Felton's check list for "spotting and untying organizational knots" that stop you from becoming a successful housekeeper.

Resources:

*Messies 2* by Sandra Felton. Revell Company. 1986.

*Messie No More* by Sandra Felton. Revell Company. 2004.

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## **Untangling Organizational Knots in Housekeeping**

What stops you from becoming a successful housekeeper? I know I have a number of unrelenting habits of avoiding the obvious. I walk by a pile of dirty clothes that seems to pile up bigger each day; when I could just as easily put them in the hamper when in the closet picking my clothes to wear for the day. That's just one of several. Sandra Felton has a very practical way to spot and untie those organizational knots we all get entangled with.

Put a check to the left side of any areas in your life that are not organized—where you think further control is needed:

<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Finding things (eyeglasses, keys, purse, etc)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Meal planning and preparation	
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Cleaning the house	
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Paper (finding, filing, and sorting)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Keeping finances in order	
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Laundry (washing, drying, folding, and putting it away)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Keeping things picked up	

<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Dishes (washing, drying, and putting away immediately)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Grocery shopping	
<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Delegating jobs	
<input type="checkbox"/>	11. Being on time	
<input type="checkbox"/>	12. OTHERS (list them)	

After you have checked any area not organized, put the letters of the category listed below that best explains the reason for lack of organization in the area you checked. Put the letters to the right of the category in the column provided. After this exercise, write down in your own words what keeps you from being organized. You will undoubtedly discover some very interesting insights for yourself and even ways to overcome these organizational knots you have lived with for years. But, remember to be nice to yourself—pace the changes you want to make. You and everyone else in the family will thank you.

LF	Lack of Follow Through—Getting the main part of the job done but failing to finish it up.
LP	Lack of Planning—Not planning for the future. Maybe you prefer spontaneous living.
AD	Lack of Attention to Detail—Thinking only in terms of the “big picture.”
IP	Impatience with Paper Work—Easily frustrated.
PT	Perfectionist Thinking—Finding it hard to decide the best way to do the job.
PG	Orientation toward Present Gratification—Wishing to have it easy now, even though it will make the future harder.

TC	Too Compliant—Letting others dictate what you do and letting others ignore your plans.
EC	Excessive Confusion—The situation is so complicated and confused that it is difficult to begin.

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