

# *From the Heart. . .*

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



## ***Housekeeping . . . Honing in on your Home***

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, June 5, 2015)

Is your house your home? When you turn the key and enter, does your house say “Welcome home”? Here are some questions that may help make your house your home and refuge. These questions apply whether you are have a house, condominium, or rental apartment. I may give you some hints by virtue of the questions themselves, but you are really the only one that has the answers. Why? Because it’s your home, not mine.

When it comes to the physical style, layout, and décor of your home, we each have our own idea of what we like. One may love a Ranch style home. Another may love Southwest or even Contemporary. Your color scheme may range from all black and white to the colors of the rainbow. You may prefer having your space more geometric, while others go organic with curves and swooping arches; maybe even a tree growing up in the middle of your living room or the whole house immersed within a mountainside!

Next, as you cruise through the inside of your home, you may prefer lots of furniture and “what-nots” around the rooms. Others may want a more simplified, minimalist environment inside the home. Yet, no matter what your preferences may be, we all deal with housekeeping chores and who does them. We make all kinds of

choices as to how we are going to live with each other within that home, and how we share our lives with others. Choosing a place to live and taking care of it go hand in hand. A house will never be a home without the two working in tandem.

With these questions I hope to elicit responses that will either say “Yes, my house is my home, in every way.” Or your responses may surprise you with “It’s time for some changes to make my house more my home.”

So, here goes the what, why, when, where, who, how Q&A.

- What is your first impression when you walk to your front door?
- Why did you choose that specific home to live in?
- When was the last time you had a friendly gathering in your home?
- Where do you spend most of your time inside your home?
- Who does most of the housekeeping inside? Outside?
- How are major decisions made and by whom?

You may discover additional insight for your first impression when you walk to your house from a distance, not just from your driveway or walkway. Be aware of your feelings as you get closer to your home.

You may then discover further insights as to why you chose that specific place to live. Your home is also a place for the gathering of family, friends, and neighbors. Whether your income is modest or massive, hopefully your home inside and out is a welcoming place for all who enter. If a home is used to only impress, those who live or visit there may never experience your house as a refuge for themselves or others.

When it comes to spending lots of time in one part of the home, it may be that you have a special spot to relax or create. Each room of a house contributes to what

makes your home yours. This is also true for caring for your home and everything and everyone one living there. When the whole family shares in the housekeeping and care of the home inside and out, the whole family is investing in making a life for each other. It's not just about taking the trash out, mowing the lawn, or vacuuming the house. It's really about building relationships and that life together.

A life together also involves sharing in decisions that need to be made. None are a lone ranger. Everyone, young and old, has a stake in your family, and each has something to contribute. When their views and perspectives can be shared, they feel heard, honored, and know without a doubt they have a home and family. Then even with some situations where one person may find themselves responsible for making a final decision, all voices have been respected and given serious consideration. Safety and trust become cornerstones of your home where love and care flourish. The house becomes your home.

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# *From the Heart. . .*

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## **Housekeeping . . . Recycling your house stuff**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, June 12, 2015)

I recently moved into in a county subdivision that doesn't yet have recycling. Every time I throw away a can, glass, plastic, and newspaper, I cringe at where all my "stuff" ends up...please, not under someone's housing development! Fortunately, my community is working on research and proposals for a recycling service. So, since this topic has been haunting me for some time, I decided to "recycle" one of my 2008 articles on recycling with some updates.

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

Grab a notepad and pencil. Make four columns on a sheet of paper—activity, item used, threw away, recycled. For next week, where ever you go, whatever you do, whatever you use, make a note on something you used. Check off whether you threw it away or recycled it. At the 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>), "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% of the world's population, generates 50% 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 at home? The most common items are newspapers, certain plastics, glass, cardboard, and cans. It all depends on what your recycling service is able to handle. With technology ever advancing to the latest, greatest device, think about all the electronics we have that is obsolete the minute you buy it. According to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (2013) Texans turned in more than 43 million pounds of electronics to computer manufacturers for recycling. For more information on Boerne recycling, you can contact Boerne Utilities/Recycling, 249-9511 or Kendall County, (201) 249-9343 (county recycling info:

<http://tools.cira.state.tx.us/users/0079/docs/County%20Engineer/Recycling%202014.pdf> ).

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 (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/recycle/recycling.html>). According to Take Care of Texas nonprofit (<http://www.takecareoftexas.org/>), here are simple tips to adopt right at home:

## IN AND AROUND YOUR HOME

- **Buy Recycled-Content Products** (made from or packaged in recycled materials. . . )
- **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. . . 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. . . 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 . . . If all Texas households collected rainwater for their watering needs, we could keep more than 10 billion gallons of water in our aquifers, lakes, 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 . . . Plus, it helps keep fertilizers out of storm drains, out of rivers, lakes, and bays.)

## IN YOUR KITCHEN

- **Recycle metal, plastic, other compostables** (Each Texan generates about 7 pounds of this kind of garbage every day. . . 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! . . . And NEVER pour used motor oil down storm drains . . . used oil from one oil change can contaminate 1 million gallons of fresh water, a year's supply for 50 people.)

In the next article, Take Care of Texas nonprofit will offer us ways to recycle at work. What ways does your workplace recycle right now? How can you help your workplace become more proactive with recycling?

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## **Housekeeping . . . Recycling your work stuff**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, June 19, 2015)

In the previous article, we focused on recycling at home. You were asked, “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. With technology ever advancing to the latest and greatest device, think about all the electronics we have that can be obsolete the minute you buy it. According to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (2013) Texans turned in more than 43 million pounds of electronics to computer manufacturers for recycling.

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 (<https://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/recycle/recycling.html>). According to Take Care of Texas nonprofit (<http://www.takecareoftexas.org/>), some of the simply ways you can recycle in and about your home includes buying recycled-content products, recycle electronics and batteries, cut back on your amount of mail, collect and use rainwater, leave grass clippings on the lawn recycle metal, plastic, and other compostable materials, recycle paper products, and recycle used motor oil.

At work, do you already have a recycling routine? If not, Take Care of Texas offers these ways to get started.

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

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## ***Housekeeping . . . let's get philosophical***

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, June 26, 2015)

We all know the basic chores any house needs from day to day, month to month to keep us from tripping over the trash. We also know each person in our family may have a particular personality that either contributes to keeping the housekeeping routines or collides with every attempt you make at keeping the clutter and crud to a minimum.

The more type A personality usually keeps a list handy on what needs to be done each day, week, month, annually. The other more sanguine messy personality simply looks at your list and says, "Let's go to the movies!" Anything to preserve their innate mantra "out of sight, out of mind." For your sweet messy, the solution is always to simply get out of sight of it, then it simply floats out of the mind, so the fun can begin! I confess. That is me, sort of! I do have my "let's get it done" moments. But notice, it's "let's", not just "I." Us sanguine personalities have to share "the experience" in order to keep the motivation and mop moving along.

How can these two wonderfully and uniquely designed human beings get along under the same roof when it comes to housekeeping? Maybe both can wrap their hearts and hands around a basic ***Housekeeping Philosophy***? My philosophy wrapped up with a few tips comes in the form of a "housekeeping" acronym. Here goes:

- **Healthy & happy happenings** – clean enough for healthy, dirty enough for happy. Life is sweetly balanced when healthy and happy happen together.
- **Opportunities come each day** – no matter how much you clean, dust, mop, vacuum, the dirt shows up moments later. Consider it just another opportunity the next day, or week, or month to “move to the music” while you “whistle as you work.” This is life and a good one at that!
- **Under cabinets, couches, chairs, and calendar** – dust, dirt, and grime always show up at some point in the day, week, month, or year. It’s like they put themselves on “YOUR” calendar to make sure they get your attention. Even the hidden places under cabinets, couches, and chairs eventually find a way to show up right in front of you and along the baseboards, walls, and ceiling. But remember it’s your calendar and your schedule. Everything will get done in its own time. Don’t worry, they won’t desert you. They love your home and will stick around, literally!
- **Sweeping it under the rug** – surprise guests always warrant a temporary sweeping under the rug and throwing whatever into the closet. Just remember, after the guests leave, to un-sweep it.
- **Easy clean equipment** – Choose whatever equipment and supplies that keep you and your home healthy and makes for an easy clean.

- **Kitchen galore** – When you whip out the wipe each day, it's a wonder what a damp, clean cloth can do for just about every surface from countertops, stove tops, cabinet fronts, dishwasher, garbage can, sink, dish rack, refrigerator, small appliances, and floor. Heavy cleaning later becomes a breeze.
- **Expectations** – Be kind and patient with yourself and family. Life happens and expectations need to bend with the broom. So, help each other get the job done when it's time to catch up. Together, the expectations from the "to do" list handed out are more softly received.
- **Exceptions are OK** – Some jobs are best left up to another day or others, either in the family or for hire. Sometimes the routine responsibilities of work and life get heavy and call for exceptions with the "to do" list.
- **Play with your pooch and purring cat but put out the poop** – as much as we consider our pets family, what they leave behind each day needs attention on a regular basis for their own health and the family. A good lather up makes playtime later a lot more fun without the leftovers!
- **Inspiring others to help** – Enlist and inspire others in the family to help. If you don't, you WILL be THE HELP. There are times, if all agree and the budget can handle it, to hire out. No guilt here!

- **Never ending story** – your house is your home where you live your story. Let your never-ending housekeeping routines be a reflection of your purpose-filled, joy-filled, and never ending story.
- **Garage cleaning** – make your garage not just a catch-all clutter and garbage heap, but a “good for you” space for car, cleaning, and creating.

May my *Housekeeping Philosophy* keep you motivated and moving the mop, with some music on the side. May it also spark memories that housekeeping isn't just a chore but an important part of your story and life with those you care for and love.

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