

# *From the Heart. . .*

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



## ***Spark Your Child's Inner Talent***

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Sept 6, 2013)

Have you ever noticed your child spark an interest in something? How did you respond to that little spark that surprised you? No matter our age, from young years to elder years, we all have an inner talent that needs to be sparked and given attention.

Peter Benson, PhD, a leading authority on childhood and adolescence, describes in his book, *Sparks: How Parents Can Help Ignite the Hidden Strengths of Teenagers*, a simple yet powerful plan for awakening the spark that lives inside each and every young person. Our world is changing so fast, with so many challenges and unpredictable events. How can we raise our children, particularly teens, to be happy, secure, and successful in an ever changing, uncertain landscape?

Benson offers some keys to discovering that spark in your child . . . and maybe even in yourself.

- SPARKS are the hidden flames in your kids that light their proverbial fire, get them excited, tap into their true passions.
- SPARKS comes from the gut. They motivate and inspire. They're authentic passions, talents, assets, skills, and dreams.

- SPARKS can be musical, athletic, intellectual, academic, relational—anything from playing the violin to enjoy work with kids or senior citizens.
- SPARKS can ignite a lifelong vocation or career, or balance other activities to create an emotionally satisfying, enriched life.
- SPARKS get kids going on a positive path, away from the conflicts and negative issues—violence, promiscuity, drugs and alcohol—that give teens a bad name and attract so much negative energy.

Benson puts this in a parent's perspective with "All parent worry. It is a big and complex world to which we are introducing our children. As we try to be good parents, there are two things all of us want for our kids. We want them to know, and know deeply, that at their very core there is something good and special about them. We want them to see themselves as persons of worth, of value to the world. You and I know, as adults, what a precious gift this perception is to a person; many of us struggle with a lack of it all our lives.

The second thing we want for our kids to be have the courage to put their gifts into play. . . Despite all the stressors, barriers, and difficulties, a spark is something that works. Whether teenagers live in a two-parent or one-parent home, whether they're poor or rich, regardless of their race, a spark is something that works for all kids. A spark has the power to change the course of a teenager's life for the better."

When your child steps into their spark and acts on it, they are more likely to have higher grades, more school attendance, more likely to be healthy, volunteer to help others, and a core sense of purpose in their lives.

You can see these sparks at any age. Elizabeth A. Hoadley and her eight year old daughter, Kailee, have written, illustrated and published 13 books together in their “Lizzy & Missy” Series. Their new book, *The Thanksgiving Coat*, illustrated by Kailee, is inspired by a true event. It is a creative story that teaches children how to give to others and become socially responsible. Check out their series at <http://thesunshineworkshop.com/>.

Hoadley offers her own tips, as the mother of a young child who is already signing autographs. “. . . many parents have asked me what I did to develop her talent. Does she attend public or private school? Do I home-school or hire private tutors? What activities do I put her in? How did I first realize that she might have a special gift? Of all the questions that I am asked, the most important is the latter. How did I first realize that she had a special gift?

This essential question begets the premise for my fundamental belief that every child has a special gift lurking within. Each person has an innate aptitude with which they were born and the challenge is to help them discover, uncover and bring this aptitude to fruition in a healthy and positive way. If you would like to discover the innate talent with which your child has been born, ask yourself three questions:

1. What does your child choose to do when they have "nothing" to do?
2. What do they do so often that you have even asked them to stop because it's starting to drive you nuts?
3. What do they do so naturally that they don't even realize that they are starting to do it really well?

If you cannot answer these three questions, here is a suggestion. For several weeks (or longer hopefully) turn OFF everything with electrical cords, buttons, batteries and screens.”

Hoadley then poses several questions. One of those questions is “What does your child do when they seemingly have nothing to do?” Check out her other questions and tips offered in her article at <http://ezinearticles.com/?Childrens-Special-Talents---Discover-Your-Childs-Inner-Genius&id=5567253>. She emphasizes that “Creativity does not blossom under the weight of a tightly knit schedule, so choose your activities sparingly. Maybe planned lessons work well with your lifestyle, but just making available the tools of your child's perceived talent might be enough.” And don’t worry about the mess, noise, or creature crawlies. You can always find a work-around that won’t squelch his spark.

As the wife of a retired entomologist and perpetual nature lover, I too learned not to squirm at his six-legged friends and other wild creatures that crawl and fly but find joy in knowing he found his “spark” growing up. And as a adult was even able to pay the bills throughout the years! So, enjoy discovering your child’s “spark” that ignite that inner talent in you both!

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*Sharon L. Benedict, is a speaker, author, and weaver, and loving it! She is available for speaking engagements, free-lance writing, and will even weave you a one-of-kind creation, just for you. Sharon also welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at [seekreachachieve@gvtc.com](mailto:seekreachachieve@gvtc.com). Visit her website at [www.celebratingyourjourney.com](http://www.celebratingyourjourney.com).*

# From the Heart...

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



## Calling all Kendall County Kids . . . Strut your Artistic Stuff!

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Sept 13, 2013)

Since this month's lifeskill is *Childcare*, I couldn't pass up a chance to spread the word here. Calling all Kendall County, Texas kids age 6 through high school. ENTER NOW for your chance to win great prizes and have your artwork exhibited alongside professional artists at the Texas Hill Country Invitational, and more!

Hill Country Council for the Arts Presents

### 'Drawn to Animals' Children's Art Contest

Sponsored by Petland Boerne

Share the beauty of the animal world and win some fantastic prizes  
by entering HCCArts' Children's Amateur Art Contest!

Dogs, cats, all manner of birds, ferrets, bunnies, guinea pigs, hamsters, sugar gliders, hedgehogs...frogs, lizards, dragons, snakes...fish! These all make excellent subjects for all types of artwork. Summer presents time to explore one's creativity. And, returning to school in the fall is an excellent time to experience some artistic awesomeness with the HCCArts 'Drawn to Animals' amateur art contest!

This year, alongside HCCArts selection committee, representatives of the Boerne Professional Artists ([www.boerneprofessionalartists.com](http://www.boerneprofessionalartists.com)), Boerne Art League (<http://boerneartleague.homestead.com>), and Boerne Public Library Foundation (<http://www.boernelibraryfoundation.org/>), will be judging the contest and choosing the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners and runners up. Each winner will receive a great prize package provided by contest sponsor Petland Boerne!

The winning artworks and artists will be announced in The Boerne Star, and introduced at the HCCArts' October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013, *Conversation with the Arts* (CWTA) at the Patrick Heath Public Library Community Room (CWTA program theme-*The Arts, Children, & the Love of Learning*). Additionally, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners will be displayed at the Boerne Professional Artists Texas Hill Country Invitational October 18, 19 and 20. The top 20 entries will be displayed at the Library October 22 through November 11.

**NOW YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO ENTER!**

**USE THIS ENTRY FORM PROVIDED BELOW; OR PICK UP DETAILS AND FORM AT PETLAND BOERNE LOCATION ([www.petlandboerne.com](http://www.petlandboerne.com)). YOU CAN ALSO PRINT THEM OFF AT HCCArts WEBSITE (<http://www.hccarts.org/hccarts-announces-drawn-to-animals-childrens-art-contest>).**

**THE DEADLINE:** All entries submitted at Petland Boerne location by **Saturday, September 21, 2013, 6:00 p.m.** Completed and signed entry form should accompany all artwork.

**Strut Your Artistic Stuff!** So, to all you animal-loving artists out there, clean your brushes, sharpen your pencils, and other creative materials, we want to see some great stuff! Good luck!

For more details, contact Paula Horner, HCCArts Vice-President, [events@hccarts.org](mailto:events@hccarts.org).

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Hill Country Council for the Arts Presents  
**'Drawn to Animals' Children's Art Contest**

Sponsored by Petland Boerne



**ENTRY FORM**

Children aged 6 to seniors in high school are eligible to enter the contest and must be residents of Kendall County, Texas. You may enter as often as you like, but each artwork must be labeled and submitted with a completed Entry Form. Entries must be created in the summer of 2013, and animals depicted in artworks must be true species rather than make-believe. The species must be indicated in the Title of the artwork.

**Deadline to submit artworks to Petland Boerne, 1375 S. Main Street, Boerne, Texas 78006, is Saturday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013 by 6:00 p.m.** See contest details at Petland Boerne location and websites ([www.petlandboerne.com](http://www.petlandboerne.com), <https://www.facebook.com/PetlandBoerne>), as well as HCCArts websites ([www.HCCArts.org](http://www.HCCArts.org), <https://www.facebook.com/HCCArts.Tx>).

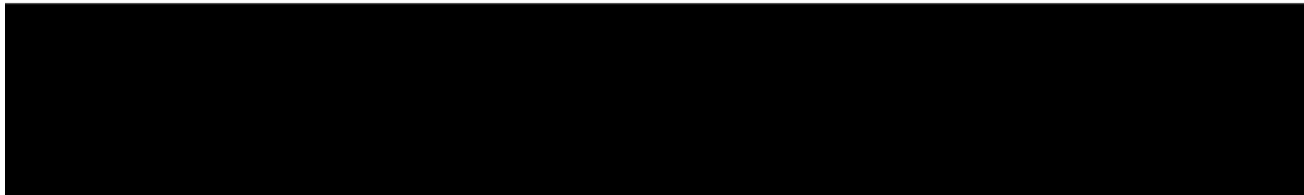
Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Title of  
Artwork \_\_\_\_\_



to participate, and for photos of children and artworks  
Facebook sites of Hill Country Council for the Arts,

Medium \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below, parent gives permission for child  
to be used in local news media, at the websites and  
Petland Boerne, and partners.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent

Partners

BOERNE PUBLIC LIBRARY

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# *From the Heart...*

*...Lifeskills for Today's Family*  
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## **Winning Over Procrastination**

My friend Paula recently asked if I had ever written an article on procrastination and could the topic be covered again. Although she said she needed a refresher course herself and maybe for a few others, I realized with her request that I was actually procrastinating myself all this week, particularly for this article. Just didn't feel inspired.

Oops! One of the key trip ups for procrastinators. So to help my friend, myself, and others out there who are also being tripped up this week, here goes. I needed a little jump start and my friend gave it to me, along with finding an article I wrote years back to help get me moving.

I have included that article here with a few changes along the way. I realize this month's lifeskill is Childcare, but hope you find this diversion equally helpful. You just might creatively make the Childcare connection yourself! Now, the first question may get you started.

Are you stressed out, burnt out, or just plain tired? Is your life out of balance with seemingly too much to do, and not enough time for family, your kids, and yourself. Do interruptions throw you off track? Do you procrastinate what's important? Feel unprepared and under pressure much of the time?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may be missing out on your greatest potential for getting more done in less time. Many people spend their days in a whirl of busyness, but achieve little because they are not focused on the those things



that make all the difference in experiencing a fulfilling day and life. According to Don Wetmore, The Productivity Institute (<http://www.balancetime.com>), there are five top time use mistakes we all need to avoid.

1. Start your day without a plan of action.
2. Get out of balance in your life.
3. Work with a messy desk or work area.
4. Don't get enough sleep.
5. Don't take a lunch break.

All five of these mistakes have at least one thing in common—procrastination. People who are chronically affected by procrastination lose out on utilizing their capabilities to the fullest and often disrupt not only their personal lives but also professional careers.

In Psychology Today, Hara Estroff Marano offers us ten additional things we should know about procrastination (<http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200308/procrastination-ten-things-know>). You can read more by accessing this link. Here is a summary of key factors:

1. Chronic procrastination is a maladaptive lifestyle and cuts across all areas of life, such as not paying bills on time, missing opportunities for buying concert tickets.
2. It is a profound problem of self-regulation.
3. Procrastination is not just a problem of time management or of planning. Getting a day planner doesn't solve the problem.
4. Procrastinators are made not born. Procrastination is learned in the family environment, not direct but subtle.
5. Procrastination predicts higher levels of consumption of alcohol substance abuse.

6. Procrastinators tell lies to themselves. Such as, "I'll feel more like doing this tomorrow." Or "I work best under pressure." They squander their resources.
7. Procrastinators actively look for distractions, particularly those that don't take a lot of commitment, such as always checking their emails. Also as a means of regulating emotions such as fear of failure.
8. People procrastinate for different reasons-- thrill-seeking, avoiders, decision procrastinators.
9. Big costs to procrastination, such as health, insomnia, hurts/destroys teamwork, results in resentment.
10. Procrastinators can change their behavior but it takes commitment and energy, and needs a structured program or even, at times, behavioral therapy.

A simpler summary is offered by Mind Tools (<http://www.mindtools.com>),

Procrastinators typically—

- Do something that is more enjoyable, comfortable, or more urgent in the moment.
- Feel overwhelmed by a particular task.
- Wait for the “right” mood or time.
- Fear failure or successes.
- Have poor organizational skills.
- Are perfectionists at heart.

Where do you see yourself with these behaviors? Feeling overwhelmed by the list itself!? Be of good cheer, here are some time savings steps for breaking the procrastination pain in the neck. You will then create more time that works for you in your everyday life and with those special dreams you want to see come true.

**Step 1—Recognize you are procrastinating** (i.e. starting an important task then immediately going off to get some coffee or make a “quick” phone call; rereading a task on your to do list many times without doing anything about it)

**Step 2—Identify why you are procrastinating** (main reasons—the task is unpleasant or overwhelming)

**Step 3— Know your important priorities**, then take action (i.e. commit to small steps that support the overall larger task; learn the difference between urgent and important tasks)

**Step 4—Develop accountability strategies for continued follow through** (i.e. set up rewards for yourself; ask someone to help you stay accountable by checking up on your progress (professional coaches are particularly skilled at helping you stay accountable to your short-term and long-term goals); write down the tangible and intangible cost of time and consequences of NOT doing the task)

Procrastinators work as many hours in the day as most people but often invest their time getting off track. Let us ask ourselves, “Isn’t it time to get focused and “on task” with what is important in our lives? If you agree, then let’s start today to break the procrastination habit in our everyday life with these four simple, time-saving steps for managing our time.

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## **Child & Parent Stress Coping Tips**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Sept 27, 2013)

As parents and adults, we often are so wrapped up in our own fast-paced and stressful activities at work and home we lose sight of what is going on with our kids right in front of us. We tend to assume since all the necessities are provided for your children, and you always make time to make sure they are at soccer practice and do their homework, that everything is carefree with them.

Yet, kids have their own set of stresses that need attention and gentle guidance. Kids can become overwhelmed with pressures from school, friends, family issues, and so many others. As parents, how do we help our kids and even grandkids not just cope with these stresses but feel safe and secure in the midst.

We know we can't protect our children all the time, but there are some healthy ideas KidsHealth offers that will go a long way in helping them navigate, solve problems, and thrive throughout their growing up years. Depending their family living situation, your child may or may not be comfortable expressing their feelings. It just might be become they just have a more shy personality or there are problems at home where they don't feel safe and secure.

Here are some tip excerpts from D'Arcy Lyness, PhD (January 2013) article from KidsHealth, *Helping Kids Cope with Stress*

([http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/stress\\_coping.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/stress_coping.html)). By all means, access the link to read the entire article and gain more tips in related areas of interest.

**Notice out loud.** Tell your child when you notice that something's bothering him or her. If you can, name the feeling you think your child is experiencing. ("It seems like you're still mad about what happened at the playground.") This shouldn't sound like an accusation . . . or put a child on the spot. . . Be sympathetic and show you care and want to understand.

**Listen to your child.** Ask your child to tell you what's wrong. Listen attentively and calmly — with interest, patience, openness, and caring. Avoid any urge to judge, blame, lecture, or say what you think your child should have done instead. . . Take your time. And let your child take his or her time, too.

**Comment briefly on the feelings you think your child was experiencing.** For example, you might say "That must have been upsetting," "No wonder you felt mad when they wouldn't let you in the game," or "That must have seemed unfair to you." Doing this shows that you understand what your child felt, why, and that you care.

**Put a label on it.** Many younger kids do not yet have words for their feelings. If your child seems angry or frustrated, use those words to help him or her learn to identify the emotions by name. Putting feelings into words helps kids communicate and develop emotional awareness . . . .

**Help your child think of things to do.** If there's a specific problem that's causing stress, talk together about what to do. Encourage your child to think of a

couple of ideas. You can start the brainstorming if necessary, but don't do all the work. Your child's active participation will build confidence.

**Listen and move on.** Sometimes talking and listening and feeling understood is all that's needed to help a child's frustrations begin to melt away. Afterward, try changing the subject and moving on to something more positive and relaxing.

**Limit stress where possible.** If certain situations are causing stress, see if there are ways to change things. For instance, if too many after-school activities consistently cause homework stress, it might be necessary to limit activities to leave time and energy for homework.

**Just be there.** Kids don't always feel like talking about what's bothering them. Sometimes that's OK. Let your kids know you'll be there when they do feel like talking. Even when kids don't want to talk, they usually don't want parents to leave them alone. You can help your child feel better just by being there . . . .

**Be patient.** As a parent, it hurts to see your child unhappy or stressed. But try to resist the urge to fix every problem. Instead, focus on helping your child, slowly but surely, grow into a good problem-solver — a kid who knows how to roll with life's ups and downs . . . .

There is one thing that is essential to successful navigates through these tips offered by KidsHealth. . . active listening. This isn't just simply hearing your child. You can actively listen by looking at your children when they are speaking to you, not having your eyes on doing the bills or watching TV. Have your eyes on them. And be in close proximity when they are speaking. Don't interrupt; let

them finish what they are saying. Don't ask questions that distract them from their train of thought.

Focus on what your child is saying and not so much on what you will say in response. Be aware of your body language when interacting and listening . . . smile, nod your head, make a quick response that reassures them you are connecting and affirming them. With active listening your children will know they are being heard and understood. Your children will then become equipped to handle just about anything life brings them, both opportunities and challenges.

As the years fly by, you will be there for them when they call and say "Mom, Dad, I need your counsel on something." You will know not to "fix it" but to listen, affirm, give counsel when asked, and release them to whatever decision they make, with your love for them intact.

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