

# *From the Heart. . .*

## *. . . Lifeskills for Today*

*By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC*



### **Celebrating being Content**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Dec 2, 2011)

In the rush of the season, where do you hold on to contentment? Along with the fast-paced routine things of life, we have added Christmas shopping, holiday parties at work and community, and don't forget the parades. You name it. And watch out for any pesky germs floating around knocking you out with a cold!

What does it feel like to be content even in the midst of all this running about? One of the first things that comes to mind is the gift of the phrase "no thank you." What do I mean by that? Basically, there is only so much one human being can do, even when the pressure is on from the job, relatives, finances, and your own children. That's when the brakes need to be applied ever so graciously with thank you but I am just not able to do one more thing. Begin to make this holiday season even more enjoyable and contented with saying "no thank you" to those few extra requests that come your way.

You will then have more precious time to get done what you are already committed to do and actually enjoy yourself along the way. Another thought comes with a combined question: "What brings you simple contentment to your life and what robs you of that contentment?" Focus on a couple things that release some of the "should's" in your life that may not be necessary to be there. Maybe you have always been the one

that organizes and hosts your workplace holiday party. Maybe this year, someone else can have the privilege. What do you come up with that would bring you more contentment during this season and into 2012?

Pick one thing that has robbed you of contentment...such as a part of your job, money, weight, a relationship. Choose one action that would make a positive change and help you regain some contentment. If it's money problems, look around you. Have anything you could part with to sell for some extra cash? For a Christmas gift for someone, look around your home for something you would like to gift them, instead of spending more dollars. Yet, be sure it is something they would enjoy receiving and not just something you would probably throw away or put in a charity bin.

Could it be a relationship? Possibly, it's about time to sit down and have a conversation about improving that relationship. Respectfully share what you need, and ask that friend, relative, or spouse what they would like to see happen in your relationship together.

During the holidays, contentment is yours to have, even if you happen to catch one of those season's cold and end up in bed sniffing and sneezing. Grab that warm comforter, some hot healing herb tea and homemade chicken soup, and put on some sweet music to cheer the soul. And by all means, allow your family to pamper you and handle the holiday celebrations. I bet you will see loads of creativity arise from surprising sources...even at the last minute that will make forever memories for you and your family.

Whatever your plans, may this Christmas and holiday festivities be special for you all, filled with the joy of the season. And may the gift of contentment be yours to share throughout the coming New Year.

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Sharon L. Benedict, MS, ACC, is a certified life/wellness coach-consultant, specializing in lifeskills, wellness, and creative arts development for individuals, businesses and organizations ([www.harvestenterprises-sra.com](http://www.harvestenterprises-sra.com)). She welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at [seekreachachieve@gvtc.com](mailto:seekreachachieve@gvtc.com).

# *From the Heart. . .*

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### **Celebrating baking and breaking moments**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Dec 9, 2011)

Yesterday morning as I sat down in my office to tackle the pile of work in front of me, I booted up my computer to start replying to the accumulated emails. Yet, to my frustration, the internet connection was down....nothing coming in, nothing going out.

I sat there for a moment rethinking a work around. Then my husband came into my office saying he was going to bake some whole wheat bread from scratch, and would I like to join him. Since it was his first time at this adventure, he felt he needed a little supervision. Do I stay here and try to figure out how to get some work done or have fun baking some bread with my favorite person in the world?

No contest! Break time for baking bread won out. So, John pulled out our mixer and whole grain grinding mill. Being the orderly and creative scientist he is, I saw him carefully line up four glass loaf pans, the liquid ingredients on one side, the dry ingredients on the other—after grinding about 20 cups worth of whole wheat kernels and 5 cups of whole rye grain. Oh, I forgot to mention, he spent a couple hours last night rewriting my simple recipe of past years into a gourmet concoction. I felt like we were in a chemistry lab and the professor was giving me lessons on the chemical reaction he believes will happen when we put together his blend of wheat flour, rye flour, olive oil, low fat goat milk, water, honey, banana (egg substitute for low fat grams), a little dough enhancer, sea salt, yeast, caraway seeds, and raisin syrup (which he also created the night before).

After following his recipe to the letter with all ingredients in the mixer and the dough hook doing its job for 8-10 minutes, we came up with a pile of awesome sticky dough to dig our hands into to shape into loaves. Putting some olive oil on our hands we dug in. It was so much fun...like being a kid again playing in thick mud. I also felt like I was back in one of my ceramic classes years ago kneading clay and shaping it into just the right size of balls for creating something on the potter's wheel. But I was sure these balls, once baked, would be a lot more tasty!

It turned out that we actually had enough dough for 5 loaves. But John wanted to use the fifth ball to make my sticky buns I used to make when our daughters were just little ones. So, I got the chance to be the teacher instead of the student for once! He ever so carefully put together a raisin, cinnamon, honey, nut mix for filling. After spreading out the dough into a long rectangular shape, honey was dripped all over, then the raisin/nut mix was added. It was so funny to watch John so gently roll the long end of the dough as if he were handling a delicate piece of china. I had to get in there and poke my figure into it just to hear him say, "Don't touch my work of art here!"

After cutting the "sticky bun" roll into equal pieces and placing them in a larger glass pan, all loaves and buns were covered to rise for the next hour. Forgot to mention again that John had to pull a little dough aside to make a couple hot dog shaped buns. He had to see how it tasted with his favorite turkey sausage hot dog.

After another hour went by baking his gourmet recipe in all its forms, the kitchen was filled with a wonderful, elegant fragrance no one could resist. So, what did John try first?...his hot dog bun of course! Then came a taste of his sticky buns for dessert. Needless to say, when I looked at the clock, the day was coming to an end. And I didn't think about work and emails all day.

Why do I tell this tale? Simply because I learned an important life lesson again. This moment is the only moment you have to choose what you will do with it. So, I chose to celebrate

a rare opportunity to share in the fun of baking and breaking bread together! Both of us are always so busy with “our own work” and “our own interests” that we often are in “our own worlds.” Time and life go by so fast without even pausing to gift and be gifted a moment to celebrate and treasure.

So, watch for those simple moments of opportunity when someone you love and care for invites you into their world. That opportunity may never come again. So, grab it. Be grateful for the chance to experience truly what is most important in life.

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# *From the Heart. . .*

## *. . . Life Skills for Today*

*By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC*



### ***How do you like to Celebrate?***

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Dec 16, 2011)

When you hear some good news about something you've waited forever for, how do you celebrate your *Hoorays!*? Getting out that vintage bottle of champagne or chardonnay is always a pleasant tradition. Yet, I hope drinking and getting drunk isn't your first priority for celebrating. If so, maybe it's time to broaden your creative horizons on how to celebrate good news.

Here's your opportunity to think about how you would like to have a fun and *wholesome* good time with good news. When it comes to celebrating, most of the time, we go out to dinner, to a movie, or just put up our feet and do absolutely nothing for at least part of the day. These are fine simple ways to say to yourself, "Congratulations." Yet, celebrating is much more than just saying, "Wow, I'm so glad that job is over, and I don't have to think about it for another six months."

Celebrating involves some creative thinking in order to get out of our routine rejoicing rut we've been accustomed to for so many years. Are you ready to have fun with some planning? If so, check your "this is just more work" attitude at the door and say hello to your long dormant creativity and confidence-building for really celebrating! As Zig Ziglar, notable motivational speaker, quips,

“Confidence is going after Moby Dick in a rowboat and taking the tartar sauce with you.” Creativity comes alive with that kind of confidence! Are you ready? Let's get started.

Throughout each month this year, certain life skill topics have been covered—*Relationships/Core Values, Time Management, Career/Money Management, Recordkeeping, Home/Vehicle/Possessions, Housekeeping, Wellness, Meals, Childcare, Recreation/Entertainment, Reflection*—and this month, *Celebration*.

As you followed along this year, you have focused on your core value, how you use your time, your career choice, how you spend your money, keep your records, take care of your possessions, clean your house, reach for higher wellness, more enjoyable, nutritious meals, nurture your children, choose wholesome entertainment and outdoor recreation. As you reflected on these life skills, you have come away with a greater awareness, understanding, and commitment to the life you want to seek, reach, and achieve.

This month it's time to celebrate your personal wins in those life skill areas. So, choose which areas you and your family would like to celebrate throughout the December holidays and beyond. But remember, don't fill this month so full you lose the simple pleasures of quiet moments by yourself and with your own family.

Here are a few sample ideas from three life skill areas to consider any time:



## ***Time Management***

**Goal accomplished**—Mom and Dad were able to cut down ten extra hours of work per week away from home in order to have the family together more often.

**Celebration**—Children, Jason and Mary, decide to treat parents to a night out with “the kids”, all expenses paid “by the kids” (e.g. dinner and a show; dinner and miniature golf; a day at Fiesta Texas Entertainment Park or some other theme park).

## ***Career/Money Management***

**Goal accomplished**—As a sideline, passion, and possible future career, Dad finally finished writing and publishing his first fictional short story.

**Celebration**—Mom and the kids arrange a surprise writer's party for Dad. House decorated accordingly; even dressed up as the characters in his story. Being wildly creative to tell Dad how great he is.

As you confidently create simple and elaborate celebrations for you and your family, remember to celebrate each moment, the gift of this day, and the breath you breathe. You will then begin to experience the simple joys and treasure of relationships you may have taken for granted. But no longer!

Resources:

*Celebrations That Touch the Heart: Creative Ideas to Make Your Holidays and Special Events Meaningful* by Brenda Poinsett. WaterBrook Press (October 16, 2001)

*Roses: Beautiful Ideas for Home and Celebration* by Antonia Swinson. Ryland Peters & Small (January 15, 2006)

*Sweet Smarts for Sweethearts: Savvy Advice & Fun Ideas for Celebrating Love* Honor Books (December 2004)

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# *From the Heart...*

## *... Life Skills for Today*

*By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC*



## ***Celebrate Your Family Legacy, part 1***

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Dec 23, 2011)

As you gather all your photos together and childhood treasures to scrapbook and box them for lasting memories, Kimberly Powell has other ways to celebrate your family's heritage ([http://genealogy.about.com/cs/holidays/a/family\\_history.htm](http://genealogy.about.com/cs/holidays/a/family_history.htm)). Beside the simple and high tech ways I mentioned in earlier articles, here are Powell's additional creative suggestions. First, get started tracing your family tree; then start your own family cookbook; record family stories; uncover your family health history; take a trip back in time by visiting sites of importance to your family (e.g. your old family homestead, the country from which your ancestors migrated, the hillside where you played as a child, or the cemetery where great-grandpa is buried. If none match, then consider a trip to an historical museum, battlefield, or re-enactment event that relates to the history of your family.); craft a heritage gift (e.g. from picture frame Christmas ornaments to heritage quilts); and create an annual family picture calendar using your computer.

Your family heritage is wonderful to celebrate. Yet, contributing to the lives of others goes a long way toward preserving your legacy for your community and across our nation. There are many ways to contribute. There are also many life arenas you can impact throughout your life and legacy.

As you celebrate the holidays and the gift of giving, consider how you can make all the difference in everyone's lives. There are approximately eleven life arenas to share your legacy. The first six are:

**I. BASIC CORE VALUES & PRINCIPLES:** Organizations that support your core values and life principles.

**II. HOME/FAMILY/VALUES:** Organizations that encourage and support the family, home, and core human values.

**III. RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS/ CHURCH/MISSIONS:** Organizations that support your faith and desire for outreach to humanity.

**IV. HISTORY/WESTERN CULTURE:** Organizations that support your values and principles in global human affairs and lessons of history.

**V. PUBLIC POLICY/DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS:** Organizations supporting human justice and compassion in legislation, domestic policy, and international relations.

**VI. SCIENCE/MEDICINE:** Organizations that seek truth in our universe and life on earth; observe and understand the natural world from a scientific and spiritual perspective. Be cautious about certain perspectives that may have extreme views and inappropriately discount the faith dimensions, credible scientific discoveries, and the principles of macro- and micro- adaptation.

Plan your giving in each arena into your core values, life goals, career, budget, and friendships. Benevolence and giving are genuine expressions of compassion and love to humanity. Whether you contribute time, money, materials, or message, there are individuals in your neighborhood and around the world that need your help. The heartfelt rewards of giving are far beyond the gift itself.

Experience the joy and satisfaction of helping humanity in your own community and across the oceans. You may be surprised at how many ways you do give already. Feel free to email me and request the related handout to list the ways you are

currently giving and want to give in the future whether to individuals, organizations, institutions, ministries, and churches. It is important to investigate each work for its integrity and stability before supporting that person or organization.

Remember, there are many creative ways to give and show benevolence (e.g. purchase of materials to publications, giving goods and materials, tax and estate planning, money gifts, time and effort). Be creative in every life arena. The next article for December will cover the other five life arenas for benevolence and giving. In the meantime, have a very creative, appreciative, and abundant Christmas and New Year!

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## ***Celebrate Your Family Legacy-part 2***

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Dec 30, 2011)

In the past 30 years, the family, the basic unit of all societies, have been adapting itself to new challenges and opportunities. Families are also changing its structure and types of activities to help cope with new realities and enhance the quality of their lives.

The baby boomer generation (born 1944+/-1964) is one of the largest peoples groups of the older age population. While this generation continues to age, Generation X (born 1965+/-1982) will share caregiving responsibilities with the largest generational population yet, Generation Y—or Millennials. This Gen Y offspring is 70 million strong, born between 1977+/-1995. Accelerating social and economic change is posing new challenges and opportunities for this largest and newest adult generation—preparing the youth for productive life roles.

Millennials are also increasingly diverse. One in five have at least one immigrant parent; one in ten at least one non-citizen parent. According to CH Hartill, PhD, Assistant Dean, Butler University, *Understanding Millennials*, this generation has a variety of advantages—older parents, smaller families, therefore more resources & parental time, more firstborns (roughly 40%) and singletons (approximately 10%), more parental education—one in four Millennials

have at least one parent with a four-year degree or higher, and, believe it or not, reduced divorce rates.

Along with the baby boomers and Gen X reaching older ages, Gen Y is a new feature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These generations are connected in more than just size and era. The prospects of these generations will significantly depend on the strength, adaptability and foresight of their families and how they contribute to their own care, the community, and our nation.

In the last article, you were encouraged to plan your celebration of giving in eleven life arenas that support your core values, life goals, career, budget, and friendships. Whether you contribute time, money, materials, or message, there are individuals in your neighborhood and around the world that need your help. The heart-felt rewards of giving are far beyond the gift itself.

The first six were BASIC CORE VALUES & PRINCIPLES, HOME/FAMILY/VALUES, RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS/ CHURCH/MISSIONS, HISTORY/WESTERN CULTURE, PUBLIC POLICY/DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, and SCIENCE/MEDICINE. Here are the other five:

**VII. BUSINESS AND LEGAL ISSUES:** Organizations that support and train business leaders and legal advisors to advance integrity, honesty, and excellence in the work place and our nation's legal system.

**VIII. EDUCATION/CHILD DEVELOPMENT:** Organizations that train young children, teens, and adults to be mature, informed, effective leaders in every field of life.

**IX. MEDIA/ENTERTAINMENT/CULTURAL DISCERNMENT:** Organizations that support your core values in entertainment, news, cultural trends, and influence the media to improve the quality of programming.

**X. SOCIAL MINISTRIES:** Organizations whose mission is to provide an alternative to state-run welfare programs with effective, compassionate ministries to the underserved, needy and unfortunate.

**XI. IMPLEMENTATION:** Organizations that coordinate and mobilize leaders across society to improve their communities and the world.

Remember, as with the first six life arenas, there are many creative ways to give and show benevolence (e.g. purchase of materials to publications, giving goods and materials, tax and estate planning, money gifts, time and effort). Celebrate the love and life that surround you. Help this young and growing adult generation embrace the values and compassion for humanity, beginning with your own family. Open your heart and eyes to all the possibilities for your family, community, nation. May you then experience an exceptionally creative, appreciative, and abundant New Year! See you in 2012!

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