

From the Heart...

... Life Skills for Today

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Relationships—Sharing the Same Dreams & World

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, January 7, 2011)

Happy 2011 New Year to all my readers! Are you ready for some new adventures in your lives, opportunities to have some dreams come true, and touch your community and our world in the midst? If so, let's get started with this month's lifeskill focus, *Relationships/Core Values*. If you are a new reader, I welcome you to the journey this year through twelve practical daily lifeskills (listed on my website, www.harvestenterprises-sra.com). The adventure has just begun.

How are your relationships so far at home, work, and around the world? Do you know the way you treat each other at home and on the job can directly impact your neighbors, community, and those across the globe? You may ask, "How can that be?" Well, I want to share with you something that was recently sent to me that says it all.

We have an extraordinarily gifted performer right in our hill country community. You may already know of him. Donald Braswell (www.donaldbraswell.com) has a miracle story and a one-of-a-kind voice to share with the world. He has performed in Texas, around our nation, and the world. Most recently he performed with Tim Janis at Carnegie Hall 2010 Christmas Concert. He has been interviewed by Texas Public Radio and many other notable venues. His voice captures the heart and soul of what it means

to care for the human spirit. Donald has an enduring passion to also touch the lives of those who need hope and opportunities to make their own dreams come true.

Donald recently received a request to use one of his songs for a video clip by a 17 year old Iranian student. Donald gave his permission, and then shared his heart with his fans across the nation and world about his song used in the video. With his permission, here are Donald's own words:

"A young man, 17 years old, who lives in Iran, named Alireza Zamani, put a montage video together with a song I wrote called "We Are the Same You and I" as a backdrop. He had contacted my Fan Club President to ask permission to do this. At first when I heard he wanted to do this I said no because I was extremely nervous that he might make some religious statement that pertained only to his culture and region or some religious agenda using my song as a propaganda tool. When I wrote this song my hope was that it could be a message of warning to all that if we don't come together in this world that the slow destruction of our humanity will continue until the world that our children inherit will be uninhabitable both socially and environmentally. I'm not an environmentalist, am not educated enough on the topic to be one and I can't say I'm a liberal or conservative. Not a party person either. I'm a father and as a father I think and worry of this every day.

I realize that it is easy and I am guilty myself, to assume that cultures different than our own could possibly have only our destruction in mind. It is easy to make this argument in light of all that is happening when we see predominantly a one sided picture of "those other people" which could be anyone. I have no doubt that there are radical groups bent on religious hate, cultural hate and racial hate, all over the globe,

including right here, who would see not just our end but the end of many who are or seem to be 'different'.

Alireza is a 17 year old in the Middle East from a country like many in that area that we all as a nation, assume, that they are all the same with the same goal in mind which is to see us disappear from the planet. Alireza is proof that anywhere any of us would like to in whole or in part, assume that all are against us or someone else. From this video, sometimes harsh, one only needs to know that this is a dreadful and deadly mistake for any of us to assume. Alireza believes that all in the world need to find peace with each other and that all together we can achieve that goal for generations to come. But like his vision, it can only work if we all realize we are not really that different. This is a 17 year old in Iran. He is not one, I guarantee you, he is among many who are wanting to let us know and others that we can't have a narrow minded view about anyone from any culture in this world. There are many millions if not billions who are mothers and fathers and children and families and singles who all share the same dream and vision for every one of us everywhere.

That dream is that we could all be a species that is united for each other and for the precious world we live in that we are all responsible for.

Please watch the video. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-JK7LyUIY>

Thank You, Donald"

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Relationships—What does it take to go the extra mile?

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When you think about your relationships at home and work, what seems to be the most rewarding part of knowing those in your life? What seems to be most difficult part of certain relationships? Write down your thoughts right now. How many times have you gone the extra mile or more with some people? Are you getting the point where you are just about to give up on them or maybe yourself? Tom Brokaw, former news anchor and managing editor of "NBC Nightly News," offered some sage advice on relationships to the Dartmouth College commencement speech, June 2005. *"In pursuit of passions, always be young. In your relationship with others, always be a grown-up. Set a standard and stay faithful to it."*

Let's then venture into what we all need when it comes to relationships and going the extra mile. I believe there are three basic human needs in relationships. These three needs are essential when reaching for the highest core values in all relationships. When getting back to these basics and experiencing them in your own life, you can actually go the extra mile for someone else and even enjoy the ride.

- **TO BE ACCEPTED**
- **TO BE SECURE**

- **TO BE SIGNIFICANT**

With these a natural part of who you are, you will more readily encourage them in others. People will be attracted to your secret to feeling accepted, secure, and significant in your life. You will have the opportunity to share your story, your journey to get there.

These basic needs have everything to do with how we see ourselves, others, even God. The needs also drive how we treat each other. To accept oneself is the beginning, just as you are. If you believe God accepts you as you are, then why not yourself? This can be a huge hurdle for some to climb and may need some extra help to get there. So often in life, relationships are broken along with one's self-image and capacity for forgiveness and healing of the heart. No matter what the other person decides, you do have a choice to experience acceptance of yourself right now.

Give yourself time to reflect on this. Get help if you feel you need it. You will then begin to encounter opportunities to be more secure in yourself, and start to discover ways to feel significant in who you are and where you are heading, both personally and professionally in all relationships. Amazing things happen with those around you when they start to see you live a life of acceptance, safety, and significance demonstrated from the inside out each day. In the meantime, here are some insightful and a few witty quotes to consider. I offer my own here . . . ***"Life is sometimes like a stretched out Slinky. This classic toy reminds us that in life we all have ups and downs. We will also sometimes feel like we are going around in circles. But be of good cheer, look a little closer...you are still moving forward!"*** The next article will focus on core values and where they come from and where they take you.

“What is hardest of all? That which seems most simple: to see with your eyes what is before your eyes” Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

"The universal aptitude for ineptitude makes any human accomplishment an incredible miracle." Col. John P. Stapp, Stapp's Ironical Paradox

"The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated, the desire to be important." Andrew Carnegie

“As man draws nearer to the stars, why should he not also draw nearer to his neighbor?” Lyndon B. Johnson

**“It never rains on your neighbors without you getting your feet wet.”
Chinese Proverb**

“Nothing makes you more tolerant of a neighbor’s noisy party than being there.” Franklin P Jones

“Regard your neighbor’s gain as your own gain, and your neighbor’s loss as your own loss.” Tai Shang Kan Ying P’len

“A good marriage is one which allows for change and growth in the individuals and in the way they express their love.” Pearl Buck

"Why is it that people always need love and understanding the most at a time when they probably deserve it the least?" Lou Holtz

"What makes a woman beautiful? For beautiful eyes, look for the good in others; for beautiful lips, speak only words of kindness; for a slim figure, share your food with the hungry; for beautiful hair, let a child run their hands through it;

and for poise, walk with the knowledge that you never walk alone." Audrey Hepburn

"Sometimes our light goes out but is blown again into flames by an encounter with another human being. Each of us owes the deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this inner light." Albert Schweitzer

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From the Heart...

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By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Relationships—Getting to the Core

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From conception to our final days, we are all influenced by the many relationships we experience in life. Do you sometimes wonder where your values come from and where they take you?

Most prominent influences are Family, Faith, and Friendships. Also, consider what key conditions and events in your life have impacted the decisions you have made. Write down your own response to how each area has shaped your values in life. Along with Family, Faith, and Friendships, other areas include Career/Co-workers, Culture/Society/Global, Genetic Predisposition, Media (including Internet), Neighborhood/Community, Self-determination/Choices, and even those you consider your enemies.

Are you ready to take the first step in building solid core values that are at the heart of all relationships, and everything you do each day? For most of us, we don't spend much time thinking about what we believe and why we do what we do. We typically live each day on autopilot. Even when we try to set goals for next month, next year, or in five years, we get stuck. We get stuck because we haven't connected our "to do" list in life (that often times haunt us) with what really motivates and drives the choices we make.

Yet, when we do make the connection, our dreams and goals become a natural flow of who we are and where we are going. We begin to know we are in the right place at the right time throughout the journey. Yes, there are moments when it won't feel like it. However, it really doesn't affect our clarity of who we are. Again, as the last article mentioned, we hold close those three basic human needs and freely share them with others . . . **TO BE ACCEPTED, TO BE SECURE, TO BE SIGNIFICANT.**

We are willing to stay the course into the unknown and be flexible with the ups and downs of life that come our way. Remember, my "slinky" axiom? ***"Life is sometimes like a stretched out Slinky. This classic toy reminds us that in life we all have ups and downs. We will also sometimes feel like we are going around in circles. But be of good cheer, look a little closer...you are still moving forward!"***

Are you now ready to shift out of autopilot into conscious awareness and action? If so, it's time to claim your top ten core values for your life and wrap all your relationships around them. Write your top ten values down, speak them to your spouse or close trusted friend. Ask for feedback.

These ten core values represent those motivating characteristics you embrace when living your life with integrity and on purpose. These core values will impact your overall life balance as well as those lifeskills experienced every day—choice of friends, the way you use your time, career option, how you handle your money, keep records, buy and take care of your possessions, handle housekeeping routines, wellness, meals, childcare, how you play, reflect and celebrate your life each day.

During the coming week, place your core values you have written down on your refrigerator, in your car, on your desk, in your purse or wallet . . . wherever you will see

them most often. Reflect on each one and see what thoughts surface about your relationships that demonstrate any one or more of your core values.

In the next article, four specific areas will be covered that are driven by your core values and relationships. Here are some hints that will help you take the first steps:

1. **Vision** – What larger, over-arching image do you have of yourself functioning at your best and living life at its fullest?
2. **Areas of Focus** – In what five of the twelve lifeskill dimensions are there the greatest readiness for change? (12 practical lifeskill dimensions— Relationships/Core Values, Time Mgt, Career/Money Mgt, Recordkeeping, Possessions, Housekeeping, Wellness, Meals, Childcare, Recreation/Entertainment, Reflection, Celebration).
3. **Lowest Satisfaction Lifeskill** – Of the five you have the greatest readiness for change, which one has your lowest level of life satisfaction?
4. **Actions/Sources of Support** - Who can go on this journey with you, to help you take action?

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Relationships—who and what are driving you?

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“Women upset everything. When you let them into your life, you find that the woman is driving at one thing and you're driving at another.” George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion offers a one-liner for which most men find true and unsettling. Yet, isn't it true for the opposite gender as well, for us women? Where do we begin to cross the gender divide and find common ground for our lives, relationships, and core values?

There are three specific areas for both men and women that drive our core values and relationships. The first is ***Vision***. In the previous article I gave you some hints in the form of questions. ***“What larger, over-arching image do you have of yourself functioning at your best and living life at its fullest?”*** Have you had a chance to consider this question? Say your response to yourself right now. Then write it down to give some time to looking at your life as it is happening each day. How does your image functioning at your best and living life at its fullest match? See any gaps? If you do, pick one major gap to fill and give yourself a timeline for filling that gap.

Areas of Focus is your next driver in all relationships and choice of core values. ***In what five of the twelve lifeskill dimensions we cover throughout the year do you have the greatest readiness for change?*** (12 practical lifeskill dimensions—Relationships/Core Values, Time Mgt, Career/Money Mgt, Recordkeeping,

Possessions, Housekeeping, Wellness, Meals, Childcare, Recreation/Entertainment, Reflection, Celebration). Write down those five lifeskill dimensions in order of priority. “Lifestyle prescriptions” from family, financial advisors, and healthcare providers can also factor into the prioritizing process. With each of the five you choose, follow along with these steps (write them down for referrals in the months ahead):

A. **Desires:** What do you want? In your own words, what are your stated desires for this area of focus? This is good to state in both an immediate goal and in a longer-term, more motivational goal.

B. **Current State:** Where are you at? Current status of the area of focus.

C. **Destination:** Where do you want to get to? What will that look like, stated specifically and as measurably as possible.

D. **Committed Course:** What are you making a commitment to do? The action steps involved, stated specifically—short-term, then long-term.

E. **Challenges:** What are you up against? What challenges or obstacles are in the way? What blocks your path?

F. **Strategies to Meet the Challenges:** What creative ways can you think of at this time to overcome the challenges or hurdles blocking you presently? Consider strategies of how to adjust and flex, to bend without breaking from the commitment. For example: when under a work deadline I will make my exercise session briefer, but not skip it.

Which one has the lowest life satisfaction score for you? Are you ready to change that score within the next 30 days? Take one action this week to begin that change. Ask your spouse or close friend to help you stay accountable to your commitment.

At the end of 30 days, look at where you are and how you feel about that lifeskill at that moment, compared with 30 days ago. At six months do the same. If you are experiencing sustained change in that lifeskill, during the next six months choose the next lowest satisfaction lifeskill you want to work on. Follow up on each of the five lifeskills in the same manner. At the end of each six month to one year, look at how these changes have impacted your core values and relationships. I bet you will experience some significant discoveries about yourself, and certain relationships that do and do not support your core values. You may find yourself spending more time with people who do and less with those who don't. You may also begin to see your everyday life as more fulfilling, cohesive, directional, and peaceful.

The changes you are making with each lifeskill, with the help of your spouse or friend, demonstrates the essential third area, **Actions & Sources of Support**, you are committed to travel not just in the year ahead but throughout your life. **Who do you want to go on this journey with you, to help you take action and stay motivated along the way?** Next to each of the five prioritized lifeskill, specifically state who and what are your sources of support, encouragement, and accountability as you follow your life plan into new territory?

When you choose that friend to journey with you, remember to show gratitude to the one you have entrusted to help you stay the course to the life you always have

wanted and didn't know how to get there. Melodie Beattie, one of American's notable authors on self-help and co-dependency books, has her own commendable perspective on gratitude. ***"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow."*** She definitely has touched each lifeskill with her perspective. What an awesome glimpse into the possible for each of us! See you next month when "Time Management" has center stage for making our everyday lives more manageable and friendly.

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