

From the Heart. . .

...Life Skills for Today's Family

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, CLC



Housekeeping . . . Mañana is good enough for me!

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There is an old African proverb that offers a momentary mañana from housekeeping for us all when it comes to dealing with the dirt. "Indecision is like a stepchild: if he does not wash his hands, he is called dirty, if he does, he is wasting water."

Putting aside any negatives on behalf of all stepchildren, I find myself making up all kinds of excuses to wait until tomorrow to pick up the clothes, do the ironing, scrub the toilets, and dust away the cobwebs. I bet we each have our own special set of avoidance tactics. So, I offer my own personal litany, and I don't mean prayers here. Although it just might be prudent to consider them prayerfully!

The first one my husband hears often is "I promise I'll get to it tomorrow. I'm just too busy right now." Are there times when you consider whatever you are doing more important than any kind of housecleaning? I know I do. That's another phrase my husband hears on more than a few occasions . . . "I am in the middle of this very important project right now and can't lose my train of thought." And that project happens to be something that will take me at least several days, maybe a week or two!

Then there are occasions when I personally just don't care how much dust, dirt, grime, and crud collects on the baseboards and shower rims. So where is the tenet that "cleanliness is next to godliness" in that scenario? This is when I make clear to myself and my sweet hubby that our house, no matter what state it is in, doesn't have that kind of power. What a twist of that tenet for "mañana is good enough for me!"

But don't be concerned about my state of cleanliness. There are recurring moments when I finally say "Enough of the grime and crud staring at me." There is a Cleanie side to my conscience. I actually changed my bed sheets this week. And no . . . I won't tell you when I changed them last. And I went on a cleaning binge washing clothes, vacuuming, dusting early this week.

One major motivator that is actually quite positive and encouraging is when my husband decides it is time for his part of our abode to be cleaned up, de-cluttered, and organized. Nothing like seeing your hubby so domestic! I even get giddy with my domestic dream man while he is dusting the drapes! I know, it seems a little odd. But vive la différence! I guess I am just so lucky to have a man who will be domestic, that it gets me motivated to do my part . . . of the housecleaning, etc.!

In my senior years, I have found a nice balance between making my home clean enough for healthy and dirty enough for happy. Now that I have shared enough of my own "mañana is good enough for me" confessions, think about what ones you have held firm for these many years. How do your "mañanas" stack up with your Cleanie side? My hope is you also have found a friendly

balance between the two that keeps your home “Clean enough for Healthy, and Dirty enough for Happy.”

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Housekeeping Humor

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Did you ever think you could have a belly laugh while cleaning house?

Well, you can. It's all in the attitude and what you "whistle while you work." What kind of music would you choose to listen to while lathering up the scrubbing bucket?

For me, bring on the 50s and early 60s sounds. How about the Beach Boys "SurfinUSA" or Buddy Holly's "That'll Be The Day" for sure! During these hot summer days when housecleaning is the last thing I want to do, Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues" offer me sympathy. Then when I'm on a Cleanie binge, Harry Belafonte's "Jump In The Line" gets me shaking and dancing calypso style!

And who can resist Little Eva's "Locomotion" bringing you out of a foul mood. Or how about Barry Mann's "Who Put The Bomp (In the Bom...)!?" *"I'd like to thank the guy Who wrote the song, That made my baby, Fall in love with me, Who put the bomp In the bomp bah bomp bah bomp? Who put the ram In the rama lama ding dong? Who put the bop In the bop shoo bop shoo bop? Who put the dip In the dip da dip da dip? Who was that man? I'd like to shake his hand He made my baby Fall in love with me (yeah!!)." Are you dancing yet?*

If not, would a laugh or two get your lungs and legs moving? Well, here's a sample of what just might get you laughing as you lift that mop and pail.

Paradoxpro.com offers us 10 Rules Of Housecleaning . . . to take only with a good laugh.

1. Don't vacuum too often— it weakens the carpet fibers. Say this with a serious face, and shudder delicately whenever anyone mentions Carpet Fresh.

2. If disturbed, dust bunnies cannot evolve into dust rhinos. Rename the area under the couch "The Galapagos Islands," and claim an ecological exemption.

3. Layers of dirty film on windows and screens provide a helpful filter against harmful and aging rays from the sun. Call it an SPF factor of 5, and leave it alone.

4. Cobwebs artfully draped over lampshades reduce the glare from the bulb, thereby creating a romantic atmosphere. If your husband points out that the light fixtures need dusting, simply look affronted and exclaim, "What? And spoil the mood?"

5. In a pinch, you can always claim that the haphazard tower of unread magazines and newspapers next to your chair provides the valuable Feng Shui aspect of a tiger, thereby reducing your vulnerability. Roll your eyes when you say this.

6. Explain away the mound of pet hair brushed up against the doorways by claiming you are collecting it there to use for stuffing hand-sewn play animals for underprivileged children.

7. If unexpected company is coming, pile everything unsightly into one room and close the door. As you show your guests through your tidy home, rattle the door knob vigorously, fake a growl and say, "I'd love you to see our Den, but Fluffy hates to be disturbed, and the shots are SO expensive."

8. If dusting is REALLY out of control, simply place a showy urn on the coffee table and insist that "THIS is where Grandma wanted us to scatter her ashes."

9. Don't bother repainting. Simply scribble lightly over a dirty wall with an assortment of crayons, and try to muster a glint of tears as you say, "Junior did this the week before that unspeakable accident. I haven't had the heart to clean it."

10. Mix one-quarter cup pine-scented household cleaner with four cups of water in a spray bottle. Mist the air lightly. Leave dampened rags in conspicuous locations. Develop an exhausted look, throw yourself onto the couch, and sigh, "I clean and I clean, and I still don't get anywhere."

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Housekeeping...Kitchen Creativity

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, June 15, 2012)

After moving into your apartment or home, you crammed as much kitchen utensils, pots and pans, and all kinds of gadgets in the drawers, cabinets, and counter tops. Your sincere intention was to organize your kitchen in just the right way after you settle in. Fast forward three years. Any change from that day?

For many of us, absolutely nothing got moved or changed since the day you moved in. You still have to rummage through the drawers trying to find that spatula or large wood spoon among the pile of items cluttered together. You have even added several more items to the drawer to the point you can hardly close the drawer anymore. Eventually, every drawer, cabinet, and counter tops is so cluttered, dining out has been the routine.

This part of your house, if not also other rooms, has lost its appeal for most any meal. Grab that cup of coffee and muffin and off you go, leaving the clutter behind. Want to change that scenario? Want to give some "kitchen creativity" a try to make your kitchen a welcoming part of your home for not just fixing meals, but also conversation and laughter with family and friends?

If you do, here are a few very handy tips for getting started. And by all means, don't feel you have to do a full-blown remodel to reclaim this part of your

home. First, start with just opening one drawer you consider the most cluttered. Pull everything out of the drawer and lay it all out on the counter or table. Pick those items you use at least once per week. Put those items back in the drawer. Now, separate out those items you have not used for the past year or two. Ask yourself, “Do I really need them?” If the answer is no, then put in a box to sell or take to the local donation center.

Now, here is the tough spot. Look at what is in front of you that is left over. You may be thinking, “Maybe I need to save these because I may need them sometime.” Or you may see one or more items as a treasure passed down from your Grand Mama. Yet, have you ever used it? This is a hard one to decide if you have any kind of emotional connection with that item. You can always start a mini-family museum in your china cabinet. Or pass it down to your adult children as a treasured memento for them to store. But if you can muster up the courage to say, “I can let this go,” immediately put it in the “to sell” or “donation” box.

Move on to the next drawer to go through the same process until all your drawers have been inventoried. Now, go back to each drawer you just cleaned out, and consider what kind of containers you will need to keep everything organized in those drawers. Measure your shortest and longest items.

Your next step is to go to your nearby store to purchase those organizing containers to bring home. Make sure you have your “to sell” and “donation” boxes in the car with you. Your next errand is to drop off these boxes to that consignment store and donation center, in order to remove them from your home and possession. That way, you are much less likely to put them in the nearby

closet or garage for action later . . . and find them there next year when you are looking for something else. You are now ready to start in on your kitchen cabinets with the same exercise. After the cabinets and counter tops, time for your pantry. And be sure to utilize and efficiently organize the vertical space available. You can get all kinds of ideas by going online to Containerstore.com or Spacesavers.com, just to name a few.

Keep in mind, that much of “kitchen creativity” has to do with who lives with you, how you share getting things done, and your own personal mealtime menu. Whatever foodstuffs you have in your cabinets, counter tops, and pantry reflect more than anything how you eat and share a meal. I encourage you to consider as you take inventory, what you want to include in your pantry to encourage healthy eating and enjoyable mealtimes together.

The next article will focus on organizing *Your Pantry With A Purpose*. What kinds of foodstuffs you buy and where do you get them? And did you know, for those who live in our Texas Hill Country, we now have a farmers market (<http://herffmarket.org/Home.html>). Check it out this Saturday.

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Housekeeping...Pantry with a Purpose

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, June 22, 2012)

Whether you have an official pantry you can walk into or have any number of your kitchen cabinets filled with bags, boxes, and bundles of foodstuffs, your pantry reflects your dining routines and preferences. What do you see when you cruise through your pantry?

In just about every home, the pantry stores a variety of the basics, such as meats, vegetables, breads, and cereals. In addition, you will probably find an assortment of fruits, oils, flour, sugar, spices, teas and other beverages. Yet, how do you know if what you have on the shelf helps you organize *Your Pantry With A Purpose*. And what is your purpose?

My hope is that you are ready to make sure just about everything in your pantry supports healthy, whole foods, and your taste buds too. The first thing to ask yourself and your doctor or nutritionist is "What daily calories and gram weight of fats, sugar, and salts do I reach for?" Once you get your answer, it's time to check your pantry and see how your foodstuffs match up or don't.

Any whole foods on the shelf? For some, you may not know what "whole foods" means. Basically, these foods are nutrient dense . . . meaning high in all the whole needed vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and fiber necessary for

healthy eating. The trick to not being tricked by the marketing hype out there. Check the labels before you buy. You just may find many of the so-called whole grain foods, for example, only contain 10% actual stone-ground whole grain. The rest is basically white flour, sugar, and caramel color to make you think it's the real deal. You can also tell by the weight. For example, if any breads almost float, whole grains are definitely NOT a main ingredient. So, always check the labels for what are the first two or three top ingredients. That tells you what the product mostly contains. If unbleached flour, sugar in any form, and saturated fats (particularly trans fats) are among the first three ingredients, it's time to find an alternative.

Once you have started to stock your pantry with whole food basics, you are on the way to having just about all you need to create any recipe supporting healthy eating. Just one more suggestion before you starting buying. Start opening up some whole foods cookbook to get acquainted with using those nutrient dense products . . . fresh/frozen veggies, fresh/frozen fruits, whole grain rice, oats, wheat, millet, quinoa, and healthy fats in the right quantity.

And if you want to have a one-page inventory of *What's in your Pantry?*, go to my website payment center, www.celebratingyourjourney.com. For just one dollars you can have a simple inventory to take with you to the store as you check off what you need to fill your pantry. Be sure to pace yourself with each change and have some fun with recipes that will encourage you to enjoy all the great herbs and spices available to enhance your menu.

And first thing this coming Saturday, be sure to buy some great produce at our local Herff Farmers Market (<http://herffmarket.org/Home.html>).

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Housekeeping...Pantry with a Purpose, part 2

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, June 29, 2012)

While visiting the Cibolo Nature Center's Farmers Market in Boerne this last Saturday, I came across something they had on the tables. It was a Weekly Menu Planner and Shopping List. What a great idea to have so you can plan for the week what you will need.

The list looks something like this example. You can pick up a copy when you go to the market this Saturday.

Weekly Menu Planner and Shopping List

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	
Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
Saturday	Farmers Market Items:	Grocery:	Other:
Notes			

This kind of list will make it much easier to plan your menu for the week and have all the ingredients you need without going back out to the store. With the previous article, hopefully you have already completed your inventory of your drawers, cabinets, counter tops, and designated pantry. You have also reorganized everything for easy access as discussed in part 1. At this point you are ready to create your *Pantry with a Purpose* for healthy and appetizing meals.

When you cruised through your pantry of foodstuffs, what did you find? Did you zero in on the bread you have bought for those many years? If so, how would it rate on a whole foods/healthy scale? If it's low on your scale, then it's time to write down on your Weekly Menu Planner and Shopping List "whole grain bread." Have you routinely used canned fruit and vegetables over the years and want to start eating more fresh fruits? Add that to your list for Saturday shopping at the Farmers' Market, and other places if they don't have what you need for the week.

Do you see how it works to create your *Pantry with a Purpose*? Simple and practical. Just take inventory of your food staples, write down what you need, then off you go to the market. These are a few examples of the vendors you will see at the Farmers Market:

Vendor Name	Items
Bear Moon Bakery	Fresh Brewed coffee, pastries, specialty breads
Bonner Farms	Heritage Pork, Heritage Lamb
Buddy Bonz	Pet Treats
Cathy's Sweets	Handmade Candy
Cibolo Nature Center Gift Shop	Variety of items of interest
Have spade will travel	Plants: Edible/Ornamentals and hardy perennials
High Street Chocolates	Handmade Chocolate
KDM Produce	Fresh Produce and Jams
Melissa's Farms (Angel Crossing)	Fresh Whole Produce
My Fathers Farm	Locally grown produce using all organic practices
Natures Presence	Organic Gardening Supplies,
Peggy Clark	Fresh Eggs
Robert Jubela	Fresh Whole Produce

For all those who have a smart phone, create a shopping list right on your phone and have it with you as usual wherever you venture.

Remember, you will need to know how to cook these great whole foods to enjoy in each season of harvest. The Farmers Market will also occasionally have cooking demonstrations going on, with some live music in the mix. In addition, the farm will be an outdoor classroom teaching living skills we have nearly lost in little more than a generation, such as gardening, composting, beekeeping, rainwater harvesting, and more. So, get connected to find out what is available, alongside events and demonstrations coming throughout the summer. There will be more vendors coming on board as each season's foodstuffs become available.

Here is their official latest and greatest website link for the Cibolo Nature Center's *Farmers Market at the Cibolo*, with contact link and directions to the market—<http://cibolo.org/calendar/event/the-farmers-market-at-the-cibolo>. Be

sure to click the video, offering a glimpse into our very own Farmers Market.
Come out and support this wonderful addition to our community's offerings.

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