

From the Heart...

...Life Skills for Today's Family

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, CLC



Possessions . . . how much “stuff” is enough?

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, May 4, 2012)

When you open your dresser drawer to put away some recently laundered clothes, are you stuffing those t-shirts or socks in the drawer as tight as you can get them? Have you actually counted how many t-shirts or socks you have lately? How about all the pens, pencils, paper clips you have thrown in your desk drawer? And what about the collection of CDs you haven't listened to for more than a year? Then go through your closets, even the trunk of your car. What do you discover there?

After counting all the “stuff” that fills your drawers and cabinets to overflow, did you find that some long-lost treasure or just something you really don't need? I bet you did. So, how much “stuff” is enough?

This weekend choose one room in your home and take inventory by product type and its use. You may just find that out of the three dozen t-shirts you have jammed in the drawer, you have really only used about six or seven on a regular basis. Time to give them to someone who just might need them. But please don't give them the ones that have grimy yellow underarms! Those belong in the rag box or thrown out. And if one of them you deem precious and no one

will see the yellow yuck, think again the odor that can't be removed because the yuck is permanently absorbed into cotton. Cotton absorbs like nothing else.

Ok, enough of yellow yuck! After gaining the courage to get rid of the extra “stuff” you never touch for a year, now look at what's left. Any extras around? What purpose does the “stuff” have? For some you just may need six different kitchen spoons for a variety of purposes. Yet, for others, a couple spoons will do just fine. Only you can decide.

What will this exercise do for you? You will be amazed at what getting “uncluttered” will do for your daily life . . . when you are baking in the kitchen, hanging clothes in the closet, finding that lawn rake hanging on the rack within easy reach. All of a sudden you will experience a sense of order, energy, and a calm disposition. If you don't believe me, just give this exercise a try in your most cluttered part of your home and life. And I am not referring to rid of your spouse!

Give yourself a treat and get connected to the magic of Sandra Felton's Messies tips at <http://messies.com/>. You may not consider yourself a Messie, but you will learn some life-changing clues to help the Messie in your life. One thing is sure, whether a Messie or a Cleanie, we all get overwhelmed sometimes and find ourselves in a cluttered place in life. So, give Felton a chance to make all the difference in knowing when your “stuff” is enough and just right for you and your family.

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welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at seekreachachieve@gvtc.com. Visit her website at www.celebratingyourjourney.com.

From the Heart...

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By Sharon L. Benedict MS, CLC



Possessions . . . First Leap, First Step

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, May 11, 2012)

Do you know your possessions or “stuff” all around you identifies so much about your life. Your possessions are also a major contributor to not only the clutter you may have but also your motivation or lack of to control that clutter and the “stuff” you accumulate. This is true for both your home and workplace.

Did you check out Sandra Felton’s website I gave you last time? I hope you did. No matter, let’s cover some of the fine points of Felton’s years of experience and compassion for all us Messies and Cleanies in life. Felton offers organizing help and tips to eliminate clutter and junk at home and at your workplace...simplifying your life in ways you didn’t think possible.

First, are you feeling overwhelmed and seeking a way out of the mess you see in front of you? No worries, according to Felton. That is the way we all felt when we started. Felton simplifies her Messies Anonymous (M.A.) program into a few powerful steps. With reading this article and checking out her website, you have already made the first step. By all means start out easy, but start by doing something every day, step-by-step to the finish line! As you follow her steps you will notice that “little by little your life and your house will change.

STEP ONE: Make a strong take-off every day. A good take-off sets the tone of the day. When you:

- WAKE UP - set a time
- JUMP UP - don't lie in bed, there's a wonderful world waiting
- MAKE UP - the bed immediately, automatically
- EAT UP - something nutritious
- WASH UP - bathe body or wash face
- BRUSH UP - take care of your teeth
- DRESS UP - completely from head to toe including hair, shoes, and makeup of some kind on your face
- LOOK UP - sometime during the day (morning is great) turn your heart upward to God

Add any other steps you may need to your flight plan, like TAKE A WALK. They don't have to end with UP.

STEP TWO: Change habits one at a time. Start with The 30-Second Rule. "If it takes thirty seconds or less to do a job, do it immediately. This applies to putting up packages when you come in, putting the scissors (or whatever) back where you got them, hanging up the clothes you take off and other things like that." The second powerful habit: when you get something out, put it back, right away. "Remember to "STOW AS YOU GO." Felton believes your commitment to these two habits will immediately change the condition of your house. Give it a try.

STEP THREE: Attack the mess — bless the house! We don't attack the house. We attack the mess that is hiding the wonderful possibilities of our house. Felton offers two methods to use to get rid of the junk and organize your house— Mt. Vernon Method and Mt. Vesuvius Method.

Notice that with every step, you will run into your possessions in every closet, drawer, floor, and garage. When attacking the mess, it doesn't just involve cleaning up and storing, each step challenges you to look at your possessions. Do you really need them or are they just adding to the clutter of your home, workplace, and your life?

See you next time for more, including STEP FOUR & FIVE. And if you want to get a head start, visit Felton's website at <http://messies.com/>.

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From the Heart...

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Possessions . . . First Leap, First Step, part 2

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Your possessions play a major role in how you live your life. Your “stuff” also may create clutter that robs you of your motivation to care for them. Yet, clutter never seems to slow you down accumulating more. So, how do you manage your “stuff?”

In the previous article I covered the first three pointers for all us Messies and Cleanies at heart, offered by organizing guru, Sandra Felton. Felton gives organizing help and tips to eliminate clutter and junk at home and at your workplace...simplifying your life in ways you didn't think possible.

The FIRST STEP was “Make a strong take-off every day. A good take-off sets the tone of the day.” STEP TWO was “Change habits one at a time. Start with The 30-Second Rule. If it takes thirty seconds or less to do a job, do it immediately.” STEP THREE was “Attack the mess — bless the house! We don't attack the house. We attack the mess that is hiding the wonderful possibilities of our house.” Felton offered two methods to use to get rid of the junk and organize your house—Mt. Vernon Method and Mt. Vesuvius Method.

Mt. Vernon Method “is the backbone of the Messies Anonymous program. Get three Banker's Boxes™, about 12 X 18 inches. Label each box, GIVE

AWAY, THROW AWAY, STORE SOMEPLACE ELSE. Starting at the front door, go around the inside periphery of the room from drawer, to cupboard, to nook or cranny emptying the contents of things that don't belong in that area into one of these boxes. Organize neatly what does belong in that area and move on to the next area.

The Mt. Vesuvius Method is used “. . .if your house is a shambles, your marriage is in trouble because of it, you fear the health department or your landlord, your adult children are distraught about your place, or you face some similar emergency. Like Mt. Vesuvius, this is a quick and powerful method. It avoids the hang-up of decision making and clears the clutter quickly. What do I do with all of this stuff?” Keep reading. On to step four and five.

STEP FOUR: Get adequate support. "You alone can do it, but you can't do it alone." Choose from the following helps.

- A daily reminder from The Organizer Lady® to keep you moving forward. Strongly recommended. Sign up now. Use sign up box to the right and enter the email address where you would like to receive the daily coaching email.
- On the support group page, look for a local group in your area or join one of the many on-line support groups you see listed.
- Where appropriate, get on-site help from friends, family, or a professional organizer in your area.

STEP FIVE: “Make a smooth landing. Again we need a check-off list. After you EAT UP (you did have your meal planned ahead?), it's time to CLEAN UP.

this is a family thing, everybody sticks around until the kitchen is completely done. You may need to work into this to create new habits. Start slowly. Now STRAIGHTEN UP, have the family do what one children's show calls the ten minute tidy. Set the timer and all rush around tidying for ten minutes. This will work miracles.”

Be sure to check out Felton “Simple Six Week Program” at <http://messies.com/index.php/a-simple-six-week-program>. Her program helps you “ease into change” with at least ten suggestions each week. You circle only two you are not doing now and commit to do them sometime during the week. You can download a pdf copy of the program to put on your refrigerator or some other prominent place to help you stay on track. Amazing things will happen to your home and life as you clean the clutter and organize your treasured “stuff.”

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Possessions-Your Home . . . Is bigger better?

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As our community grows and we see more residential developments popping up everywhere, I bet many of us are out cruising around to check out the latest subdivision. Bet you are also signing up for tours in some of the more upscale, lavish models. And who doesn't love to go see our Hill Country "Parade of Homes."

It's always fun to dream big and want to envision yourself in that big castle on the hill. Yet, when you finally come down from that lofty air abode of affluence, what kind of reality do you face in your current abode. It may be a one or two bedroom apartment or your first home you could afford. As the years move on and your family grows, you begin to think about that "dream" house again with lots of space and gadgets you just know will make your life easier. That dream house may even have a abundance of walk in closets, a large enough utility room for ironing and an extra refrigerator or freezer.

You may have always wanted a separate crafts room or studio for those many arts/crafts projects you have spread over your dining room table for so many years that you haven't really have only used the table for dining a few times. And when you do have guests, you have to clear it all up and shove it in a

nearby closet that has barely enough room for your clothes and shoes. The dream list goes on.

What do you see as key questions to ask yourself when considering the purchase of your next abode? How do you see bigger as better? The first questions that most men always ask first is, "Can we afford it?" Since women still tend to be home more hours than men, women tend to see more details inside the house. Men tend to consider the structure and outside more often. When a couple is considering their options, you can definitely know the importance of talking out the details of each other's "wish list" before venturing out into the marketplace.

HUD has a very useful check list at http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/buying_a_home. You will notice at the top of the list is "How much home can you afford?" I recommend you give this checklist a try when you sit down to talk about what each of you dream about. HUD also has a home-buying (<http://www.hud.gov/buying/checklist.pdf>) and wish checklist (<http://www.hud.gov/buying/wishlist.pdf>) you can use. Once you have gone through these lists together, you will be on your way deciding whether bigger is better or what you already have is just fine. These helps will go a long way in helping you avoid strained conversations if not outright arguments about one of you wanting your "dream home" to be bigger and your partner wanting better but not so much bigger.

Home life will always be better when the two of you reach that perfect middle ground on the myriad of choices out there. And give yourselves a chance

to size up what you already have and how you could change things without moving at all. You may find you can be wonderfully content right where you are. No matter, enjoy the adventure making your house your home, filled with kindness, laughter, and love.

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