

From the Heart. . .

. . . Life Skills for Today

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Housekeeping—now who wants to volunteer?

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, June 4, 2010)

Does this always seem familiar when you call out to your family on the weekend, “Time to clean the house everyone!”—everyone except you seems to either conveniently disappear or have a pressing obligation they must take care of right then? Yet again, are you one of those who would rather go to the dentist than clean the house? Erma Bombeck has a classic quote, “Housework is a treadmill from futility to oblivion with stop offs at tedium and counter productivity.”

If this is your mantra, you definitely will want to stay tuned for this month’s lifeskill, *Housekeeping*. I will try my best to create a balance between the must do’s and dancing free of the drudgery. It really is all about one’s perspective, attitude, and the way the jobs get done.

The first step is settling in on the reality that we all have the perpetual ability to make a mess but may not have as much fun cleaning it up. This is true for your five year old or even yourself. We all have fun working on a crafts project, making a gourmet meal, or throwing off our shoes and settling into the easy chair with a glass of wine (adults only of course!) and a movie. We leave the shoes and empty glass where we left them to head off to bed after throwing our clothes on the nearby seat or floor area. Possibly, a few days pass before you even consider it might be time to pick up and

clean up. We all know life is a lot more fun when your body and soul chill for a while. I encourage you to keep this perspective handy (but please not as an excuse for continual avoidance).

Then let's look at "attitude." What is going on in your mind as you cruise through the house picking up a shoe here, a dirty shirt there, or begin to mop the kitchen floor? Are you trying to figure out a way to mend a relationship, go on a trip to Tahiti, solve the world's problems, or simply what you are going to fix for dinner? Are you one of those "determination with a list" people who find fun and fulfillment in checking off each job as they are done, charging like a sergeant at arms readying your troops for the bathroom battle of the bugs? If so, you just may be one of those "cleanies" that us "messies" either love or hate; but secretly wish we could accomplish as much as you do in one day that take us a week or more to almost finish. And I do mean "almost finish."

Was your mom or dad that sergeant at arms, showing how the job needs to be done? Whether you were raised by your very own sergeant or colonel of the cleanies, their cleaning skills imparted were filled with love and care for you. Even if you didn't see it that way when you were ten, maybe it's time to reflect on their love and care now that you are thirty (or a little younger or older too).

I have a homework housework assignment specifically directed to every person under 30 years old. Listen to this YouTube history and life lessons (*Erma Bombeck: The Mother of all Humorists*, <http://youtube.com/watch?v=2rD1wMpn8KY>) straight from Erma and her fans—real Mom tales of daily living and loving. Then, do what they ask, call your Mom! Tell her how much you appreciate her and all she has done for you in your life. Next article, you will find out a variety of ways to tackle your castle; and what it

really means to have a home *Clean Enough for Healthy, Dirty Enough for Happy*. For all those obsessive/compulsive personalities, be sure to check in to this one!

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

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Housekeeping your Castle—Camelot or Cluttered?

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, June 11, 2010)

Whether your castle is the size of a large closet or nestles on two hundred acres, housekeeping is a very democratic endeavor. No matter the size or location, every one of us must face the dirty laundry and dust on the table every so often. But for some of us, that doesn't necessarily mean we have to do anything about it. In fact, you may even be tempted to offer this excuse. . . "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...'"

Yet, when company is coming over, it's amazing how motivated we get to do the jobs we have ignored for months, even longer. It may not be a spring cleaning, but it sure will reduce the clutter a little bit. Here's one my fast pickup tricks for when you only have fifteen minutes before your guests arrive. Grab your laundry basket and run through each room and drop in the basket the dirty clothes, scattered shoes, newspapers, magazines, candy wrappers and throw the basket into the garage corner where you stack your paint tarp or old rags. No one will be the wiser! But remember...after everyone leaves don't forget to redeem the basket; or you will wonder where your favorite shirt disappeared to!

One other fast trick is to put all the dirty dishes in the dishwasher, and those you

don't have room for in the washing machine. Again, don't forget after your guests leave to empty the washing machine before you start a load of dirty laundry! If you do forget, you will hear a very unique clatter coming from the utility room that will spark your memory on the run!

I know, these tricks may seem a little tacky and you may get some odd looks with your so-called Grandma urn; but it's important not to take this housekeeping lifeskill too serious—just *Clean Enough For Healthy*, but *Dirty Enough For Happy*. I know a masterful woman who has spent her entire life helping us whistle while we work, maybe even a dance step or two. Over the years Sandra Felton (<http://www.messies.com>) has written many books and conducted hundreds of courses on organizing and cleaning your castle, particularly for us messies. *Can* you believe there is even a *Messies Anonymous* out there!? She has masterfully coined the words, *Cleanie* and *Messie* to describe those of us who are both perfectionists at heart but are very different when it comes to the way we deal of housekeeping and cleaning chores. Personality style can even impact where we are.

According to Felton, *Cleanies* have “. . . mental schedules they themselves are not aware of. Their minds are like computers going down their list of things to do. The power that activates the computer is in the eyes. Again and again they say, ‘When I see. . .’ or ‘If it looks dirty, I...’ Their goals are visual, and they become uncomfortable if something is out of place.

Cleanies are not afraid to use shortcuts because they are confident in their own cleaning ability and don't feel it necessary to prove anything by doing things the hard way. They tend to get up with a bang and get going with purpose. They frequently have

a time goal in mind and work fast to meet it. You might think they are uptight people. They don't seem to be. In fact, they often are gracious, warm, and creative. They can afford to be because they have enough time to do whatever they want to do!"

For *Messies*, positive qualities abound and are also wonderful human beings. "They are creative, intelligent, nice people." They are optimistic and keep on going even in the face of disappointment, fatigue, and frustration—looking for a better day. Then, why do they live in clutter and a mess? It's definitely NOT laziness, and they definitely don't want it that way, as *Cleanies* tend to believe.

As you consider which housekeeping style you may place yourself in, the next article will actually show you that there are any number of *Messie* styles out there—from Perfectionist, Rebellious, Relaxed, Sentimental, Safe, Idealistic *Messies* to Clean *Messies*. In addition, your own personality style directly impacts your housekeeping routine.

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By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Housekeeping—the Cleanie & Messie Faceoff

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According to Sandra Felton, Messies Anonymous Expert, Messies express a variety of styles—Perfectionist, Rebellious, Relaxed, Sentimental, Spartan, Clean, Safe, Old-Fashioned, and Idealistic. *Perfectionist Messies* have very high standards for individual jobs. Yet, they are indecisive about the approach to tasks. So, they decide not to decide. *Rebellious Messies* although they know what they need to do, they refuse to do it. Sometimes determined to be independent from the way “Mom” told them to do it way back when.

Relaxed Messies rationalize that the world outside is hostile and home is their place to relax. So things are let go. The home then actually becomes hostile with clutter...actually making others and sometimes themselves feel unwelcome in their home. *Sentimental Messies* consider every scrap brought home is precious and valuable. You never know when you will need it. So, the piles grow and every drawer has loads of undeveloped film of precious memories.

Spartan Messies cut out or lock up the things they need because it will just mean more to care for. They usually don’t get rid of things just exclude them from care. “Out of mind; out of sight!” *Clean Messies* believe as long as things are clean they can be left out...like clean clothes in a basket, not folded; dishes washed but left out on counter.

But they are clean! *Safe Messies* leave their bed unmade so it can air out better. The floors are not waxed because they might slip and fall. Dishes not dried by hand because air drying is more sanitary; so they stay out. One cannot be too careful.

Old-Fashioned Messies just love to do things the old-fashioned way...like scrubbing the floor on their hands and knees. Some are appropriate but not just for old-fashioned sake. They lose out on new technology or simple ways to ease the task.

Idealistic Messies have their heads in the clouds...great thoughts and ideas but results either don't appear or are disastrous. Tuned to loftier things, they seldom notice the relationship between their messy home and their fading dreams.

Depending on the housekeeping & personality styles, Messies tend to be absent minded, having difficulty remembering the simplest things. They may be easily distracted—flitting from one job to another—straightening this, clearing that. The phone rings, a child interrupts; and the task is left undone. This may be connected to a habit of disorganized thinking because clutter muddles the mind and creates a downward spiral, bordering on living from one minor or major crisis to another.

The irony of this is “. . . crisis-oriented living keeps you in a constant state of activity, which makes you feel alive and useful. Messies may also tend to visually tune-out the mess and clutter around them. Whereas, Cleanies have to see clean, orderly lines and must pick up that tiny piece of thread on the carpet no matter how tired they are. Messies may also process larger tasks somewhat slower. This does not mean any less intelligence than a Cleanie—just a different way of processing.

If I were going to choose one of the styles, I would first consider myself a “recovering” Messie bordering on being a Clean Messie. Yet, as the years have gone

by, I have a few days every few months I can definitely say I am a Cleanie, hooray!
Where do you see yourself? No matter where you are on the journey toward being a Cleanie, be nice to yourself. And if you deem yourself a definite Cleanie, be nice to us “recovering” Messies! We are trying hard to catch up with you without selling our souls to the soap suds!

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By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Housekeeping—Whistling Tips While You Work

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When it comes to housekeeping chores, Sandra Felton, Messies Anonymous master of housekeeping, asks us to remember, ***“Learning to keep house is like learning to dance. If there is no feeling for the music, there is only mechanical movement.”*** Even with housekeeping, being present in the moment makes each job a little easier and actually enjoyable. ***So, when the music is turned on and the mop is out, dance along, be in the moment!***

Your “smile & dance” attitude will go a long way in making your castle environment and your family relationships much friendlier. If your kids see you actually in a good mood as you “whistle” while you work, they too just might join in. You can always hope. But you can also hand them the broom and say, “Start dancing!” In their adult years, they just might fondly remember that housekeeping is not only necessary but can also bring a dance to your step. Again, attitude is everything when choosing to “whistle” while you work.

Once you have a dance to your step and a smile on your face, here are five starter housekeeping tops to make your environment and relationships friendly.

Tip 1 - The Simple Solutions = use soap, vinegar, lemon juice, baking soda, salt.

Tip 2 - Recycle everything possible!

Tip 3 - Keep your home free of unnecessary inhalants and highly toxic products (or at least locked up safe from children's curiosity and any leaks or out-gassing).

Tip 4 - Open your windows to routinely air out house. Clean all filters.

Tip 5 - Get the whole family involved.

You can check out a variety of online helps, such as **All About Home, Spring Cleaning Tips**, <http://www.allabouthome.com/tips/seasonal/spring.html>, **Messies.com**, <http://www.messies.com/> **Stay at Home Parents, Housecleaning Tips**, http://homeparents.about.com/od/housecleanin1/Housecleaning_Time_SavingTips.htm, **Better Homes & Garden**, <http://www.bhg.com/>, and **Housekeeping Channel**, <http://www.housekeepingchannel.com>. Feel free to check out my lifeskills manual, *Celebrating Your Journey, Lifeskills in Synergy* to help balance your housekeeping "to do's" with the many other life decisions and activities you face each day.

What are we trying to do here? . . . *Simplify, Simplify, Simplify!* Simple living sounds simple enough. But in today's world, it's not a sure thing. Lives are filled with daily routines, challenges, and sometimes crises for us all. The stress that comes with it all doesn't seem to leave us alone either. So, get all the help you can to make life more of a dance worth celebrating, even with mopping the floor!

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