

# *From the Heart...*

## *... Life Skills for Today*

*By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC*



## **Reflection-when the mood strikes**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, November 5, 2010)

What comes to mind when you say the word, Reflection? How about—"The return of light or sound waves from a surface," or "An effect produced by an influence." What do you see when you look around you? When you look in your mirror?

Whether the word reflection refers to the physics of light and sound or digs deeper into your own personal musings and those around you, let's see what we can discover. With this month's lifeskill, let's take some time to learn how our surroundings and each of us influence our community and world. Let's start with "when the mood strikes."

You may ask "Why this topic?" Well, honesty is the best policy. I have been in a frustrating mood the last couple days and still was at the writing of this article. Although I will keep the reasons to myself, William Butler Yeats understood the writer's dilemma very well with this hopeful axiom. "The creations of a great writer are little more than the moods and passions of his[her] own heart . . . and sent to walk the earth."

So, I decided to take advantage and reflect upon "the mood." The first thought to surface was, there is a difference between "the mood" and "the moment." Often times we confuse them. Yes, any particular mood fills a moment in time. Yet, a mood I may

find myself in doesn't always accurately hint that "the moment" has arrived. Moods are driven by emotions sparked by just about anything—negative or positive. From just feeling tired one day, sneering glances from the sales clerk, to a day off from work, a thank you from a friend, or even a sumptuous piece of chocolate cake!

How do you know when it's just a passing mood or a special "moment" to embrace that will influence your life, community, our nation? Mark Twain offered us this reflection: "Time cools, time clarifies; no mood can be maintained quite unaltered through the course of hours." So, let's all agree that with a little time, whatever mood we are in will change. Time even helps us more clearly separate "the mood" from "the moment." The moment can then be more clearly seen for what it really is—something to gently let pass or invite into our lives and relationships.

No matter one's political persuasion, our nation is also going through some difficult "moods." Archibald MacLeish, American poet, playwright, and Librarian of Congress (1892-1982), left us with a reminder of earlier times. "The American mood, perhaps even the American character, has changed. There are few manifestations any longer of the old American self-assurance which so irritated Dickens. Instead, there is a sense of frustration so perceptible that even our politicians have attempted to exploit it." Sounds like this would fit today as well.

No matter the challenges and difficulties, each day brings a new set of possibilities—as long as we know the difference between the mood and the moment with the actions we take. Pearl Buck gave us some sage advice. "Don't wait for moods. You accomplish nothing if you do that. Your mind must know it has got to get down to earth." Living each day with a clear understanding of our daily reality paired with

possibilities helps us direct our moods and actions. Hopefully, each possibility mirrors our core values and life goals with each step. Honest, respectful inquiry and communication, with occasional apologies, need to also accompany each step for a more positive outcome.

So, whether you are having a conversation with yourself or that person next to you, here are some questions I asked myself to reflect upon. I encourage you to do the same—whether your mood is negative or positive. Don't rush your responses. Take your time. Consider this exercise a journey of discovery as I did.

What mood is driving you today? How is the moment fueling your mood? And how is your mood fueling the moment? Where is it taking you? If you are traveling on a negative road, how can you change your mood right now to transform the moment? After responding to each question, I discovered on my own journey, that even when the situation doesn't change, your outlook does.

In addition, since my own life experiences involved traveling a long, winding road back to health, my attitude or mood has had everything to do with my physical and emotional wellbeing throughout the years. At a November 2009 American Heart Association Scientific Sessions conference in Orlando, Florida, researchers reported from a ten year study that "...people who have a positive attitude during stressful events are 22% less likely to have a fatal or nonfatal heart attack than those who have negative attitudes." With this first set of studies of a large population, it "...shows that having positive feelings and positive attitudes during negative events may prevent first heart attacks," says researcher Karina Davidson, PhD, Columbia University in New York.

Davidson also reported that those who expressed negative emotions were more likely to have one.

This is just one example of how a positive or negative attitude or mood can impact health. Yet, we all know most illnesses result from a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, behavioral, and psychosocial factors—not just one thing. So, no guilt trips here for an occasional rotten mood. We all have them. And we know many of us can be exposed to germs and not get sick. This is also true for any emotional, psychological stress, or trauma we may experience and still stay healthy.

As researchers continue to delve into the connection between attitude, stress, and illness, each one of us can choose to improve on our mood, no matter the circumstances. I know writing this article has helped change mine for the better. May you also, in the midst of your mood, discover your situation has also improved, along with your community and our world.

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## **A day to remember, November 20 The Great Western Trail and Public Art for Boerne**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, November 12, 2010)

Have you heard? The Great Western cattle drive actually came through Boerne during the mid to late 1800s? According to the Texas State Historical Association, The Western Trail, also known as the Dodge City Trail was blazed in 1874 by cattle-drover John T. Lytle, who herded 3,500 longhorn cattle from South Texas to the Red Cloud Indian Agency at Fort Robinson, Nebraska. By 1879 the Western Trail was the principal thoroughfare for Texas cattle bound for northern markets.

Feeder routes such as the Matamoros Trail from Brownsville, which ran northward through Santa Rosa, George West, Three Rivers, San Antonio, Beckman, Leon Springs, Boerne, and Comfort, and the Old Trail from Castroville, which ran northward through Bandera and Camp Verde, converged in Kerrville to form the Western Trail.

The National Park Service

(<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/projectHome.cfm?projectID=30803>) is also conducting a feasibility study to name this trail the **Great Western National Historic Trail** commemorating the routes followed by upwards of ten million cattle as they traveled

northbound from southern Texas to Kansas and adjacent destinations between 1867 and the 1880s. In recognition of the national attention and public advocacy given the Chisholm and Great Western Trails, Congress passed legislation and President Obama signed into public law on March 30, 2009 orders to conduct this feasibility study for both trails. Public meetings were held in June 2010, scoping reports are now available, and more updates are coming.

To celebrate our community's Western Trail historic heritage and the beauty and value of public art, the *Hill Country Council for the Arts* (HCCArts) is having a **Western Trail Community Day** on Saturday, November 20, 10am to 3pm. And its free to the public. This is a day you won't want to miss!



In partnership with Ag Heritage Museum, Boerne Area Historical Preservation Society, Boerne Convention & Visitors Bureau, Friends of the Old No. 9, The School at

Majestic Ranch, and the Hill Country Pan American Chamber of Commerce, your family is invited to visit the following locations to get a taste of the old west, arts, and activities as follows:

<b>Western Trail Community Day Locations</b>
<p><b>#1: HCCArts at Longhorn site (West end of Main Plaza)</b>  <i>Quick Draw for prizes, Artists demos, 4 bronze maquettes on display, view and photo op with Longhorns, Facepainting</i></p>
<p><b>#2: Kuhlmann-King Historical House, 402 E. Blanco Rd.</b>  <i>Lincoln log building for children, 1880 furnished home, separate Pioneer kitchen, Historical House &amp; Museum collection on view, Period costumes, Tommy Rodriguez &amp; Rodrigo Lozano Accordion music</i></p>
<p><b>#3: Agricultural Heritage Museum, 102 City Park Rd.</b>            Hayride, Chuck wagon food, Book signing, Charros roping demo, Trail ride (starts at 10am), Blacksmith shop open, Ralph Lay rope making, Kids craft activities on porches, Traditional tortilla making</p>
<p><b>#4: Navarro “Little House” 103 Kronkosky Street</b>            Book signing/story telling-Marlene Richardson, Bill Csanyi-Flintknapping, Hill Country Archeological Association display, Friends of the Old No. 9–railroad transportation display, Old Spanish Trail display for upcoming centennial</p>
<p><b>#5: Boerne Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau, 1407 South Main Street</b>            Face painting, Mariachi L music, CVB historic building talk</p>
<p><b>#6: The School at Majestic Ranch, 543 Hwy 46 W 6 miles West of Boerne</b>            Stone sculpture w/ Rachman Ulmer demos/hands on, Alamo Area wood turners, Printmaking w/ Vicki Stephens, Ceramics with Michael Saul, Large community effort drawing/painting project, Children’s art activities, light refreshments available</p>

To get a map of each location, go to the HCCArts website homepage ([www.HCCArts.org](http://www.HCCArts.org)) and click on the map link to print off. On Western Trail Community Day, take the map with your family to each location to get it “branded.” Then bring it back to the HCCArts site #1 to possibly win great prizes!

This special day is a way to celebrate our heritage and support the **Boerne Public Art Fund**. The loaned installation of Robert Summers’ Longhorns in Boerne’s Historic District August 2010 launched the introduction of the Boerne Public Art Master

Plan initial draft, and established the Boerne Public Art Fund. HCCArts, through education and fundraising efforts, encourages the acquisition of public art for Boerne's gateways and cityscape. Through the generosity of the Texas Trees Foundation, Dallas, the two 130% life-sized bronzes were installed to introduce residents and visitors to the joy of interacting with public art. Charitable donations, or pledges to the project, can be made to the Boerne Public Art Fund in care of the Hill Country Council for the Arts, P.O. Box 2024, Boerne, Texas 78006, or donate online at [www.HCCArts.org](http://www.HCCArts.org). Email inquiries to [membership@hccarts.org](mailto:membership@hccarts.org) for further information.

***See you on November 20, Western Trail Community Day!***

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## **Enjoying Memories of those Special Ones**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, November 19, 2010)

Since Thanksgiving is just around the corner, I've been thinking about those people who have made all the difference in my life over the years, both professionally and personally. No matter the challenges being faced today, I discovered those challenges are much less arduous when I remember Judy Worden who has always been there to encourage me, boost my faith in both God and humanity. I remember Nancy McIntosh, a friend and cheerleader for me, whose final heroic battle with melanoma cancer gave me a gift of love and compassion offered no other way.

I remember my counselor, Don Kinney, who made it safe to be healed from childhood abuse and learn how forgiveness brings healing to the body and soul. During that time, Cheri, one of my weaving students, helped me finish my master's degree project on time, while I recovered from many physical ailments that my body kept score. Then a few years later, there were those special kids I tutored in math and English at a private Christian school who were a delight to help and share field trips to the local firehouse.

I surely can't forget my first life coaching client, Paige Holloway, who kindly trusted our professional relationship throughout her own journey of discovery and

renewal. And I would be definitely remiss if I left out my own family—sister, Paula; husband, John; my precious daughters, Kimberly and Kelly. Paula and I have grown closer than we have ever been even though I'm in Texas and she lives in California. I couldn't ask for a sweeter person to share my life.

There is no way to count the times that my husband, John, and daughters were there to say “I love you” and “everything to going to be alright.” And of course, Dixie, our precious Brittany spaniel, and Smokey & Daisy, miniature schnauzers, who were our closest companions as we raised our daughters. No matter the tears or struggles, these “puppies” always jumped on our laps, gave us licks, and cheered us with their unique gifts of unconditional love.

In addition, my family will shortly be much larger with the marriage of my daughter, Kimberly, to David Rodriguez...the sweetest guy in the world for our daughter. So, with this Thanksgiving, take time to think about those special ones who make your life even more special. ***How would you like to say thank you to them?***

You will be amazed at how just *saying* thank you can change a person's life. There is nothing more important than to feel ***accepted, safe, and significant*** in one's life. Your thank you can make all the difference for someone needing just a kind word or deed to lift them into hope, safety, and personal value as a human being—a life forever changed. You'll never be the same either. ***Bet on it!*** In the next article, you'll get tips on saying thank you from a simple card or phone call to maybe even a trip around the globe! So, if you miss saying thanks at thanksgiving, you will still have your chance with the following Friday article.

In the meantime, don't forget to take your whole family on Saturday, November 20, to the Western Trail Community Day! And it's free too! Learn more about it at [www.HCCArts.org](http://www.HCCArts.org). It will be a great way to share the day with family and friends...to be with your special ones. See you there.

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## **Forgot to Say Thank You?**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, November 26, 2010)

Now that Thanksgiving is over, did you really forget to say thank you to those special ones? If so, be not dismayed. Here's your chance again. Let's cover a variety of ways you can make someone feel special. From a simple card or phone call to a trip around the globe, let your imagination take off (that is, as long as your budget can handle it)!

A thank you does not have to involve financial cost. Yet, if that's what you want to do, you feel it's the right thing to do, and have the money for it, by all means, go for it. When you really know that person, you will recognize what special thing to do or give. And, remember, a simple thank you is often just the right thing to do and touches the heart and life. In addition, spending time putting something together yourself for that person often means more than buying an expensive gift. Or, just simply express in some way that you understand and care about what they face each day. So, don't think a phone call of thanks or a card w/ a personal note has significantly less impact than gifting them a trip to the Castles in Ireland! Believe me, it doesn't.

Here are just some basic ways to say thank you to get you started:

- **Always verbally communicate** appreciation/thank you whenever you can.

- **Write a short letter or “thank you” note** (sending online greeting cards personally designed by you works too). Small “thank you” note card, even regular stationary are personal ways to show our gratitude. Give a small, inexpensive gift, when appropriate, either purchased or made yourself.
- **Treat the person to a meal, a movie, or just a favorite snack.**
- **If you want to spend a bit more money, consider taking out an advertisement in the local paper;** but make sure the public message is appropriate and won’t unduly embarrass the person.

Each person impacts your life in different ways. A friend may give you a loan at a time when it was greatly needed. Your boss may have shown his appreciation of your work with time-off or a bonus. Your kids may have surprised you after coming home from work with the house all cleaned up. You know, it is possible! Your doctor may have helped you improve your health. Your husband may surprise you with a romantic dinner he actually cooked at home for you (and the kids are sleeping overnight at a friend’s house too). There are all kinds of possibilities that can shine during your daily life.

Below are those lifeskills I coach/consult client on that cover just about anything you may be doing each day. I bet there is someone (family, friend, co-worker, neighbor, even a stranger) who has made all the difference for you in each area. Read through each lifeskill and choose a person who has touched your life in that area. And if it turns out to be yourself in some area, by all means include “you” in the thank you. Then start planning those thanks soon. If there is someone who may no longer be with us, think about someone within their family or friend to share your thank you and gratitude.

**Relationships/Core Values:** (Who has been exceptionally supportive of your core values and relationship? How would you like to say thank you?)

**Time Management:** (What person has made your days go more smoothly, saving you time and energy? How would you like to say thank you?)

**Career/Money Management:** (Who in your professional/personal life has significantly impacted your career opportunities and ability to wisely manage your finances? How would you like to say thank you?)

**Recordkeeping:** (Who has helped you maintain thorough and accurate records to preserve your integrity? How would you like to say thank you?)

**Possessions:** (What person has kept you clearly focused on simplifying your life and possessions, helping you keep your priorities in balance? How would you like to say thank you?)

**Housekeeping:** (Who has kept your home clean and clutter-free more than anyone? How would you like to say thank you?)

**Wellness:** (Who has encouraged you the most to pursue and sustain your health and well-being? How would you like to say thank you?)

**Meals:** (Who makes most of the meals and works at making them not only nutritious but also appetizing and enjoyable? How would you like to say thank you?)

**Childcare:** (Who contributes the most in taking care of the physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual needs of your children or those of a family or friend?) How would you like to say thank you?

**Recreation/Entertainment:** (Who has made all the difference in encouraging you to have wholesome fun on a routine basis; and/or help plan and have fun together? How would you like to say thank you?)

**Reflection:** (Who helps you keep things in perspective and your life in balance? How would you like to say thank you?)

**Celebration:** (Who always helps you celebrate a win in your life and just makes every day a celebration in some way? How would you like to say thank you?)

As you share your thanks, don't be surprised if you get a few yourself along the way. It's always sweet to give and receive.

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