

From the Heart...

...Life Skills for Today's Family

By Sharon L. Benedict MS



Recordkeeping . . . Loving it?

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, April 5, 2013)

Are you ready to love recordkeeping? I know, you are probably thinking, "Is she kidding?!" Ok, I'll bend a little here. It is possible to actually "like" to keep accurate, comprehensive records. Loving it is another thing all together. It will take a very unusual person and personality to go that far!

So, let's be a little more realistic here. The first step to you "liking" to do recordkeeping of your finances in particular is deciding whether you are the one to actually do it. Check out your personality behavioral style to start. Are you a detail person and likes to have "all the ducks in a row?" Then you are the one to keep the books. Your personality just might be, according to the DISC system, a Complimentary personality.

You want to make sure of all the facts in front of you before making any decisions or taking action. You are the one who helps us more Directive/Dominant and Sanguine/Influential type personalities be more realistic before we cheer everyone to jump off the cliff or leap over the mountain in front us!

The next step is to decide how you want to keep the books and what tools to use. In this highly tech age and getting more techy each day, choose a

software program that does it all with as much ease as possible. For personal money management, financial life plans and goals, budgets, even inventory of your personal and business possessions, Intuit's Quicken software comes in all types. Then there is Microsoft Money that shares the playing field for money management needs, along with others out there.

Once you get familiar with your chosen software, set up your various accounts, categories, and downloaded your transaction data from your bank or financial institution, you are ready to establish a recordkeeping routine. Keep in mind, you will also need to have a filing cabinet for any hard copies you want to have for those in your family who aren't computer savvy or who are more of a traditionalist.

In the next article, we will delve a little deeper into these software recordkeeping features that can make all the difference in the ease of handling your money and your life. You just might end of "liking" the result you get when your spouse asks for the latest income and expense report to size up how it matches with the budget you both agreed upon way back when. Be sure to be kind to each other on this recordkeeping adventure!

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From the Heart. . .

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By Sharon L. Benedict MS



Recordkeeping . . . Software Savvy?

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Now that you have either decided to “love” doing recordkeeping or at least “liking” it, it’s time to look at the tools that make the job easier. Yes, I said easier. For those who haven’t yet embarked on utilizing the latest money management software, and would rather not, you might as well pass on this article. Or, maybe, just maybe, I actually will help your “want to” . . . as you step up to the 21st century!

Although there are many programs out there, since 1977 I have been using Intuit’s Quicken software. Within a few years I changed over to their Home & Business program and have never regretted it. This program has suited both our personal, business, debt reduction, savings, investment needs, reports, and budgets. It also includes a home inventory of our possessions. Since my husband is more of a traditionalist with pen and pad, John still records the old fashion way some of our investment performance records in retirement.

Yet, over the years, I think I have persuaded him of the benefits of coming into the 21st century. One of the reasons is I have been the one who has kept our household financial records. If you don’t have the personality or motivation, maybe your spouse does; or think about hiring a bookkeeper you trust.

You may ask, “Why did you go to so much time and trouble?” John has asked the same question many times. But I just kept persevering because I believed it was all worth the effort. Why? There was no other way to really know if we could even live on a budget without the necessary records proving it one way or another. And when it came to asking where the money went, both of us could see the numbers right in front of us. Without the data, I bet your spouse just might be claiming you are the one doing more spending than the other!

Then each starts saying, “No I’m not. You are.” And the other repeats it back to you. And the tension mounts without resolution. That’s when marriage and money get tangled up. What happened to your marriage & money...a match made in Heaven? When the tension begins in our household, I go back to the data to not just set the record straight, but also find a way to manage the money together in harmony with our mutually shared dreams and goals. John actually started seeing greater benefit when he asks for income/expense reports, particularly when sitting down to do tax prep for our CPA.

This software also has a home inventory program and emergency records feature all in one place. So, in case of an emergency either one of us or our daughters can access needed information if we are unable to. That is why keeping copies of your records and other important documents in a safe deposit box is essential.

The home inventory records also help us add our possessions to our overall net worth. It is amazing how most people don’t take into account all the possessions or “stuff” accumulated. Put your house, cars, all other possessions

together, along with your other assets, and you will be surprised what the total is. Yet, if the liability side is high, then the net doesn't look so hot, does it?

There is another good reason to maintain these records. You can actually match your spending and savings habits with your life dreams and goals together. Otherwise, your dreams and goals may never be realized. Life does have its surprises, but you can dream and work together to come close to what you both want for you and your family. You will also be able to budget benevolence and giving into your recordkeeping throughout your life.

The next article will provide you with a strategy for planning benevolence and giving in your budget that supports your core values across all of society...from your faith, education, legislative, media, and more. There is no greater joy than giving from the heart and watching people lives forever changed.

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From the Heart. . .

...Life Skills for Today's Family

By Sharon L. Benedict MS



Recordkeeping . . . the Gift of Giving, part 1

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, April 19, 2013)

When you look over your budget, is there strategic benevolence and giving evident in your recordkeeping routines? If not, let's see how you can get started on experiencing one of the sweetest returns on your investments.

Why have both words, benevolence and giving? Don't they mean the same thing? Not really. Simply, benevolence tends to refer to gifts for the basic needs and wellbeing of individuals (directly or through an organization) who are not able to care for themselves. You are giving without any expectations or personal tangible benefits on what they may do with what you give. Although, you would hope they would use it wisely to better their lives. Yet, you really don't have control over their behavior, do you?

Giving is more inclined to be contributions to an established organization or worthy business that has a community outreach program. You tend to expect accountability and significant outcomes with the entity's mission and program. You may even have specific benefits given to you on behalf of your contributions, membership, or gift.

Both terms cover most all areas of contributing to your community and society at large. Now let's look at your records to see how you can step up to a strategic benevolence & giving plan.

First, print out an income/expense report for the year. Do you have a net income or loss? If a net income, you are one jump ahead of most people and can more easily designate your giving plan. For either a net income or loss, go down the expense column and highlight areas you think you could shift some monies to not only offset a net loss over time but also for benevolence and giving. Find any pennies or dollars there?

If not, then have a heart to heart either with yourself or your spouse about where the money is going that may not need to go there. Consider what are mandatory or discretionary expenses. How do you see your wants and your needs...and the difference between them? In what way can you be content holding off some of your wants and sharing the cash with benevolence and giving?

As you discuss this often touchy area, reaffirm your shared core values across all of society. What do you think those areas might be? Your faith, education, legislative, and media are just a few.

For those who tend to be more spontaneous with your giving when you think the money is there that week or month, be it a few dollars or a thousand, how about becoming more strategic in your giving? Not only will you be supporting your own core values in your community, nation, and the world but you will also help those worthy nonprofit organizations stay sustainable through

the years. They will know you share their values and vision for making our community and nation a better place for all to raise families and care for our neighbors next door.

Once you agree on how much to designate for benevolence & giving, it's time to look a little closer at those areas in society you can more strategically share your values and impact your community. Benevolence and giving involves advancing the quality of life, cultural, economic, and value-based prosperity of your community and nation. Here are the first five of eleven areas to consider:

I. BASIC CORE VALUES & PRINCIPLES: Organizations that support your core values and life principles.

II. HOME/FAMILY/VALUES: Organizations that encourage and support the family, home, and core human values.

III. RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS/CHURCH/MISSIONS: Organizations that support your faith and desire for outreach to humanity.

IV. HISTORY/WESTERN CULTURE: Organizations that support your values and principles in global human affairs and lessons of history.

V. PUBLIC POLICY/DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS: Organizations supporting human justice and compassion in legislation, domestic policy, and international relations.

You will be surprised at ways you already contribute whether regularly or periodically. Name the organizations, institutions, businesses, ministries, and

churches. This list should help you assess your financial commitment and involvement throughout all of society.

It is important to investigate each work for its integrity and stability before supporting that organization. Remember, too, that there are many creative ways to give and show benevolence (i.e. purchase of materials to publications, giving goods and materials, tax and estate planning, time and effort).

When it comes to contributing items you have around your house and workplace, where can you provide in-kind items that are still quite functional? And not a piece of junk, please. I know that someone's junk can be another person's treasure. Yet, consider how you would feel if you were the one on the receiving end.

Next article for this month will offer the other six areas for benevolence and giving. There is no greater return on your investment than giving from the heart and watching your community and nation benefit and also see people lives forever changed.

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From the Heart...

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By Sharon L. Benedict MS



Recordkeeping . . . the Gift of Giving, part 2

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Remember those first five areas of benevolence and giving reviewed in the previous article? Are you ready to create a strategic plan and record of your benevolence and giving for those right in your neighborhood, community, and nation? If so, here they are again: **BASIC CORE VALUES & PRINCIPLES, HOME/FAMILY/VALUES, ORGANIZATIONS/CHURCH/MISSIONS, HISTORY/WESTERN CULTURE, PUBLIC POLICY/DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.**

How does your family contribute within these areas of giving? Let's see the remaining six benevolence & giving areas that help you experience one of the sweetest returns on your investments. As you maintain a life-long strategy and recordkeeping of your benevolence and giving, the rewards are more than you can even imagine.

VI. **SCIENCE/MEDICINE:** Organizations that seek truth in our universe and life on earth; observe and understand the natural world from a scientific and spiritual perspective. Be cautious about certain perspectives that may have extreme views and inappropriately discount the faith dimensions, credible scientific discoveries, and the principles of macro- and micro- adaptation.

VII. **BUSINESS AND LEGAL ISSUES:** Organizations that support and train business leaders and legal advisors to advance integrity, honesty, and excellence in the work place and our nation's legal system.

VIII. **EDUCATION/CHILD DEVELOPMENT:** Organizations that train young children, teens, and adults to be mature, informed, effective leaders in every field of life.

IX. **MEDIA/ENTERTAINMENT/CULTURAL DISCERNMENT:** Organizations that support your core values in entertainment, news, cultural trends, and influence the media to improve the quality of programming.

X. **SOCIAL MINISTRIES:** Organizations whose mission is to provide an alternative to state-run welfare programs with effective, compassionate ministries to the underserved, needy and unfortunate.

XI. **IMPLEMENTATION:** Organizations that coordinate and mobilize leaders across society to improve their communities and the world.

As you review all eleven areas of benevolence and giving, you will undoubtedly find ways you already are contributing in money, materials, time, and estate planning. I encourage you to get your whole family and your kids involved in choosing ways to make all the difference in people's lives in your neighborhood, our nation, and around the world.

You will be building a tradition that your children will continue throughout their adult lives. During these troubling times of tragedy and even terror, let us all step up to bring hope and encouragement to those around us.

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