

# *From the Heart...*

*...Lifeskills for Today's Family*  
*By Sharon L. Benedict MS*



## **Muddling Through Time**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Feb 7, 2014)

How do you spend your time? Are you on automatic with a list that determines and drives your day, month, year, your life? Why do you do what you do? Are you just muddling through?

If you want to find out, then here are seven more questions for you. Write down your responses and share them with a close friend or family member. Get their feedback and see what you both discover about how you use your time and life.

1. What or who determines the way you use your time?
2. What have you observed about your routine day and its effect on your life?
3. Do you want to change any way you use your time? If so, how?
4. What might prevent you from making that change?
5. What would be your first step to remove the barrier(s)?
6. What outcome(s) do you want?
7. How does the use of your time and the change you are about to make support your dreams and goals for your life?

There are key principles and practices to consider using as you discover what is most important in your life. The next article will cover a few of those tools to use.

Every moment is a gift not to just “muddle through.” May we all receive this gift, treasure it, and use those moments of each day purposefully. And may the joy of the moment be always present. As Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) offered, “This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.”

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*Sharon L. Benedict, is a speaker, author, and weaver, and loving it! She is available for speaking engagements, freelance writing, and will even weave you a one-of-kind creation, just for you. Sharon also welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at [seekreachachieve@gvtc.com](mailto:seekreachachieve@gvtc.com). Visit her website at [www.celebratingyourjourney.com](http://www.celebratingyourjourney.com).*

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## **Freedom from Muddling Through Time . . . Key Barriers**

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Feb 14, 2014)

From the previous article, where did your responses to those seven questions take you? Did you see areas where you were just “muddling through” time? There are key principles and practices to consider using as you discover what is most important in your life in order to get free from just “muddling through.”

First, some key barriers or distractions to setting the course of your life include:

- Too many discretionary commitments (including technology-such as ipods, cell phones, tablets, computer time)
- Career/work is always on overtime, bringing it home and commuting
- Mismanagement of finances
- Major health and/or relationship challenges
- Little or no spousal participation in daily life responsibilities
- Unable or unwilling to seek help
- Physical clutter at home and work

How many more can you add to these distractions? What do you believe will keep you free from “muddling” through? *Whatever motivates you drives your choices in life.*

Are you driven by the “shoulds” or extrinsic motivations, telling yourself “I have to.” Are you more focused on the future and having no fun in the present? Or do your motivations come from within, intrinsic? Do you say to yourself “I do this because I want to. I do this because it is important to me.” You are focused on the process, seeking mastery, and fully present in the moment. And you are enjoying it too.

So, now you have a choice. Which direction are you choosing? And where is your plan? Since this is Valentine’s Day, how about giving yourself a Valentine’s card that says, “I love you and believe in you. You can have the life you always dreamed about. Let’s start together, today.”

In the next article one of the key practices will be covered—creating a plan, a SMART one. What do you think SMART means? Let’s find out next time.

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## ***Freedom from Muddling Through Time . . . the SMART way***

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One of the key practices in being free from just “muddling” through life is being SMART. What does this mean besides the obvious? What do you think SMART means? Possibly for many out there you have already heard a particular version of this acronym. Here’s my version.

Basically, SMART represents the elements in creating a plan for any project, program, and life. First, wrap you mind and heart around one thing you want to change or accomplish. Start with something fairly simple. For those who love to cook or not, let’s try a new recipe.

“S” stands for Specific. Any goal or plan should be clearly defined and emphasize what you want to happen and why. Specifics help you focus on what you are going to do. Use direct action words to describe What you want to do. For a recipe, you want to make banana bread.

“M” stands for Measurable. Your goal to make this awesome banana bread for the first time is to have that recipe right in front of you giving you the ingredients needed. You of course have the measuring cups and spoon handy, along with the mixing bowls, plus any other item needed. Having the tools and ability to measure each

part of the recipe and manage how the recipe comes together per instructions given. When you can measure your progress, you can then build confidence that the recipe is coming together; and you continue to stay on track toward reaching your specific goal and the time it takes from the beginning to when you take your banana bread out of the oven.

“A” stands for Attainable or Actionable. This part of your SMART plan or goal should support what is most important to you about making your banana bread. You have begun to figure out ways you can make that goal come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach them. Yes, even having the money to buy the ingredients and items you need to make the bread is all part of being attainable.

You see previously overlooked opportunities bringing you closer to achieving your bread-making goals. Attainable goals are mastered in bite-size pieces; and not so far out of reach that your motivation and confidence is shaken along the way. That means if your banana bread didn't come out exactly as you expected, you are ready, willing, and committed to try again until the flavor, texture, and aroma comes out just the way you like it. The goal needs to stretch you just enough so you can feel you can reach your ultimate goal.

“R” stands for Rewarded. For some the “R” may represent being realistic or relevant, doable goals. I tend to place that with “A” for attainable. Nothing can be attained without considering the plan or goal must also be realistic, both in the short-term and long-term. To reward yourself is to support where you are in the moment. So, by all means as you learn how to make a most awesome banana bread, be sure to enjoy

every bite. But be sure not to eat it all down in one sitting! Your stomach and family would appreciate you sharing a morsel!

“T” stands for Timely. You set your bread making plan in a time frame that successfully moves you through the process or break-making strategies. If the recipe states it will take one and a half hours from start to finish, setting the time aside will free you from trying to rush through the process. Your bread may not rise sufficiently and you may have some raw dough in the middle that will only make the bread less enjoyable. Choose a time frame that supports your specific, measurable, attainable, and rewarding goal. Don’t be too vague; set a time that says this bread making adventure or plan is important in your life that motivates you to action now and with each step.

Now that I have whet your appetite for not just banana bread but also for those long-awaited dreams and goals you still have on the back burner, how about giving one of those bigger, loftier plans a try . . . the SMART way. You will then begin to experience what it really feels like to be free from just “muddling” through time and life.

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## ***Living our Future in Every Moment of the Day***

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Feb 28, 2014)

Throughout this month, we have focused on life's precious commodity, *Time*. Have you found yourself "muddling" through time much too often during the day, week, year? Freedom from muddling through has everything to do with what drives you to always be urgent in those things you do each day. How important are these "urgent" matters to you?

Have you given yourself some "time" to reflect on ways to free yourself of the constant "urgency" of your day. Have you finally experienced moments of quiet, no rushing thoughts or behavior that typically crowd the day? I hope so. In this final article of the month on Time Management lifeskill, here are tips to get you started and keep you free from "muddling" through your time and life. I may have offered them in a previous article many years ago. Yet, I feel they are worth repeating in this new year.

- **Commit time and dollars to specifically achieve your dreams and goals.** Your time and money are intricately involved in the process of goal setting and daily living—where you live, work, utilize services, and every daily routine such as showering, breakfast, reading the paper, and watching your favorite TV program. Take a moment here—***Wherever you spend your money is where you spend your time & life!***



- **Know where your hours are going.**
- **Stay focused on what is important**/not what is seemingly urgent; and know the difference (Now, Later, Never).
- **Stay in the moment** while seeking mastery and desired outcome.
- **Commit to defined priorities** based on your core values and intrinsic motivators.
- **Schedule time for important matters**; get home at a set time—and do not exceed it! Quality time include Quantity time too!
- **Take a 15 minute break each day** for a quiet moment alone (“pause”) to rest your thoughts.
- **Delegate tasks** when possible.
- **Avoid procrastination** (honestly appraise your own indecisions/delays).
- **Take the stress out of work and home life.** Start with one small change in your day to further motivate you each day in reducing your stress. Exercise, a walk, a run, dance . . . any healthy, aerobic movement will do.
- **Organize home and office space** to be more time efficient and user friendly.
- **Do most important tasks during most productive hours.**
- **Simplify, avoid unreasonable deadlines, reduce unnecessary interruptions, monitor telephone time**; turn off cell phone for a period of time in each day (while sleeping doesn’t count! But by all means turn the cell off when sleeping!).
- **Use your calendar to match your core values, goals, with scheduled activities**; it is important to make sure you schedule in fun, R&R/personal development.
- **Be a “team” player** who knows your own personality style and others; enhance your communication/collaborative skills; willing to give credit where credit is due.

- **Learn to politely say “No.”** Sometimes God’s best is “No.”
- **Seek excellence, not perfection.**
- **Garner Quiet Time at Home & Work = “ME” time.**
- Important but often neglected—**Give dedicated time for your spiritual life.** Read sacred and meditative books, be active in your church or synagogue; be part of an active home support group.

Let us remind ourselves each day of this worthy thought, when the clock wakes us to the morning light and our feet hit the floor. ***“In every moment I am living my future.”***

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