

From the Heart. . .

. . . Life Skills for Today

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



How do you like to Celebrate?

When you hear some good news about something you've waited forever for, how do you celebrate your *Hoorays!*? Getting out that vintage bottle of champagne or chardonnay is always a pleasant tradition. Yet, I hope drinking and getting drunk isn't your first priority for celebrating. If so, maybe it's time to broaden your creative horizons on how to celebrate good news.

Here's your opportunity to think about how you would like to have a fun and *wholesome* good time with good news. When it comes to celebrating, most of the time, we go out to dinner, to a movie, or just put up our feet and do absolutely nothing for at least part of the day. These are fine simple ways to say to yourself, "Congratulations." Yet, celebrating is much more than just saying, "Wow, I'm so glad that job is over, and I don't have to think about it for another six months."

Celebrating involves some creative thinking in order to get out of our routine rejoicing rut we've been accustomed to for so many years. Are you ready to have fun with some planning? If so, check your "this is just more work" attitude at the door and say hello to your long dormant creativity and confidence-building for really celebrating! As Zig Ziglar, notable motivational speaker, quips,

“Confidence is going after Moby Dick in a rowboat and taking the tartar sauce with you.” Creativity comes alive with that kind of confidence! Are you ready? Let's get started.

Throughout each month this year, certain life skill topics have been covered—*Relationships/Core Values, Time Management, Career/Money Management, Recordkeeping, Home/Vehicle/Possessions, Housekeeping, Wellness, Meals, Childcare, Recreation/Entertainment, Reflection*—and this month, *Celebration*.

As you followed along this year, you have focused on your core value, how you use your time, your career choice, how you spend your money, keep your records, take care of your possessions, clean your house, reach for higher wellness, more enjoyable, nutritious meals, nurture your children, choose wholesome entertainment and outdoor recreation. As you reflected on these life skills, you have come away with a greater awareness, understanding, and commitment to the life you want to seek, reach, and achieve.

This month it's time to celebrate your personal wins in those life skill areas. So, choose which areas you and your family would like to celebrate throughout the December holidays and beyond. But remember, don't fill this month so full you lose the simple pleasures of quiet moments by yourself and with your own family.

Here are a few sample ideas from three life skill areas to consider any time:

Time Management

Goal accomplished—Mom and Dad were able to cut down ten extra hours of work per week away from home in order to have the family together more often.

Celebration—Children, Jason and Mary, decide to treat parents to a night out with “the kids”, all expenses paid “by the kids” (e.g. dinner and a show; dinner and miniature golf; a day at Fiesta Texas Entertainment Park or some other theme park).

Home/Vehicle/Possessions

Goal accomplished—Redecorated the children's bedrooms

Celebration—A party for each child (e.g. daughter, Mary, wants a slumber party of friends all crammed in her room; son, Jason, wants guys over to play basketball and some computer games in his room). First, give yourself a time-out. You'll then have a lot more energy and motivation for this one. I also suggest you have them on separate days for your own sanity! Enjoy!

Career/Money Management

Goal accomplished—As a sideline, passion, and possible future career, Dad finally finished writing and publishing his first fictional short story.

Celebration—Mom and the kids arrange a surprise writer's party for Dad. House decorated accordingly; even dressed up as the characters in his story. Being wildly creative to tell Dad how great he is.

As you confidently create simple and elaborate celebrations for you and your family, remember to celebrate each moment, the gift of this day, and the breath you breathe. You will then begin to experience the simple joys and treasure of relationships you may have taken for granted. But no longer!

Resources:

Celebrations That Touch the Heart: Creative Ideas to Make Your Holidays and Special Events Meaningful by Brenda Poinsett. WaterBrook Press (October 16, 2001)

Roses: Beautiful Ideas for Home and Celebration by Antonia Swinson. Ryland Peters & Small (January 15, 2006)

Sweet Smarts for Sweethearts: Savvy Advice & Fun Ideas for Celebrating Love Honor Books (December 2004)

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Let's Make Memories Last Forever

When you hear some good news about something for which you have waited along time, how do you celebrate? Getting out that vintage bottle of champagne is always a pleasant tradition. Yet, I hope drinking and getting drunk isn't your first priority for celebrating. If so, maybe it's time to broaden your creative horizons on how to celebrate good news.

Goal accomplished--Redecorate the children's bedrooms

Celebrate--A party for each child (ie. Mary wants a slumber party of friends all crammed in her room; John wants guys over to play basketball and use the computer in his room). I suggest you have them on separate days for your own sanity! Enjoy!

Goal accomplished--Dad finally finished writing and publishing a short story novel

Celebrate--Mom and the kids arrange a surprise writer's party for Dad. Decorate accordingly. Be wildly creative to tell Dad how great he is. If possible, dress up as the characters in his book.

Goal accomplished--Mom and Dad were able to cut down on extra hours of work away from home in order to have the family together more often.

Celebrate--John and Mary decide to treat parents to a night out w/ the "kids", all expenses paid (ie. dinner and a show; dinner and miniature golf; a day at Fiesta Texas Entertainment Park or some other theme park).

Have you and your family celebrate together in some special way. Be creative.

Dream alittle...or alot! Then do it!

(And so on; you fill in the rest. Let the creative genius in you be let loose! Utilize the books and resources listed at end of workbook. Have fun!)

Celebrate each moment, the gift of this day, and the breath you breathe. You will then begin to experience the simple joys and treasure of relationships you may have taken for granted. But no longer!

Resources:

Celebrating Holidays Scrapbook Style: 250 Sensational Page Ideas You Can Create (Paperback)

by Kerry Arquette (Editor). Memory Makers Books.

Memories in Moments: Over 600 Timeless Ideas for Celebrating Life's Special Occasions (Paperback) by Susan Stone, Roxane M. Smith. Marally Publishing (July 1998)

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Celebrate Making Forever Memories The Hi Tech Way

For all those who love to keep your memories the more traditional way via photo albums, scrapbooks, and treasure boxes, try to stay with me on the fantastic hi tech ways to celebrate making memories.

Once you get a little help and learn how to use the many features on your computer, making forever memories will be preserved for generations in your family. To give you a jump start, I recommend you take a course/workshop in creating these memory makers. Ask a family member or friend who knows how to create them, or hire out. Our children are probably already more computer/internet savvy than any of us today. So get them involved in teaching you how to go Hi Tech. Here are some hi tech possibilities to try out for your own memory maker projects.

Hi Tech Memory Makers

Memory makers considered somewhat hi tech are slideshows, audio tapes/CDs, video DVDs, and family websites that offer interactive sharing within the family, even close friends over the years.

Slideshows—The easiest do-it-yourself way to create your own CD/DVD is to use computer programs, such as Microsoft Word, Powerpoint, Wordperfect Presentations, or Apple's Keynote. Although there are many others out there, these are the most recognizable ones for personal use. You will need to have some sort of scanning equipment and software for converting your hardcopy pictures into digital images. Adobe Photoshop and Jasc Software's Paint Shop Photo Album are just one of many software programs for working with digital images. These programs have some text movement, animation, and sound capabilities to play with.

Audio tapes/CDs—If you still have the traditional audio cassette tapes with your children's baby sounds and Christmas tape, I recommend you convert them to an computer audio format (such as .mp3 or .wma) to place on a CD/DVD to preserve these memories. You can also use them as background for your slideshow.

Windows Media Player comes with most computers and offers instructions on how to convert. You may need to purchase additional software, such as Plus! Digital Media Edition or something compatible, for certain tasks. To record new sounds, stories, memories from the computer, check to see if you have a speech recognition-dictation feature in order to create audio digital files. You can also look for a variety of portable devices for this type of memory maker at most electronic stores.

Video DVDs—This memory maker takes you to the next level, combining not just photos, but action videos, music, your own oral history on video.

You are the story teller on camera, with segment titles; and music at special spots or background mood—all packaged in a special jewel case. You can also include the audio file you made as a backdrop voice for your still and moving images. Check out your computer capabilities for doing both audio and video working together. You can then make multiple copies and give them away as gifts.

Family Websites/Interactive Sharing—Here's the ultimate possibility for preserving family memories for the world to see. Every day more families are creating their own website. There are now very easy ways to set up your own family website, with pictures, stories, family newsletter, email & instant messaging connections. You don't necessarily even need to have a specific webpage creation program, such as Dreamweaver to convert designed pages to an .html format for the web. You can check out options from Yahoo, MySpace, and more for ideas and instructions. Or just get that techie in the family to help out.

Depending on your motivation, creativity, and learning style, there are so many ideas to consider in celebrating memories. Start your creative juices flowing today. Here's your chance to show how much you love your family and close friends.

For any of these memory makers, you can do-it-yourself, share the project with your family, or even hire out. There are many consultants who are available to scan your pictures and create CDs and DVDs galore for you...for a fee of course. Check out the resources below for the variety of helps available for

yourself and others. Be sure to put copies of your CD/DVDs in the safe deposit box. You will then avoid the trauma and heart ache of losing your prized memories.

Whichever way you choose to make memories last forever, be sure to have your children learn to carry on the memory making tradition. You will then treasure the time you spent sharing your family story with those you love and creating a lasting legacy from generation to generation.

Resources:

Family Legacy Video, <http://www.familylegacyvideo.com/>

Family Slideshows, <http://www.familyslideshows.com>

Publishing/Sharing Your Genealogy, <http://genealogy.about.com/cs/publishing/>

Vintage Family Tree Video, <http://www.vintagefamilytreevideo.com/>

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Celebrate and Contribute To Your Family Legacy

As you gather all your photos together and childhood treasures to scrapbook and box them for lasting memories, Kimberly Powell has other ways to celebrate your family's heritage (http://genealogy.about.com/cs/holidays/a/family_history.htm). Beside the simple and high tech ways I mentioned in earlier articles, here are Powell's additional creative suggestions. First, get started tracing your family tree; then start your own family cookbook; record family stories; uncover your family health history; take a trip back in time by visiting sites of importance to your family (e.g. your old family homestead, the country from which your ancestors migrated, the hillside where you played as a child, or the cemetery where great-grandpa is buried. If none match, then consider a trip to an historical museum, battlefield, or re-enactment event that relates to the history of your family.); craft a heritage gift (e.g. from picture frame Christmas ornaments to heritage quilts); and create an annual family picture calendar using your computer.

Your family heritage is wonderful to celebrate. Yet, contributing to the lives of others goes a long way toward preserving your legacy for your community and across

our nation. There are many ways to contribute. There are also many life arenas you can impact throughout your life and legacy.

As you celebrate the holidays and the gift of giving, consider how you can make all the difference in everyone's lives. There are approximately eleven life arenas to share your legacy. The first six are:

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.

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.

Plan your giving in each arena into your core values, life goals, career, budget, and friendships. Benevolence and giving are genuine expressions of compassion and love to humanity. Whether you contribute time, money, materials, or message, there are individuals in your neighborhood and around the world that need your help. The heart-felt rewards of giving are far beyond the gift itself.

Experience the joy and satisfaction of helping humanity in your own community and across the oceans. You may be surprised at how many ways you do give already. Feel free to email me and request the related handout to list the ways you are currently giving and want to give in the future whether to individuals, organizations, institutions, ministries, and churches. It is important to investigate each work for its integrity and stability before supporting that person or organization.

Remember, there are many creative ways to give and show benevolence (e.g. purchase of materials to publications, giving goods and materials, tax and estate planning, money gifts, time and effort). Be creative in every life arena. The next article for December will cover the other five life arenas for benevolence and giving. In the meantime, have a very creative, appreciative, and abundant Christmas and New Year!

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Celebrate and Contribute To Your Family Legacy-part 2

In the past 30 years, the family, the basic unit of all societies, have been adapting itself to new challenges and opportunities. Families are also changing its structure and types of activities to help cope with new realities and enhance the quality of their lives.

The baby boomer generation (born 1944+/-1964) is one of the largest peoples groups of the older age population. While this generation continues to age, Generation X (born 1965+/-1982) will share caregiving responsibilities with the largest generational population yet, Generation Y—or Millennials. This Gen Y offspring is 70 million strong, born between 1977+/-1995. Accelerating social and economic change is posing new challenges and opportunities for this largest and newest adult generation—preparing the youth for productive life roles.

Millennials are also increasingly diverse. One in five have at least one immigrant parent; one in ten at least one non-citizen parent. According to CH Hartill, PhD, Assistant Dean, Butler University, *Understanding Millennials*, this generation has a variety of advantages—older parents, smaller families, therefore more resources & parental time, more firstborns (roughly 40%) and singletons (approximately 10%), more parental education—one in four Millennials

have at least one parent with a four-year degree or higher, and, believe it or not, reduced divorce rates.

Along with the baby boomers and Gen X reaching older ages, Gen Y is a new feature of the 21st century. These generations are connected in more than just size and era. The prospects of these generations will significantly depend on the strength, adaptability and foresight of their families and how they contribute to their own care, the community, and our nation.

In the last article, you were encouraged to plan your celebration of giving in eleven life arenas that support your core values, life goals, career, budget, and friendships. Whether you contribute time, money, materials, or message, there are individuals in your neighborhood and around the world that need your help. The heart-felt rewards of giving are far beyond the gift itself.

The first six were BASIC CORE VALUES & PRINCIPLES, HOME/FAMILY/VALUES, RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS/ CHURCH/MISSIONS, HISTORY/WESTERN CULTURE, PUBLIC POLICY/DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, and SCIENCE/MEDICINE. Here are the other five:

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.

Remember, as with the first six life arenas, there are many creative ways to give and show benevolence (e.g. purchase of materials to publications, giving goods and materials, tax and estate planning, money gifts, time and effort). Celebrate the love and life that surround you. Help this young and growing adult generation embrace the values and compassion for humanity, beginning with your own family. Open your heart and eyes to all the possibilities for your family, community, nation. May you then experience an exceptionally creative, appreciative, and abundant New Year! See you in 2007!

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