

# *From the Heart. . .*

*. . . Life Skills for Today*

*By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC*



## ***Celebrating with a Kid's Heart*** **(Topic of the Month: Celebration)**

How about this Christmas holiday, seeing this season from a kid's heart? Let's embrace their wonder, anticipation, excitement, laughter, fun, and the joy that only Christmas brings to us all. Yet, how do we older folks cut loose from the busyness of life, work, and daily responsibilities so we can be a kid at heart this season? Here are some tips and ideas to try out right now. Each week, I will then add some more ideas to try as you get closer to Christmas day and the New Year. So, bring out the holly, deck the halls with color and music that will ring with laughter and love that will shine through each day and throughout the New Year.

- Write your own Christmas Story as a family. Pick your own characters and weave a story of fun and family, with a special message for those you love.
- Have each one in your family make their own Christmas ornament that reflects how they feel about someone in the family and the Christmas story.
- Decorate your front door in a new and unique way. Go through your closets, garage, even your backyard, for all kinds of ideas—not just something new you buy from the store.
- Step out and go caroling in your neighborhood, particularly if this will be your first time. And if you really can't sing a note or you sound like a screeching

fingernail on a chalkboard, just silently mouth the tune. No one will be the wiser!

- Give a gift to your postal person who has been faithfully delivering your mail (and be sure to forgive him or her for any delayed or lost mail before you decide what to give! This is not trick or treat time!).
- Say thank you to five people in your community this week who serve you every day (e.g. grocery clerk, restaurant waiter, hardware store clerk, fast-food server, and the list goes on!)
- Fully forgive someone (family, friend, co-worker) for which you have held an offense for a very long time. You will be amazed out how much Christmas cheer you suddenly experience!
- Do some charitable act anonymously for someone.
- Video tape your family playing out the Nativity story to learn more closely what Christmas is all about. Then copy it to some DVDs and pass around to bring a sweet message and a possible chuckle as they watch you embarrass yourself in the most endearing ways!
- Turn off the TV for a couple days and plan absolutely nothing—and see what spontaneous, in-the-moment happenings occur. You just might enjoy the gift of silence, solitude, and serenity so rarely experienced in our hectic, noisy world.
- For those with very young children, give yourself a day or two to just quietly observe your child at play and contemplation. Notice their expressions and their moments of discovery. Then ask yourself, “How can I experience that?”

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### ***Celebrating with a Joyful Heart*** **(Topic of the Month: Celebration)**

Have you chosen any of the tips given last week to celebrate this season as you make more room for life and relationships? And did you try out any, with a joyful heart, of course? No matter how many good intentions and good deeds we commit to, doesn't it all depend on our attitude that shows up? Yet, I believe even with any "Bah Hum Bug" person, when a simple act of kindness is done each day that "Hum Bug" attitude may just quickly melt away. So, here are some other tips to help your heart thaw out during this "Good News" season.

- Put on your calendar, day planner, phone event calendar a reminder at a certain time each day to stop racing in body and soul for ten minutes. The first 3 minutes of pure silence; the next 2 minutes to say to yourself a word of gratitude about something or someone in your life. The next 3 minutes, look in a mirror and smile. See what you like about yourself. Then the last 2 minutes, laugh...not taking yourself or life too seriously.
- Send a Christmas letter to yourself. Yes, even mail it! Sharing what spontaneously comes to mind that will encourage you in some way. Be creative.

Have some fun with this.

- Pull out a childhood picture of yourself. Frame it and put it in a prominent place throughout the holidays. Let your eyes occasionally gaze on it to ponder your young years. Then think about one person who made your childhood special in some way. If possible, contact them to share your heart about it. If not, then write a non-mailing letter to that person expressing your thoughts; then save it in your memory box for the years to come when you may open it once again.
- Visit a park nearby where children play. Watch how they interact with each other; then meditate on how you were as a child. What ways can you resurrect your own special childlike attitude with those in your life today?—wholesome and healthy of course!

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### ***Remote control train set for Grandson or really Grandpa for Christmas?!*** (Topic of the Month: Celebration)

During the past two weeks, my husband and I have been Christmas shopping like most of you. We are having a house full this year and can't wait for the fun together, particularly Grandpa Benedict! You know why? Our grandson is now old enough for a train set, and is Grandpa having fun picking it out! Yet, as I watch this 63 year old man carefully peruse the toy shelves for just the right one, I see another side to my husband of 42 years.

Grandpa is finally going to have his own remote operated train set to play with too. Yes, that's right. The set for our grandson is designed for three year olds and up, so I guess that qualifies my husband too. And the greatest fun of all he is waiting for is to get down on the floor with our precious little one and watch his delighted soul play trains with Grandpa.

Do you too have something you are so excited about this Christmas holiday? Is it a train set for your child or grandchild? Or something else you may have missed in your own childhood? Well, there is no better time than now to have your long awaited desire come true. Whatever it is, how about stepping out, be spontaneous, make it happen, and share it with your family.

Here are some long awaited childhood wishes I have heard from a number of friends and associates that may spark your own delightful fulfillment for this soon coming Christmas day. And even if you don't celebrate Christmas or any particular holiday this season, celebrate the blessings of your life and relationships with others. Have fun adding your own childhood wishes to this list, as you find a way to be that special child again.

- Ride a pony or horse
- Visit someplace where there is snow and build a giant snowman
- See my grandparents that live far away
- Go to a circus
- Build and ride my own go cart
- Have Dad and brother spend more time with me just for fun
- Get my very own fly fishing pole
- Learn how to draw and paint
- Cook my most favorite childhood food myself

# *From the Heart...*

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## ***Celebrating Simple Moments & No New Year's Resolutions Please!***

What would you most want to focus on this coming year? What new opportunities are coming your way? I am sure we can all come up with many things to consider. Yet, how about those moments in the now that actually becomes your future?

Let's do something different to celebrate the coming New Year. Let's not make any resolutions or promises for the New Year—at least not for a week or two. With the New Year many opportunities and challenges will present themselves, with little or not effort on our part. Yet, this moment is one gift you have right now. I found that during the Christmas holiday with family around, thoughts for tomorrow seemed to fade. Just having the pleasure to watch my daughters and grandson enjoy each other in all the simple things was enough.

- Simple conversations on car repairs, trips made this year to near and far, and fishing stories.
- Making fun of each other, in the most loving way, of course.
- Listening to our grandson starting to learn the alphabet song.

- Roaring with laughter when this Christmas, our grandson really started to get the idea of what that lit up tree was all about, as he wanted to help open everyone's presents just for the sheer joy of ripping the wrappings to see what was inside! And then hearing him say, "Ooo, Ahhh!" the only way a young child can along with us older folks.
- Watching our grandson's eyes light up and laughter—never getting enough of playing with cars and his first remote-controlled train set. And you can get Grandpa already has more tracks and cars stashed away for next year to expand the fun!
- Everyone catching my grandson's cold but who cares—we share everything!!
- Catching every precious moment with my camera and video, with at least a few shots of myself in the play!
- Listening to the stories of other people's kindness to our daughters.
- Making sure my oldest daughter makes the gravy, since I never mastered the right flavor they remember Grandma Benedict making.
- Watching my husband, the gourmet cook, start a new tradition—making homemade custard pie with the lightest, flakiest crust ever! And don't forget our very old tradition of steamed fig bread pudding, just the way Grandma Benedict always made it! And his



famous buttermilk pancakes our daughters get him to promise to make.

- Making sure when we all played Mexican Train Dominoes I didn't pout when I lost! Oh well—But wait until next year!
- Having my tears gently flow from pure pleasure as Grandpa and our grandson played cars together; and also cooking and eating pretend pancakes together on the dining room floor.

These are just a glimpse into those five days together where every moment was treasured. Also knowing that our sweet time together will be over by the time you read this article. Yet, know that I have been gifted so many moments of memories that say I am truly loved and blessed beyond words for these simple moments this Christmas. My hope and prayer are that you too experienced your own special never to be forgotten simple moments with those you love this Christmas and in the coming New Year.

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