

CELEBRATIONS TO REMEMBER

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Celebrations come in all shapes and sizes and are most enjoyable occasions. Celebrations can be collective e.g. a sports team winning a championship or they can be for individuals e.g. birthdays, graduations or personal successes. I wonder what it is that most of us remember about our 'best birthdays'? Was it the gift we got that we always wanted? Was it the friends who came? Was it the effort that others put into it that made it so special? Was it a total surprise birthday? Was it a trip somewhere?

One thing that will make personal celebration especially meaningful for a person is to celebrate it in a way that is cool for them. I know for a fact that my two children have completely different ideas about celebration. One child wanted a big 21st birthday with every friend there, while the other didn't want a 21st birthday at all. One wanted to walk on graduation day and the other didn't. One cannot stand surprises while the other revels in them. The question should be, "What is going to make this celebration most memorable for this person?"

Many parents feel the pressure of having to be extravagant with their celebrations. This is often fueled by advertising, perceived expectations of others (keeping up with the Joneses) and pressure from indulged children. Our kids tell us that the most memorable times they have had, have been times when we didn't spend any money at all, or very little. We just had great fun together. I recall a time when we first came to the States. We had absolutely no spare money and my son's birthday was coming up. I went to the dollar shop and bought a number of silly little plastic gifts and hid them all round the property, creating a treasure hunt. We stood inside the house while our 22 year-old ran around the garden with a funny smile on his face, retrieving all the hidden gifts. We then gave him a lovely birthday cake. He won't forget that one.

Celebrations create wonderful memories so we should celebrate often. It doesn't have to be just birthdays and Christmas. There is a saying that everyone needs to have their 15 minutes of fame. I think everyone needs to feel valued all the time. This can be achieved in many ways. We advocate that each person in a family needs to be celebrated regularly (apart from birthdays and Christmas). Once a month each person should be selected to be 'king' or 'queen' for the day. This means they do not have to do the usual chores and get to choose fun things they would like to do.

People can be celebrated and appreciated daily in a way you may not have thought about. Compliments are a great gift to give one another, yet many people don't know how to give, let alone receive one. There is a misguided idea that compliments will make a person bigheaded. I bet you never forget the praise you are given! If you love to receive praise, then give praise.

It really is simple. Instead of just saying, "Thank you", say, "Thank you for taking the time to help me. I really appreciate your kindness." "I always know the day will go well when you are working with me." "You did a great job of mowing and tidying the yard. It really looks great." To receive a compliment you may say, "Thanks so much for telling me you liked my baking. It was a new recipe and I am glad you enjoyed it." "I am really glad my training session helped you. Thanks for telling me."

Celebrate achievement. Celebrate life. Celebrate often. Celebrate your wife. Celebrate your husband and give him a call. Celebrate long and for no reason at all!

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.