

# celebrations

**Celebrations.** Your birthday, New Year's Eve, Flag Day—these days are known for their celebrations (well maybe not Flag Day so much). They give us time to slow down, appreciate things, and have a little fun. One of my favorites happens yearly, when my husband, Peter, and I commemorate our wedding anniversary at one of the best restaurants in town. It's become our tradition. With magnificent service and superb food, the evening is unhurried, quiet, and romantic. We always talk about the events of our lives over the past year, as well as our hopes and goals for our new year together.

Now I know some of you are thinking that an evening like this is a waste of money. A gift would last longer. After such an evening, what do you have? Well, I'll tell you. You have honored your past, strengthened your bonds, renewed your commitment to each other, and you've added good stuff to the mental memory book of your lifetime. I'd say that's worth a little bit of extra work.

Sadly, many people forego celebrations. They say fancy-schmancy parties are too much trouble. Why get out the good china when you can use paper plates? Why put up the Christmas tree for only a week? Why wrap birthday gifts when the kids will just rip off the paper and you'll wind up pitching it? Why go to all that trouble? What's the big deal? As my father always says, "It's just another day."

No, it's not! Celebrations help us pay attention to the truly important things in life. It's good to slow down, to share quality time with family

or friends. What most people don't understand is that your traditions don't have to be china and crystal. They can be family barbeques, popping popcorn and watching home movies on the first snowy night of the year, or reading the comics in bed on Sunday mornings. It's great to throw a party for momentous occasions, but it's also fun to hit the water park on the first day of summer vacation. The opportunities are endless.

Not enough celebrating in your own life? Consider how you might help others commemorate their special happenings. Present your niece with the video you shot as she was awarded her master's degree. Plan a shopping trip to celebrate a friend's successful loss of forty pounds. Hold a "puppy shower" to acknowledge your neighbor's first litter of Yorkies. It doesn't matter what the activity is, as long as it's fun and brings people together.

My mother left this world at the age of eighty-seven. She lived with my family for the last nine years of her life. Rather than the usual remembrances of floral arrangements or tuna casseroles, my neighbors got together and gave us a glorious redbud tree in her honor. One afternoon we all assembled around the tree and christened it with champagne while toasting the wonderful woman she was. I will never forget that celebration. Every time that I see that tree I think of my mother and feel grateful to have such wonderful neighbors.

The world of the twenty-first century can seem impersonal, rushed,

social health

and even scary at times. It's easy to get caught up in the news, the daily grind, or the hassles of the day. Sometimes we need to stop and acknowledge our blessings.

Celebrations and traditions strengthen our relationships. They connect us. They help us to feel like we belong, giving us a better sense of who we are and where we fit in the grand scheme of things.

The Mad Hatter had the right idea when he wished Alice "a very merry un-birthday!" So what if it's not your anniversary or a national holiday? Celebrate today. After all, isn't the everyday beauty of life cause enough?

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Reflections reflections



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