



Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

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The Gift of Celebration

It's July ... the month in America when summer is in full bloom and we celebrate the birth of our nation. July 4 ... Independence Day ... a time for parades, picnics, and pyrotechnics. It's a national holiday full of national pride.

Yet, for some of us, it's *just* a holiday ... a day off from work, a day to play. The meaning of the holiday is forgotten and the celebration is lost, replaced instead by parties and playtime. It's a subtle change, and quite common in our modern world. We often lose touch with the heart and soul of our celebrations, forgetting why we take time to celebrate in the first place. Then we substitute simple partying for the richness of celebration.

What is this thing we call 'celebration'? It often resembles partying and recreation, because our celebrations frequently have that character. They are done in large groups with noise and energy. Yet, some celebrations are actually conducted solemnly, even reverently, in small numbers or even alone. Indeed, the focus of the celebration determines the form it takes.

This reveals the first of three characteristics of a celebration.

A celebration must have a reason to exist beyond itself. While a party can exist just for its own sake, a true celebration has some external focus. It is an intentional, conscious activity designed to recognize, to honor, to acknowledge some significant person or event.

What we choose to focus on and how we choose to celebrate are purely up to us. It is interesting to note, however, that we often choose to celebrate with intoxicants, creating within us an impaired blur of consciousness that clouds the original purpose and power of our celebration. Perhaps that's one reason our celebration becomes just another party.

Besides being conscious and intentional, a celebration also involves joyfulness, shown in everything from quiet smiles to exuberant dancing. We do not celebrate in sorrow ... we celebrate in joy. We celebrate in joy because the object of our celebration gives reason for our joy.

Watching the World Cup soccer matches recently reminded me of the numerous, passionate, colorful ways people around the world express their joy. Celebrations were abundant among the athletes, the fans, and all those simply enjoying the sport.

The third component of celebration is thankfulness. We celebrate something because we are joyfully thankful for its existence. Consider for a moment what you are truly thankful for ... the people, the events, the institutions ... the opportunities, the outcomes, the experiences. Birthdays, anniversaries, graduations ... health, healing, beauty in all its forms ... strength, success, courage ... beginnings, conclusions, reunions ... love. The list simply grows as life progresses. What marvelous opportunities for celebration!

To develop our own personal list of thankfulness, we must again be alert ... conscious ... intentionally tuned into the joys of our life and world. Our response, then, can be brief or extended. It can be done privately in intimate connection with our Creator, corporately with family or friends, or in mass with large crowds. The style, setting, and reasons are yours.

So are the rewards. Since they are full of meaning, celebrations strengthen and refresh connections with those we celebrate. They remind us of the importance of historical events, and reinforce the values we hold dear. They help us come alive to what is real and important in our life, all the while refreshing us in our journey.

Such a gift, such an opportunity ... to celebrate and be celebrated!



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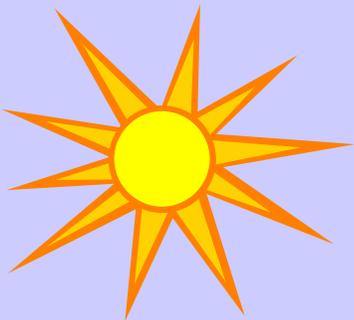
CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can help you take on the challenges of life and bring new vitality into your life relationships.

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Is Celebration Hard?

Do you find it hard to celebrate? Does it seem like a frivolous waste of time and energy? Is it difficult to look outside of yourself, to honor and visibly appreciate others?

Is there pain or fear or heaviness that weighs down your spirit? Is joy missing from your life? Are your efforts to open up in thankfulness overwhelmed by the stress and frustrations of life?

If this is the state of your life, *take heart*, because *it need not remain so!* I encourage you to commit to a more fulfilling life. I encourage you to reach out for the help that can empower you to a new way of living - a way which honors yourself and others, a way where joy and thankfulness outlast pain and sorrow, a way where celebration *is* the way of life.

It all starts with a decision to change, and then acting on that decision. The rest will follow.



"The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate."

-Oprah Winfrey