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MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

I LOVE LIFE!

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I always really enjoy the last few months of the year, and the prospect of a New Year just around the bend. I love to celebrate, and the holidays are the perfect reason to gather with family and friends to enjoy togetherness, good food, and simple traditions.

Of course, throughout the year there are other special days—such as birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, and weddings, for example—that give cause to celebrate, and I enjoy those, too. In fact, I love to celebrate life, sometimes for no specific reason at all.

As it turns out, I am not the only one. While compiling the articles for this issue of *Motivated*, I was pleasantly surprised to find that there are quite a few others who feel it's important to not just celebrate designated holidays and special days, but to include celebration as much as we can in every day of our lives.

We may not always feel like it, and there may be times when the challenges we face make it difficult to find cause for celebration, but as brought out in the article "I Love Life" on page 3, happiness has little to do with circumstances, and so much to do with perspective.

I hope that the articles on celebrating—both specific holidays and non-specified occasions—will renew your perspective and help you to enjoy the coming holiday season and enter the New Year with joyful anticipation.

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

I Love Life!

By Evelyn Sichrovsky, adapted



The walls of my bedroom are brightening with a new day's sun. I rub my eyes, stretch, and yawn, allowing my thoughts to travel far on memory lane. Through the twists and turns of my life, I've made what I like to think is a discovery—though surely many others have long found this secret. I have discovered what makes a person happy, and how I can be happy too.

For many years, foremost on my criteria for joy was optimal health and freedom from physical pain. Growing up with asthma and other health problems meant that was a hard goal for me to attain!

When I was sixteen, I underwent an emergency surgery to remove a ruptured gangrenous cyst and spent New Year's Day in the hospital. When I was able to get out of my wheelchair and take my first post-surgery steps, I could hardly contain my joy! Those slow, shaky steps were the best New Year's gift I could have asked for. I suddenly realized that joy can come from something as simple as being able to walk.

Another source of joy is being able to breathe easily. My asthma has always made me recognize this as a blessing, but an experience a few years ago gave it new meaning. I underwent an abdominal CT scan, and halfway through I was injected with a contrast medium. Unbeknownst to us, this substance can be very dangerous

for asthma sufferers. As the fluid entered my bloodstream, I experienced terrible pain and immense pressure in my lungs. Within minutes, I went into toxic shock, brought on by a severe allergic reaction. I was rushed to the ER, where nurses administered antidotes and hooked me to a respirator. Two intense hours later, I was finally out of danger.

I will never forget how I felt when I returned home. I stood by the window in the sunset's rosy hue, breathing deeply and thinking, I can breathe painlessly again. I am here, I am alive!

The ordeal also filled me with gratitude for my sight. At the height of the allergy, my face had swollen so tightly that I could barely open my eyes. When I was again able to open my eyes, I couldn't stop looking at everything around me in excitement and awe.

Being able to walk, breathe, and see—it's true, my criteria for joy have changed drastically. I'm finding more to be happy about than I ever thought possible, as I learn that my happiness has little to do with my circumstances and so much to do with my perspective. My life is full of challenges and joys, equally worth celebrating!

I open my eyes again and sit up. A ray of golden sunlight is streaming through the window and over the foot of my bed. I wiggle my toes in its glow and smile. It's a new day, and I'm going to celebrate it! ■

The Importance of Celebrating



By Mike Robbins, adapted

How do you feel about celebrating? If you're anything like me and most of the people I know, you probably enjoy it.

However, I notice that as much as I like to celebrate, I sometimes find it challenging as well. Here are some of the reasons that I use *not* to do it:

- I don't have the time or money to celebrate right now, there's work that needs to get done.
- Things aren't yet as good as they "should" be for me to stop and celebrate.

- People will think I'm weird, naive, or obnoxious if I celebrate too much.
 - With so much suffering in the world and people having a tough time these days, it's not appropriate for me to celebrate.
 - I'll celebrate, for sure, but not until everything turns out exactly as I want it to.
- Can you relate to any of these?

We were recently at Disneyland with our girls. We love it there! One of the many magical aspects of Disneyland is how they fully embrace the power of celebration. Every day at Disneyland feels like your birthday, favorite holiday, and New Year's Eve—all wrapped into one. The parade down Main Street is even called, "Celebrate You."

I was really struck by this focus on celebration when we were there most recently and realized that one of the main reasons people come to Disneyland and keep coming back (like us), is that it's an excuse to celebrate. And while they do an amazing job at Disneyland with the rides, the characters, the shows, the fireworks, and more—the real magic behind it all is the power of celebration.

Too often in life we think we have to have a "legitimate" reason to celebrate—a birthday, winning an award, an anniversary, the completion of a project, the accomplishment of a goal, taking a vacation, or some other "special occasion." While all of these things are fun to celebrate, we don't have to wait for them to happen to feel justified in our celebration.

At Disneyland they celebrate just to celebrate—on Tuesday mornings and Thursday nights, on special occasions and holidays, and on every single day throughout the year. What if we did more of this in our lives—even and especially when things get tough?

While it may seem counter-intuitive, celebrating for "no reason" and counting our blessings when things are hard can literally transform our experience of being alive.

I was in a cab in Houston a few years ago, heading back to the airport after speaking at an event for Chevron. The cab driver and I got into an interesting conversation about life, family, and the state of our culture in America. The driver told me he was from Ethiopia originally, but had been living in the United States for about twenty years.

I asked him, "What's your take on western society, given that you didn't grow up here." He paused for a long time; then asked me, "Can I be honest with you?" I said, "Of course." He then said, "I think many people in this culture act like spoiled brats."

"Why do you say that?" I asked, a bit surprised by his response. "Mike," he said, "I'm from Ethiopia...every day here is a good day. I don't understand why people just don't walk around here with their hands in the air saying, 'THANK YOU'."

Regardless of what's going on in our lives right now, we have so much to celebrate and be grateful for. Sometimes the best thing for us to celebrate is the mere fact that we've made it to this point in life, especially if things have been challenging, which for many of us they have been recently and/or at times in our lives.

Celebrating is not only an after-the-fact phenomenon; it's a way of being and can become a way of life if we choose to live that way. Stop for a moment right now and think of all the things (big and small) that you can celebrate about your life right now.

As Oprah Winfrey says, "The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate." ■

The Celebration Dinner

A lesson on celebrating life



By Sophie King, adapted

Nick and I sit opposite each other at the table bathed in candlelight and celebrity chat.

This is a special restaurant. The type that magazine-cover couples regularly frequent or where ordinary couples go for milestone birthdays. If you don't believe me, check the prices.

I can't myself because the prices only appear on the man's menu. "I didn't think they were allowed to do that nowadays," I giggle to my husband. "Not very politically correct, is it?"

He clasps my hand. "Probably not."

We share a smile in the candlelight that casts shadows over my husband's strong jaw line. Smiles and restaurant bills aren't the only things we share.

All our married life we've said we'd divide everything, good or bad. Both of us had parents who divorced, so we're determined to do all we can to remain together.

My thoughts drifted to the time when Nick had found me weeping at the kitchen table. When he quietly sat down and suggested that crying wasn't going to help, I demanded what else he expected.

"How about telling yourself we'll pull through," he'd said. Then Ben had come down the stairs, all gangly the way 17-year-olds are, like unformed cockerels with DIY haircuts.

"Are you two arguing?" our son asked, his baby face creased prematurely with worry. "I'm trying to do my coursework."

What's wrong?"

"Nothing," I lied. "It's just a silly misunderstanding."

"Misunderstanding?" asked Nick after our son had gone back upstairs.

I raised my head determinedly, feeling stronger than I'd done for weeks because of Ben's face and the realization that I had to be brave for him. "Yes. I got it wrong, and you got it right. Things are going to change now."

And they did. For a week, I told myself that there was no point in worrying until I knew for certain. "The results should be back by next Tuesday," the consultant had told me.

So I filled the intervening days with everything I could think of to keep busy. I weeded the overgrown vegetable patch and put in bedding plants that would flower by late summer. I took myself off on a day's creative writing course and wrote about my adolescence. Then I got out a box of watercolors that Emma had left behind when she went to university and I painted the scene from the sitting-room window. On Friday, I went into work and threw myself into the mess that had accumulated during my week off.

During my lunch hour, I found a park bench and began a novel I'd been meaning to read for ages over a Brie and cranberry sandwich from the deli. Every bite was unbearably sweet; every word a jewel from another world. Why, I asked myself as I marveled at the grass mosaic of blades in front of me, hadn't I appreciated this before?

"Tell you what," said Nick. "We'll celebrate when you get the all clear and go to that restaurant. The one with the crazy prices and beautiful view."

The people at the table behind us are celebrating a big birthday judging from the 50 candles on the cake and the woman in a lilac T-shirt who's blowing them out.

She's surrounded by grown-up children and a cute little boy with an overlong fringe. A week ago, I was panicking in case I wouldn't make it long enough to be a grandmother. But not now.

"Here's to my brave wife," says my husband, and the rim of his glass meets mine so that a droplet of his falls into my glass.

Anyone who knew what we'd been through in the past few days would assume that I'd had a bit of a health scare. But they'd be wrong. It's not a scare any more. It's fact. There are things they can do, of course. And things that we can do too, as Nick said. Like being positive.

So when he suggested that we'd still go out to that special restaurant, I agreed, providing Ben came, too. It seemed important then that we did everything together, so that his adolescence wasn't fearful like mine—something the writing course had taught me.

At this point, our tall, handsome son joins us from the restroom where he's been texting his girlfriend, and I smile reassuringly at him because I've learned that you shouldn't just celebrate good news.

"So how are you feeling?" he asks tightly.

I look at the people who are celebrating the birthday party, where the grandson has fallen asleep on his lilac granny's lap.

I glance over to a table where a young man is producing a ring, and I think of the bedding plants which I'm determined to see by late summer.

"Fine," I say. "Absolutely fine." ■

HAPPY NEW YEAR'S DAY



Adapted Web Reprint

New Year's is one of the oldest holidays still celebrated, but the exact date and nature of the festivities has changed over time. It originated thousands of years ago in ancient Babylon, celebrated as an eleven day festival on the first day of spring. During this time, many cultures used the sun and moon cycle to decide the "first" day of the year. It wasn't until Julius Caesar implemented the Julian calendar that January 1st became the common day for the celebration of the New Year. The content of the festivities has varied as well. While early celebrations celebrated earth's cycles, in the twentieth century, it has become a holiday mostly associated with traditions and resolutions.

While celebration varies all over the world, common traditions include:

- Making resolutions or goals to improve one's life. Common resolutions concern diet, exercise, habits, and other issues concerning personal wellness. A common view

is to use the first day of the year as a clean slate to improve one's life.

- A gathering of loved ones. Here you'll typically find feasting, a celebratory drink, music, dancing, and other methods of merriment.

Fireworks, parades, and concerts.

- Famous parades include London's New Year's Day Parade, and large firework displays, such as in Sydney, Australia, and Dubai.

Many nations and cultures within them have their own characteristic way of celebrating the New Year:

In Turkey, New Year's Eve is one of the most popular holidays. Turkish New Year's Eve traditions include a family dinner, a national lottery drawing, and a countdown to midnight. Many people in Turkey start celebrating New Year's Eve with a large family dinner. Variety shows on television begin in the late afternoon and continue until early morning of the next day. Many people play games while waiting for the clock to strike midnight.



State TV channels announce the winning numbers of the New Year's national lottery just before midnight.

In Thailand, Thais have been celebrating the 1st of January as the first day of the year for almost 70 years. The New Year is a long holiday in Thailand from the 31st of December to the 3rd of January. Many people take this opportunity to travel either domestic or abroad. For people who are away from their hometown, it is the time to go home to visit parents and family. A lot of Thais celebrate the New Year by attending countdown events around the country where there are concerts and magnificent fireworks. A number of Thais visit their local temple to make merit either on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day. Some people also attend meditation retreats over the New Year.

In the Philippines, celebrations are very loud, believing that the noise will scare away evil beings. There is often a midnight feast featuring twelve different

round fruits to symbolize good luck for the twelve months of the year. Other traditional foods include sticky rice and noodles, but not chicken or fish, because these animals are food foragers, which can be seen as bad luck for the next year's food supply.

In colder countries, close to water, such as Canada, parts of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, it is customary to organize cold-water plunges. These plunges and races, sometimes called a Polar Bear Plunge, often raise money for charity, or awareness for a cause.

The old Scottish song, "Auld Lang Syne," is sung at the stroke of midnight in almost every English-speaking country in the world to bring in the New Year. At least partially written by Robert Burns in the 1700s, it was first published in 1796 after Burns' death. The words, "Auld Lang Syne," literally mean, "old long ago," or simply, "the good old days." ■

5 TIPS FOR AN EASY PARTY

By Rana Bacaloni, adapted

Everyone loves parties! But while many of us love to be invited, we dread it when we have to reciprocate, because we know all too well what it entails to coordinate between food, decoration, and entertainment; and all this has to be done on a budget, for most of us.

As a party planner for school fundraisers for many years, I have applied my experience to my own personal parties. Here are some tips to make your party a success while on a budget.

Tip #1: Choose a theme. Pick a theme or occasion that will dictate your décor and menu. A theme can simply be color coordination or inspired by what you have in your home. If you are doing flower centerpieces, check with your local stores, see what flowers are in season, and chose your tableware to what is available.

Tip #2: Accessorize. Once you have your theme going, look around your house, and your garden to see what could be utilized as a table décor. If your event is a formal one, it's helpful to have basic tablecloths on hand in colors such as black, white and cream. I have also at times used twin size sheets that were on sale when I wanted an interesting pattern, and no guest noticed the difference, on the contrary, I received a lot of compliments!

Tip #3: Feast with the eyes. Let food also serve as decoration. Voltaire once said: "Nothing would be more tiresome than eating and drinking if God had not made them a pleasure as well as a necessity." It is all in the presentation. For example, instead of laying a vegetable or fruit tray on the table, put them on bamboo skewers and place them in a pot as a centerpiece. The possibilities are endless.

Tip #4: Give yourself time. If you are cooking your own home made food. Have your menu prepared ahead of time. Purchase all ingredients a few days in advance and try to pick food that does not enslave you to the kitchen, yet looks impressive. Where available, slow cookers can make your life easier. You can make pot roasts and all sorts of stews without having to spend hours preparing. It also keeps the food hot and ready to serve to those guests who go by the motto, "Les gents chic sont toujours en retard," meaning that classy people are always late!

Tip #5: Don't forget yourself! Last but not least, don't forget to prepare ahead of time what you will wear. You want to make sure you look as stunning as your table setting!

Happy partying! ■

CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS WITH A STORY

By Mary V. Danielsen, adapted

In books and drawers throughout my house I have more than 30 birthday cards given to me by my mother each year on my birthday. The paper card itself is of little significance to me. It is the hand written note inside each card that I cherish and reread throughout the years. It's my mother's handwriting I preserve.

Each year, Mom takes a moment to tell me how much I mean to her, how blessed and lucky she feels to be my mother, and how she wishes me all the health and happiness for the coming year. She does this for me and my eight brothers and sisters every year.

Two years ago, when she was 89 years old, she sent me a beautifully penned handwritten note on pink paper telling me about the day I was born. My siblings tell me they all received a similar note that year. I cried when I read it.

Mary dearest –

Let me tell you about the first day of your life:

You were born on March 25, 1963. You are the eighth of nine children and our fifth daughter—loved and welcomed at once!

As labor started at home, we alerted Dr. S. Paul Coccia, our family physician. We met Dr. Coccia at the hospital and expected a usual normal delivery. However, a breech delivery was looming, and a quick delivery was not expected. Dr. Coccia, always respected by the staff, remained calm and assured. In fact, he decided to leave the labor room and have a cup of tea, reassuring me that he would be nearby and would check my progress.

No sooner had he left the room than you were on your way to join your family. However, you were in a breech position. With great skill, as reported by the staff, Dr. Coccia turned you around and you arrived in normal position—beautiful, and precious!

An adoring family welcomed you home a few days later, and throughout the years you have been a loved, respected and beautiful daughter—a talented, loving person, as well as a fine mother and wife. I am ever grateful.

Love, Mom

When researching our family histories we always want to know where our story begins. It begins on your birthday. ■



Celebrate

NOTABLE
QUOTES



The most beautiful things are not associated with money; they are memories and moments. If you don't celebrate those, they can pass you by.

—**Alek Wek**

Each day holds a surprise. But only if we expect it can we see, hear, or feel it when it comes to us. Let's not be afraid to receive each day's surprise, whether it comes to us as sorrow or as joy. It will open a new place in our hearts, a place where we can welcome new friends, and celebrate more fully our shared humanity.—**Henri Nouwen**

We all have life storms, and when we experience rough times, and we recover from them, we should celebrate that we got through them. No matter how bad it may seem, there's always something beautiful that you can find.

—**Mattie Stepanek**

Celebrate yourself... and stay positive!

—**Khoudia Diop**

Celebrate what you want to see more of.—**Tom Peters**

I decided if you're lucky enough to be alive, you should use each birthday to celebrate what your life is about.

—**Mary Steenburgen**

I learned from my grandmother, who grew up in devastating war times, how important it is to keep with tradition and celebrate the holidays during tough times.—**Marcus Samuelsson**

Life is too short not to celebrate nice moments!—**Jurgen Klopp**

I want to tell everybody to celebrate every day, to savor the day and be good to yourself, love yourself, and then you can be good to others and be of service to others.—**Charlotte Rae**

