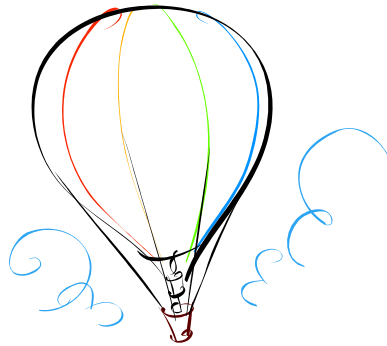


teach, empower **AND** model

Focusing on Social/Emotional and Character Development (SECD) for adults



CELEBRATING THE JOURNEY



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

~ Oprah Winfrey

Celebrating the Journey

If we think about setting goals, and can picture our path, we may see our journey as a long one with lots to do before we reach our goal. This long and winding path gives us many opportunities to set smaller goals, problem solve, learn from our failures, celebrate our successes and persevere to reach our ultimate vision. When we achieve what we set out to do, we feel good about ourselves and/or our team. This journey and the end goal are worth celebrating!

Celebrations help shape “who we are” *“We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make our world.” - Buddha*

Celebrations validate us. They give us essential recognition telling us what we and/or our group can accomplish. This reflection and recognition adds positive fuel to our lives; and keep us moving forward during times of set-backs.

When we take the time to reflect on our accomplishments, our self confidence grows. And in turn, when we take the time to help others reflect on THEIR accomplishments, their confidence and self-esteem grow as well. Helping others celebrate also has a positive effect on our own morale. All parties win.

Celebrations guide us. *“When I feel appreciated, I naturally perform better. Simple.” -Employee quote from a recognition survey shared in the book [Ten Steps to Effective Recognition](#) by Michelle Gauselesin Nold.*

Feedback and acknowledgment are important because they tell us we are on the right path. When an individual is told they have done something well, this affirms their actions. This recognition becomes a model of the type of work expected from others and it propels us toward bigger and better things.

Celebrations tell us what we have done is important. *Imagine a team winning the World Series without champagne spraying everywhere. And yet companies win all the time and let it go without so much as a high five. Work is too much a part of life not to recognize moments of achievement”-Jack Welch*

USA Today came out with a study that revealed employees say the number one thing that motivates them is being appreciated. In fact, it's the number one benefit ahead of pay, days off, you name it – it's the number one benefit.

Celebrating affirms our accomplishment(s) is “a big deal” and it has been worth our time, effort and creativity. It tells us what we have done has meaning. If we minimize this, we are saying the exact opposite and how can *THAT* be a motivator?

Celebrating the Journey continued

Celebrations make us feel good. *“When one can truly celebrate, they are allowing themselves to feel the emotion and meaning going along with what they have accomplished. Meaning, pleasure of the goal achieved and purpose = happiness.” -Tal Ben Shahar*

Happier people are more productive, creative, motivated and have better relationships. When we focus internally on the pleasure we derive from an accomplishment, spirits are lifted and morale is boosted. This self-enjoyment provides the greatest fuel for perseverance and further learning. When we stretch ourselves, this added success that helps our self confidence skyrockets.

Let’s celebrate the journey. Let’s celebrate what we learn about the work, ourselves and our group. Let’s even celebrate errors as some of our most valuable learning tools. And let’s help others celebrate their accomplishments – for when we recognize them we are truly giving them a gift, letting them know “they are worth it.”

Thoughts to consider when celebrating

- Focus on what is working or we will miss what is right in front of us.
- Applaud little achievements along the way to keep the fire burning.
- Celebrate accomplishments that reinforce key values and live up to the goals.
- Invite those you want to recognize to something special; a lunch, special meeting with other staff, etc. Give them something to look forward to.
- Be thoughtful in planning for the event. This will help recipients feel more important than if something was "thrown together."
- Weave celebrations into everyday occurrences so they are integrated into the bigger picture of life.
- If people don’t know each other, name tags are a thoughtful touch.
- Commit to the celebration at the time the plan is being created. Give specific details as to “who, what, where, why, how and when” you will celebrate.
- A key to effective recognition is praising the person immediately following his or her accomplishment. Delaying the recognition can lose its value and seem like an afterthought.

Celebrating the Journey continued

- Recognize the recipients as human beings in addition to recognizing them for jobs well done. Be vulnerable and connect with their minds and hearts. Let them know how their accomplishment(s) make you feel. This will build loyalty, trust and team unity.
- Explain “why” an achievement is a big deal. This helps the recipient know exactly what is being celebrated.
- Recognize how people would like to be recognized. If this isn’t done, the celebration may backfire. To learn more about how the recipients prefer to be celebrated, we have created the following worksheet, [“Getting to Know You”](#).

Areas to be mindful of

- Be careful not to over celebrate so that the significance isn’t diminished.
- It’s nice to have a ritual. Be careful this doesn't turn into entitlement.
- Busy schedules can push celebrations into the “not needed” pile. Remember, when we take time to celebrate an accomplishment, we are helping to nourish an individual’s well-being and/or a group’s culture. Not only are we celebrating our own self worth, we are recognizing the achievements of others, helping to motivate all to succeed.

Below are suggestions others have shared with us. Take these and run with them – OR – use these ideas as stepping stones to get your creative juices flowing, celebrate yourself, your team and/or others.

There are times recognition can be impromptu and other times where recognition is planned. Both have their places. Below are some helpful ideas for a variety of budgets.

- Present a certificate of appreciation letting others know what is being recognized. We have created 3 templates for your use. Please click below to access each specific form.
 - [“In recognition of you”](#)
 - [“In appreciation of you”](#)
 - [“In celebration of you”](#)
- Once you know your recipient(s) like public recognition, include celebration announcements in your newsletter, email and/or local media.

Celebrating the Journey continued

- Shout about the accomplishments on posters, bulletin boards, graphs and even wearable items.
- When there is a group of people to recognize, let others know what this group, as a whole, means to you and why.
- If you know an individual wants public attention, recognize them at a social event.
- Give out tickets to sporting events or other activities.
- Take a photo of the accomplishment and share it at a later event.
- Ask your team to email other team members to recognize them.
- Give unscheduled time off.
- “Relax or change” dress code for a day.
- Write an email or handwritten note to the recipient.
- Bring in special entertainment to celebrate, motivate and recognize the accomplishment.
- Pass out popcorn, ice cream or some other special “treat”.
- Add the names of all recipients being recognized to a raffle and hand out prizes.
- Provide perks to show your staff you appreciate their hard work. This can be done through quantity discount purchases. Flex work days can be offered as well as services brought to your place of work such as oil changes, dry cleaning pick up etc.

Celebrating rituals that you and your team have created help to build relationships and keep energy high. These celebrations allow for self-reflection, built-in motivation and recognition. Rituals can occur during each meeting, weekly, monthly, semi-annually or once a year; whatever schedule works best.

- When your group meets, have each person share a personal success and reflect upon the journey that took them there.
- During a meeting wrap-up, have each person recognize someone else in the room for something they learned during the meeting.
- Keep plastic champagne glasses and "mock" champagne on hand. When something big occurs - pull it out for an immediate celebration!

Celebrating the Journey continued

- We have received a lot of suggestions for celebrations with food since it often adds to the festivities and nurtures people. Think about planning:
 - monthly lunch meetings where successes can be shared.
 - a service award luncheon – to appreciate employee’s contributions.
 - birthday luncheons – to celebrate the individual.
 - An employee “recognition of the month” and take them to breakfast. Use this time to get to know the recipient even better. *How do they feel about what they have achieved? What suggestions do they have moving forward? What are their hopes and dreams? What can you do to help them?*
 - A year-end luncheon, in-house or at a restaurant, to celebrate all that has been achieved and to recognize the “blood, sweat and tears” that went into the work.
- Hold an awards banquet for your staff and provide awards for the core values important to your group. Talk about the successes throughout the year and the significance behind the awards. All staff members or a panel can vote on the awards.
- Write a personal letter each year to celebrate an employee’s anniversary at work. Share your reflections of their work, what you personally like about their character and specifically how they have helped you reach your goal(s).
- Make it a ritual to ask, "What are we celebrating today?" Take the time to hear people reflect on something good that is going on in their lives.
- Get together at the end of the year for a celebration!
 - Provide a forum for all to tell stories
 - Highlight the work done throughout the year. Start with the successes*, then acknowledge the changes and challenges, looking at these as “team opportunities” for the future.
 - *When discussing the successes:
 - report on the work accomplished.
 - share what each person liked and learned throughout the year.
 - create a safe environment for all to “self reflect” on how their personal accomplishments make them feel.
 - reflect and share what the teammates brought to the table.
- Set up a recognition program for employees to recognize each other. Place recognition boxes and forms for employees around the company. A couple of times a year have one of the executives deliver a token of appreciation to each individual – for each recognition they received.

Celebrating the Journey continued

- Thank your team members for their dedication and hard work by having quarterly team events – such as go-carting, bowling or lunch, (Yes! Food again.)
- Create a traveling trophy award that is "special" to you and your team.

Make your celebrations an ongoing collection:

- Keep a journal of positive "stuff" about your group. At the end of the year, present it to the group and thank them for the gift of their progress and support they have given you.
- Keep a journal about positive "stuff" others said about you!
- Create a scrapbook of your and/or your team's successes.
- Share these successes on a bulletin board for all to see.
- Create a visual collection so each time a personal or group accomplishment is met, the collection grows. (For example, Have a hat and add a feather to it for each achievement, or bring in a rock and mark the celebration on it, etc.)
- Have a rewards program. People build up points for each success and win a reward when they reach a certain level of points.

Each celebration we take part in can help us reflect on something good that has happened; something that we can be proud of which in turn can motivate us towards accomplishing even more. Let's celebrate our journey, our accomplishments, our team's work and the work of others. It is during these times we realize what we do with our lives is valuable and worthwhile!

Additional resources on the topic of "Celebration" for your review

- Books
- Certificates of:
 - appreciation
 - celebration
 - recognition
- "Getting to Know You" - form to be filled out by employee on how they like to be recognized
- Pondering Points (fun, reflective questions, quotes and activities around celebrations)
- Results of Celebration Survey
- Sharing Practices

Available at <http://www.charmmdfoundation.org/Celebration.html>