

## CHAPTER 6

# Good Job!

### RISES OF PASSAGE

*His master said to him, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.*

*Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities.*

*Come, share your master’s joy.”*

MATTHEW 25:23

“You’re my mother—you have to say that.”

Those all-too-familiar words are repeated every day by millions of kids who are worried about their looks, or their ability to play on the varsity team, or the likelihood that they’ll have a date for the prom, or any of a hundred other challenges that make the middle school and high school years tough to navigate.

When their self-assessments are skewed toward “loser,” teens don’t quite know how to respond to a parental word of praise or encouragement that counters their critical evaluation. In their minds, anything positive has to be fiction. That’s why

a parent’s attempt to help may be wrongly interpreted as pity or the expectation of failure.

There is, however, a way for parents to assure children of their confidence in them. The solution is so simple and obvious it is easy to overlook: Celebrate, Celebrate, Celebrate! Use every opportunity you can find to specifically tell your teen what is going right. This might take some getting used to because parents are more habituated to spotting the undone than the done, but the effort will pay off.

Find something to praise every day and point it out. Start the day with a casual remark like, “I think that shirt looks good on you,” or “I’m looking forward to getting to your game this afternoon.” Individually, these remarks don’t carry much weight, but cumulatively they convey that you are paying attention to your teen, and you like what you see. Bit by bit, these positive messages wear away negative self-perception and build a sense of worth.

Use the student council campaign, the learner’s permit, the appreciative thanks from the

neighbor whose lawn got mowed, the first driver’s license, the completed term paper, the science fair project that made it to school in one piece, or success in a game or on the stage as a reason to add a dessert to dinner or make a favorite meal. Every time you take note of a life mile-marker or a sign of progress and maturity, you are inoculating your son or daughter against the moments of despair that often make him or her deaf to the very same message. Accenting the positive at a moment when there is tangible proof of accomplishment provides an argument-free situation in which parents and other family members can express their pride, first in the child and then in the accomplishment.

You’re not independently saying you think your daughter will make a good driver, you’re repeating the opinion of the examiner who handed out the passing test grade. You’re not exaggerating your son’s intelligence, you’re happily noting where he landed in the national percentile for students who also took that achievement test. You’re not insisting that you gave birth to a future

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*Both milestones  
and everyday events  
can be cause for a  
little celebration  
and a lot  
of affirmation.*

.....

*Let your kids  
know you're willing  
to settle for less  
drama in exchange  
for a sincere hug.*

Academy Award winner, you're saying that you will be an enthusiastic part of the audience on opening night at the school play.

As you work together to make a special just-for-us family meal, consider the possibility that you are creating a tradition that your children and their future spouses will use to mark their children's successes. Your grandchildren will always know what you are telling your children now: Their very existence, not their accomplishments, is a reason to have a party every day.



# *Let's Talk*

*Did your grade school teacher use gold stars? How did it feel to get one?*

*How did it feel when you didn't get one?*

*How did you form your opinion of yourself as an athlete?*

*What could change that opinion?*

*Some youth sports leagues give trophies to everybody on every team, while others limit awards to their champions and stars. Which approach do you think is most helpful to players? Why?*

*Look at your friends' families.*

*Do you see contrasting ways of handling accomplishments and challenges?*

*Have you ever helped a small child perfect a skill like walking or learning the alphabet?*

*How did you encourage him or her to keep trying when the going got tough?*

*If celebration suppers become regular events at your house,*

*what do you want to celebrate next?*

# *Let's Listen*

Zephaniah 3: 14-20

Matthew 25: 14-30

Luke 15: 11-32

2 Corinthians 8

# Let's Cook

## POACHED SALMON TOPPED WITH CREAMED ASPARAGUS DRESSING

“This calls for a celebration” can become one of your family’s favorite expressions when you decide together that you aren’t going to let each other’s accomplishments, both tiny and terrific, slip by unnoticed. This menu expresses your willingness to do something extra on those special occasions.

### Poached Salmon and Creamed Asparagus Dressing

Serves: 6 | Prep Time: 15 Minutes | Cooking Time: 20 Minutes

#### Poached Salmon

**Ingredients:**

- 6 individual portion salmon fillets
- 3 Tbs. olive oil
- 2 C orange juice
- 1 C white wine
- 3 Tbs. honey or syrup
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced

**Instructions:**

Salt and pepper salmon on both sides. In a deep pan, add olive oil, orange juice, wine, honey or syrup, bay leaves, and garlic slices. Cook over medium heat until liquids begin to simmer. Add salmon and poach for 5-7 minutes on each side uncovered.

Remove salmon and let rest away from the liquids. Continue to cook liquids until reduced by half. The thick liquid, after straining, serves as a nice saucy base on which to place the salmon.

#### Dressing

**Ingredients:**

- 10-15 fresh asparagus stalks
- 1½ C sour cream
- Fresh dill (for garnish)

**Instructions:**

Prepare asparagus by cutting or breaking off the woody part of the stems. In a deep-dish pan, add hot water and let it come to a boil. Add asparagus and cook until it turns bright green and tender (not too soft).

Remove asparagus immediately and place in a food processor with 1½ - 2 cups of sour cream. Salt and pepper to taste (approximately ½ teaspoon of salt and ¼ teaspoon of black pepper) and blend to a creamy light green consistency. Use a serving spoon to top off the poached salmon with dressing. Garnish with sprig of dill.



*Parents like to have their accomplishments celebrated as much as kids do. Don't leave them out of the fun!*