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— by Anupma Prakash, provost and executive vice chancellor



UAF photo by JR Ancheta

Provost Prakash celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Geophysical Institute.

Take the time to recognize, appreciate, and celebrate your uniqueness and your own wins.

The first 28 years of my life I lived in India, a land of many traditions, rituals and celebrations. A religious festival, a wedding in the neighborhood or an unannounced visit from a distant cousin were all solid reasons for a celebration. If I chose to, I could easily participate in over 50 festivities in any given year. I looked forward to some of them and tried to avoid others, but often there was no easy way out. With time, I just learned to participate, engage, and eventually appreciate and enjoy the act of celebrating.

Reflecting back, I recognize that those celebrations were our way to reach out, bond, feel good, be a part of a larger community, and foster a strong sense of belonging. We applauded the accomplishments of each friend and family member. At least for some time, it took our minds off our own stressors and shifted our focus on appreciating their efforts.

The next eight years of my life I lived in Europe. My experiences diversified as I married into a German family. Instead of large-scale or impromptu get-togethers, we bonded over intimate conversations at the dining table. Regardless of the scale or nature of the settings in the two cultures, celebrating each other reinforced what mattered to us and what we valued.

If celebrations have the power to make us feel good and bring out positivity, why should we limit them to selected dates and occasions? Why should we consider the finish line as the reward and not celebrate every accomplishment in the journey? Why should we make celebration a gift that we only give to others? And why should we wait for an affirmation from others when celebration-induced emotional well-being is the reward we can give ourselves? My take is that we should not impose any such limitations on ourselves.

Your strengths and weaknesses, experience and inexperience, perfections and imperfections, all come together to shape your perspective. Your unique perspective is a real strength and it matters. It adds to the diversity of thoughts in a group that in turn leads to deeper discussions and richer outcomes regardless of the context. Celebrate that uniqueness. In your day-to-day life, it is equally important to celebrate small wins. These could be meeting a tight deadline, navigating a difficult conversation, advocating for a peer or mentee, booking a family holiday, showing up for class or work, or even making the perfect cup of coffee to start your day. Take the time to recognize, appreciate, and celebrate your uniqueness and your own wins. Just the act of appreciating, loving and honoring yourself will create more space to appreciate, love and honor others.

My hope for us all is that we will celebrate ourselves and celebrate the gift of each day.

Friday Focus is a column written by a different member of UAF's leadership team every week.