

## Winning Feels Good

*By Carole Gauntlett*

It seems to me that competition is inborn. When a baby cries for attention, he's already competing with all that distracts you. Even the baby quickly realizes that he can get you to stop doing something else and see to his wants just by crying. Oh Happy Day! This reaction and your acknowledgment of it shows how winning makes one feel. If we can minimize the impact of the opposite feelings, we'll have done a wonderful job.

Add sibling rivalry to that baby's life, and the family dynamic becomes colossally more complicated. The older child observes what he sees as the baby manipulating you and that was until this time *his* prerogative! He soon discovers though that his age is an asset and is able to use it to his advantage.

It must be a shock to a child starting school to find that he must now compete with each of his classmates for the teacher's attention, praise and help. If there are enough balls on the playground for every child to have one but only one pedal car there needs to be a sharing plan in place for that car or all but a few will compete chaotically for it at every recess.

So, it's the job of the parents at home, the teachers at school, the bosses at work and celebrity idols to channel those competitive spirits into positive action and to show by example how to be both a good and generous loser as well as a good and generous winner in life's competitions. This does not mean that everyone should be declared a winner so that no one feels bad. It's one thing to have open-ended competitions but if it's a footrace, there is a winner and we all know who it is. It's my belief that giving all the racers the same "participation ribbon" doesn't really work to accomplish much of anything. The ones who really won might not try so hard next time, the ones who MIGHT have won, certainly won't try so hard, and the true participants won't try any harder. So I'd hand out first, second and third place ribbons and all others could have a participant ribbon. We're preparing for the REAL WORLD and this learning is important to one's ability to enjoy their time in it.