

10 Benefits of Laughter

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Our lives are fraught with disaster, disappointment, fear, and anxiety. We have our current political climate, our ailing economy, Muslim terrorists, the environment, and our energy crisis. Is that all that life has to offer?

God needs to be called. He decides that its time to have the world end. He calls in George Bush, Vladimir Putin, and Bill Gates. He tells them that the world is going to end in seven days. Bush goes to the American people, and Putin goes to the Russian people. They say, " We have some good news and some bad news. The good news is, there is a God. The bad news, the end of the world is coming."

Bill Gates goes back to Microsoft and says, " I have some good news and some even better news. The good news is, I am one of the three most important people on Earth, and the even better news is we don't have to fix Windows 98!"

Is laughter the best medicine? Can we cure the world's ailments with laughter? Probably not, but we can live healthier, happier lives with humor.

Laughter dissolves tension, stress, anxiety, irritation, anger, grief, and depression. Like crying, laughter lowers inhibitions, allowing the release of pent-up emotions. After a hearty bout of laughter, you will experience a sense of well being. Simply put, he who laughs, lasts. After All, if you laugh at it, you can live with it. A person without a sense of humor is like a car without shock absorbers.

There are three religious truths:

- 1. Jews do not recognize Jesus as the Messiah.
- 2. Protestants do not recognize the Pope as the leader of the Christian faith.
- 3. Baptists do not recognize each other in the liquor store or at Hooters!

Isn't it great to be able to laugh at ourselves?

Let us discover the ten benefits of laughter.

The first benefit is laughter is contagious. It not only makes people who laugh feel better, but also those who laugh with them. It reminds me of the laughing infant in the t.v. commercial. You can't help but laugh. Which makes me question, do infants enjoy infancy as much as adults enjoy adultery?

The sound of roaring laughter is far more contagious than any cough, snuffle, or sneeze. Humor and laughter can cause a domino effect of joy and amusement, as well as set off a number of positive physical effects. Humor and laughter strengthen our immune systems and help us recover from illness, as well as bring joy into our lives.

The second benefit is; laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural painkillers, and produces a general sense of well being. Did you know? Babies are nauseated by the smell of a clean shirt?

Laughter activates the chemistry of the will to live, and increases our capacity to fight disease. Laughing relaxes the body and reduces problems associated with high blood pressure, strokes, arthritis, and ulcers. Don't sweat the petty things and don't pet the sweaty things!

Our third benefit is laughter generally increases activity within the immune system. It also decreases stress hormones that constrict blood vessels and suppress immune activity. People who laugh heartily on a regular basis have lower standing blood pressure than the average person does. When people have a good laugh, initially the blood pressure increases, but then it decreases to levels below normal. Breathing then becomes deeper which sends oxygen enriched blood and nutrients throughout the body. A study done at the University of Maryland Medical Center suggests that a good sense of

humor and the ability to laugh at stressful situations helps mitigate the damaging physical effects of distressing emotions.

Laughter increases infection-fighting antibodies. It increases our attentiveness heart rate and pulse. If 4 out of 5 people suffer from diarrhea ...does that mean that one enjoys it?

Laughter is the best medicine, perhaps against heart disease. Our fourth benefit is laughter, along with an active sense of humor, may help protect against heart disease. The study by the University of Maryland Medical Center found that people with heart disease were 40 percent less likely to laugh in a variety of situations compared to people of the same age without heart disease.

A ninety-year-old man went to his doctor and said, "Doctor, my wife, who is eighteen, is expecting a baby!"

The doctor said, "Let me tell you a story. A man went hunting, but instead of his gun, he picked up an umbrella by mistake, and when a bear suddenly charged at him, he pointed his umbrella at the bear, shot at it, and killed it on the spot."

"Impossible! Somebody else must have shot the bear."

"Exactly my point!"

The fifth benefit of laughter is exercise. Laughter gives our bodies a good workout. It can be a great workout for your diaphragm, abdominal, respiratory, facial, leg, and back muscles. It massages abdominal organs, tones intestinal functioning, and strengthens the muscles that hold the abdominal organs in place. Not only does laughter give your midsection a workout, it can benefit digestion and absorption functioning as

well. It is estimated that hearty laughter can burn calories equivalent to several minutes on the rowing machine or exercise bike.

Gay people invented sports. Think about it, Boxing, two topless men...in silk shorts...fighting over a belt!

The sixth benefit; laughter builds relationships. Laughter establishes, or restores, a positive emotional climate and a sense of connection between two people, who literally take pleasure in the company of each other.

Our work, marriage and family all need humor, celebrations, play and rituals as much as record-keeping and problem solving. We should ask the questions, "Do we laugh together?" as well as "Can we get through this hardship together?" Humor binds us together, lightens our burdens and helps us keep things in perspective. One of the things that saps our energy is the time, focus, and effort we put into coping with life's problems including each other's limitations. Our families, our friends, and our neighbors are not perfect and neither are our marriages, our kids or our in-laws. When we laugh together, it can bind us closer together instead of pulling us apart.

Your marriage is in trouble if your wife says "You're only interested in one thing" and you can't remember what it is.

The seventh benefit of laughter is it disarms tension and stress. Shy people can make use of laughter to break subtle barriers in the way they project themselves to connect to others and express thoughts, feelings and ideas they otherwise would keep to themselves. Many comedians have said they are really shy people but humor makes them project into a new person. Humor improves brain function and relieves stress. Laughter stimulates both sides of the brain to enhance learning. It eases muscle tension and

psychological stress, which keeps the brain alert and allows people to retain more information. Maybe our schools and universities should use more humor in the curriculum.

A disarming incident happened the other day at the grocery's express line while standing behind a woman with way too many items.

I'm sorry, she told the clerk. "I guess I forgot to count the things I had in my cart.

Don't worry, the clerk replied. "Everyone behind you is counting them!"

The eighth benefit of humor is it's a powerful emotional medicine that can lower stress, dissolve anger, and unite people in troubled times. The mood is improved when we seek humor in a difficult and frustrating situation.

My friend's husband had an eye infection that was diagnosed as ocular herpes. His physician wasn't about to let him live that one down. "So Fred, he joked, "been looking for love in all the wrong places?"

Laugh at ourselves and the situation helps reveal that the small things are not earth-shattering events they may seem to be. Looking at a problem from a different perspective provides opportunities for objectivity and insight. Humor provides a sense of connectedness. The good feelings when we laugh remain internally even when the laughter diminishes. Humor brings the balance we need to get through the turbulence of life comfortably.

The ninth benefit is a sense of humor can help us accept the inevitable. You can rise to any challenge, handle the unexpected with ease and come out of any difficulty smiling. You can lower anxiety by visualizing a humorous situation to replace the view of an anxiety-producing situation.

Remember that even the most difficult of times, a laugh, or even simply a smile, can go a long way in helping us feel better. I was thinking about how people seem to read the Bible a whole lot more as they get older. Then it dawned on me...they're cramming for the final exam!

View your life in context. Even world leaders realize they have limited ability to affect other's lives. While we might think taking the weight of the world on our shoulders is admirable, in the long run it's unrealistic, unproductive, unhealthy, and even egotistical.

How many egomaniacs does it take to screw in a light bulb? One. The egomaniac holds the light bulb while the rest of the world revolves around him.

A healthy sense of humor is related to being able to laugh at oneself and one's life. Laughing at oneself can be a way of accepting and respecting yourself. Humor helps us replace distressing emotions with pleasurable feelings. You cannot feel angry, depressed, anxious, guilty, or resentful and experience humor at the same time. Never be afraid to laugh at yourself. After all, you could be missing out on the joke of the century!

The tenth and final benefit of laughter is it adds spice to life. Some people are blessed to know someone who instinctively knows how to do or say something to bring levity to our life. Practical jokes seem to be a thing of the past but one of our friends who died last year was a classical practical joker. Many people in the audience would wait for Charlie's quips about the current paper. He had a special way of finding humor in every situation. The laughter he brought added spice to our lives.

Which reminds me of a trip we made to St. Louis to see the Cardinals and the Dodgers. We brought our sons for a father-son weekend at the ballpark. It was a sunny Saturday afternoon in the right field stands.

Charlie insisted I go in the row of seats first. He followed me into the row and the two boys, Erich and John, followed us. He was very interested in the two beautiful girls that were sitting next to us. He suggested that I should talk to them. I felt embarrassed when he suggested that we might ask them to dinner after the game. At this stage of the game our two sons were very interested in the dialogue at our end of the row.

Charlie kept insisting that I talk with the beautiful women. I was mortified to think that he would assume I would do such a thing. At this stage, the two boys were even more inquisitive about our new interest in the two young women. Charlie then volunteered to speak for me, if I was too shy. He then explained to the first woman, that his friend was very shy but very interested in asking them out for dinner. The woman replied that she really liked shy men and was hoping they could have dinner. At this stage, I felt if the earth would open up and swallow me, it would be a blessing. The boys were both out of their seats staring in our direction. With my head tucked in my hands, trying to disappear into my lap and my flushed face the shade of a red rose; Charlie introduced me to his beautiful secretary!

Laughter is a birthright, a natural part of life. The part of the brain that connects to and facilitates laughter is among the first parts of the nervous system to come on line after birth. Infants begin smiling during the first weeks of life and laugh out loud within months of being born. Even if you did not grow up in a

household where laughter was a common sound, you can learn to laugh at any stage of life.