Laughter’s Healthy Benefits

The Healing Power of Laughter

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Use Laughter to Improve Your Life and Your Health

Laughter…
- improves our sense of well-being
- reduces tension, depression, anger
- lowers stress levels
- reduces blood pressure
- exercises hearts
- strengthens the immune system
- reduces pain

and more…
Humor …

- Many types
- Overlapping types
- Varying deliveries
- Cultural variance
- Regional variance
Humor helps...

**Question**: What is black and white and read all over?

**Answer**: Nope, it’s not “a newspaper.”

It's “an embarrassed zebra”. Or maybe it’s a ________.
What makes you laugh?

“A Kangaroo mom with seven babies in her pouch told another kangaroo mom…“these sleepovers are killing me.”

Sydney Cervantes
Age 10
What makes you laugh?

- Everyone who has ever walked into a child’s room, barefoot, late at night, hates Legos.

  Ward Johnson, young father of two children under age four
What makes you laugh?
Does this make you laugh?

Realizing that their home just wasn’t big enough with a new baby in the house, little Johnny’s parents discussed moving to a bigger one. Little Johnny sat patiently listening to his parents, then piped in, “It’s no use. She’ll just follow us anyway.”
Laughter changes as you age…

As the years go by…

“People are less considerate—so many of them speak in whispers. What do they think I am a lip reader?”

“And people who used to be my own age are getting so much older”
Types of humor... as varied as the people who laugh
Types of Humor:

Find one that fits for you...find several

- Parody
- Satire
- Slapstick comedy
- Absurd/nonsense humor
- Black humor
- Irony
- Dry humor and puns
- Sarcasm
Parody

- Bringing imperfections to light
- **Example:** celebrity roasts
Other examples...

Yo’ mama jokes
“Yo mama so fat she eats wheat thicks”

Laugh at life jokes
I live in my own little world. But it’s okay—they know me here.
Satire

Written expression of personal and social flaws; ridicule

Satirists:

Erma Bombeck
Dave Barry
Molly Ivans
Examples…

- **Question**: A child, an honest politician and Santa Claus all spot a $20 on the ground. Who picks it up?
- **Answer**: The child. The other two don’t exist.
Other examples of satire...

Headlines

“North Korea Enjoys Nuclear Talks”

“Anti-Homosexuality Sermon Suspiciously Well-Informed”
Dry Humor/Puns

Clever wit
Mark Twain
Will Rogers
Groucho Marx
Garrison Keillor

Play on words
Examples of dry humor/puns

**Top Ten ‘Old Folks’ Party Games**

10. Musical Recliners
9. Spin the Bottle of Mylanta
8. Hide and Go Pee
7. Simon Says Something Incoherent
6. Doc, Doc Goose

5. Red Rover, Red Rover, the Nurse Says It’s Over
4. Kick the Bucket
3. 20 Questions Shouted into Your Good Ear
2. Pin the Toupee on the Bald Guy
1. “Sag, You’re It!”
Irony

- Two concepts or events, which when paired together, come to mean the opposite
Examples of Irony

“My wild oats…have turned to prunes and All-Bran”

“Forget health food, I’m at the age where I need all the preservatives I can get.”
Black “gallows” humor

Pokes fun at death
Examples of Gallows Humor

In a Georgia Cemetery
“I Told You I Was Sick!”

In Enosburg, Vermont
Her lies the body of our Anna
Done to death by a banana
It wasn’t the fruit that laid her low
But the skin of the thing that made her go
Absurd/Nonsense Humor

- Two or more concepts that unite to form a stupid, ludicrous or ridiculous perception
Examples of the absurd....

The preacher was wired for sound with a lapel mike. As he preached, he moved briskly across the platform, jerking the mike cord as he walked. He moved to one side, getting caught in the cord and nearly tripping, before jerking it again.

After several circles and jerks, a little girl in the third row leaned toward her mother and whispered, “If he gets loose, will he hurt us?”
Slapstick Comedy

- The Marx Brothers
- Laurel and Hardy
- Abbott and Costello
- The Three Stooges
- Lucille Ball
Sarcasm

- "To tear flesh"
- Verbal revenge
- Socially acceptable way to express hostile feelings through words
- Lowest form of humor
Examples of sarcasm…

“How unselfish you are,” said the girl… as her brother took the biggest piece of cake.

Mark Twain once said… the coldest winter he ever spent was a summer in San Francisco.
How about this…

Does this make you laugh?

- Cookbooks have the same resemblance to real books as microwave food has to your grandmother’s cooking.

- Health nuts are going to feel stupid some day, lying in the hospital dying of nothing.

Andrei Connolly

Redd Foxx
What makes us laugh?

“Humor is a physical release--one of four, actually. These include crying, yawning, orgasm and laughter. You can do them in succession. Just get the order right.”

Steve Allen
Why do we laugh?

There are theories about this…

- Superiority Theory
- Incongruity Theory
- Release/Relief Theory
- Divinity Theory
Superiority Theory

- Laughter occurs at the expense of someone else. The greater the dignity of the individual, the greater the laugh.
‘Superiority Theory’
takes many forms….

“Those are my principles, and if you don’t like them…well I have others”
Incongruity (Surprise) Theory

- Humor arises because the mind does not expect the outcome. Two unrelated thoughts are combined for comic effect.
Examples… kids seem to say it best

- “If you lie down with dogs… you smell funny in the morning”
- “A penny saved is….not much”
- “Laugh and the world laughs with you, cry and…you have to blow your nose”
Laughter that releases energy built up from repressed thoughts. Humor that is often taboo—not always socially acceptable.
Examples

... not always socially acceptable

- Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers
- Local High School Dropouts Cut in Half
- Kids Make Nutritious Snacks
Divinity Theory

Humor that makes order out of chaos by dissolving threats. Humor as a gift from God—his way of telling us we are not perfect.
Divinity Theory Examples

“I intend to live forever…so far so good.”

“He who laughs…lasts.”
How about this….

Does this make you laugh?

- One thing that they never tell you about child rearing is that for the rest of your life, at the drop of a hat, you are expected to know your child’s name and how old he or she is.

  *Erma Bombeck*
Does this?

WE ENCOURAGE OUR TEAMS TO THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX
The prescription for adding laughter and humor into your life....

- Take life less seriously
- Find one humorous thing each day
- Smile randomly, and often
- Observe the results as you “lighten up”
- **Warning**: Humor may be dangerous to your illness
Laughter Heals

- Reduces stress; elevates mood
- Lowers blood pressure
- Improves cardiac functioning
- Boosts immune system
- Improves brain functioning
- Encourages instant relaxation
- It’s fun!!
Remember...

- The nicest thing about a laugh is that so much of you has a good time  
  *Marsha Perlman*
For more information about healthy aging presentations…and laughter too

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