



Work Smart Live Smart

Laughter Is Good For You So Why Don't We Use It More?

**By
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*Humour can help you thrive in change, remain creative under pressure,
work more effectively, play more enthusiastically,
and stay healthier in the process.'*

C.W. Metcalfe, Author, Lighten Up

Humour - For some of us it is a lost art, but it can be one of our most powerful 'life coping' tools. It is one of the world's most potent health supplements, not toxic, low-calorie and absolutely free.

But what is humour? One definition I really like is that humour is an attitude focused on generating positive feelings in yourself and for others. It is an active state and a choice that we make.

It has been proven that laughter (not just a quick giggle) reduces physical and emotional tension. Muscles tense in laughter and then relax profoundly for as long as 45 minutes. The more hearty, the more relaxing it is and the longer the positive effect. Laughter helps the body to produce endorphins, which are natural pain relievers.

A 1993 study measuring the effect of humour on people's pain thresholds, took two groups, one with high humour traits and one with low humour traits, and subjected them to pain. Both groups got to watch a funny video while they were subjected to the pain. The study found that people with high humour traits coped well with pain with or without the assistance of the funny video, but that people with low humour traits were more vulnerable to pain and less able to cope without the assistance of the video. The study also found that watching the funny video raised the pain thresholds of both groups.

A good belly laugh can stimulate your internal organs, increase your circulation, raise the level of oxygen in the blood and boost the immune system. A group of researchers found that laughing boisterously 100 times a day will give you the same effects as a 10-mile run.

Studies show that those with a sense of humour are better communicators, team players and are more creative problem solvers. And contrary to popular belief are more productive and less distracted than their humourless counterparts.

One other advantage of maintaining a sense of humour and being able to freely laugh is that it provides us with a powerful sense of perspective and ability to build relationships with those around us.

We know intrinsically that laughter is good for us, yet as we get older our laugh quota drops further and further. One study calculated that the average 5 year old laughs 400 per day and that the average adult is lucky to laugh 12-15 times per day. As adults, we need to examine what happened to our playful, fun, humorous side.

So why don't we use our humour more?

- Fear of embarrassment – many people think that humour has to mean telling jokes and some of us just can remember the punch line
- Fear of failure – prevents risk taking and creativity
- Terminal professionalism - life, especially work, is serious and in order to succeed, we must be serious to

Our fears can result in 'terminal seriousness'. We need to lighten up and we need to be better role models for the next generation. There is nothing more distressing than to see a young adult, in the middle of their high school years, so stressed out, having to make life and seemingly death choices about their future, that they couldn't take the time to laugh and have fun. They have become cynical and many of them are developing physical illnesses and mental disorders thought to be experienced only in later adult years.

Humour and creativity originate from a lively imagination and the ability to recognize and to appreciate the incongruities of life. Fortunately your ability to look at the funny side of life can be developed with practice.

15 Ways to Increase Your Sense of Humour

1. When you're feeling terrific - notify your face
2. Find funny friends and co-workers
3. Buy desk toys
4. Read the comics - Post cartoon of the week
5. Post a 'insightful saying or blurt of the month'
6. Post a 'Murphy's Law of our Workplace'
7. Develop a **Humour First-Aid Kit** and fill it with your favourite jokes, clippings, and stories
8. Watch funny TV programs and movies - Listen to funny tapes
9. Schedule playtime
10. 'Happy Hour' is any time you make it
11. Make up a humorous response to 'How are you doing?'
12. Use humour in adversity to lighten up rather than tighten up - Laugh at yourself and your mistakes
13. Use funny Post-It Notes
14. Send a cheerful card to a friend in need

15. Appreciate today and look for the 'awesome'

Being able to laugh about our situation and ourselves helps us to release the tension, regain our perspective, accept that which we cannot change and experience joy. Not only that, but, it also gives us the physical energy and mental resilience needed to survive. Many of us just need to be given permission and encouragement to use our sense of humour more freely.

Smile, Laugh Large and Fight 'Terminal Seriousness'

Stress and wellness specialist, **Beverly Beuermann-King** translates current research and best practices information into a realistic, accessible and practical approach through her dynamic stress and wellness workshops, on-line articles, e-newsletters and media interviews and through a collaboration called *Awakening The Workplace*. Visit www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com for more on Beverly and her wellness work.

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