

# THE EXCHANGE

This issue's featured subject is "The Power of Laughter."

## LAUGHTER MAY BE THE BEST MEDICINE!



In December of 1976, the New England Journal of Medicine published an article written by Norman Cousins about how positive humor had influenced his illness. Although his account was anecdotal, it was compelling enough that the medical community wanted

to hear it. He also wrote about it in his book, *Anatomy of an Illness*.

Norman Cousins had been given a diagnosis for a fatal degenerative disease, and his condition had been deteriorating rapidly. When he focused his attention on laughter and enjoying life, his condition eventually reversed itself. Since then, countless articles have been written about the health benefits of laughter and humor. A quick Google search will yield results that number more than 360,000!

It is widely believed that incorporating more laughter into each day can boost the immune system and also create other benefits such as:

- Reducing stress
- Improving brain function
- Improving stamina
- Reducing the experience of physical pain
- Attacking depression
- Lowering blood pressure
- Increasing secretion of "good" brain hormones

Defensiveness is stress that is associated with interactions and relationships. And, since stress is definitively linked with negative physiological processes, we can say that laughter and a positive attitude can, if at least indirectly, bring many benefits. At TLC, we do know that appropriately used "positive" humor can defuse tension and lower defensiveness in interactions, help people to feel better, and be more effective. There are other benefits, including:

- Keeping people more rational and less reactive
- Strengthening relationships
- Aiding in relaxation
- Learning more about other people
- Increasing perceptions of likability, approachability, and friendliness

Every day, more studies are being conducted that confirm what we already know, there really are many benefits from laughter and humor. In this task-oriented "world-in-a-hurry," remember that you can give someone a special gift. Entertain and give them a few minutes off from everyday worries to relax, laugh, and smile. Your health and personal and professional success will improve if you do!

## IN THE NEWS: Mentoring Web Cast Still Available



Beverly Inman-Ebel was joined by an outstanding "cast" recently during a nationally broadcast web cast entitled *Passing On The Passion*.

Sponsored by the National Women's Business Council, this event was broadcast live from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce building in Washington DC, and can still be seen by going to the NWBC web site ([www.nwbc.gov](http://www.nwbc.gov)) and clicking on the web cast link.

Mentoring – in all its variations – is an especially effective resource to support women in their efforts to achieve the "American Dream" – starting and growing their own business. Mentoring helps at all stages of growth. Mentoring programs can support women as they start up their own ventures, as they grow their firms, and as they achieve success.

## What Our Clients Are Saying

"Best training I have had on the subject in a 27-year career. Learned a great deal and enjoyed it very much.

Seminar Participant, West Virginia



## April 2004

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### LOOKING AHEAD:

- **The May issue of The Exchange will focus on Raising the Level of Customer Service.**

### LOOKING BACK:

- **For previous editions of The Exchange, go to our [back issues](#).**
- **Re-read the [05/2001](#) edition: Humor.**

**Warning: Humor may be hazardous to your illness.**

**Ellie Katz**



### Helpful Hints:

- A smile is an instant facelift.
- Keep a funny file to tickle your funny bone when you're down.
- Laughter increases your oxygen flow!

Trouble knocked at the door, but, hearing laughter, hurried away.  
Benjamin Franklin



To learn more about it, click here!

## IF YOU SEEK HUMOR, IT WILL COME SMILE IT UP!

By Vincent Ivan Phipps, B.S.

Norman Cousins, in his book, *Anatomy of an Illness*, wrote about the benefits of laughter. He referred to it as "jogging of the soul" and claimed that ten minutes of genuine belly laughter had an anesthetic effect of two hours. Dr. William F. Fry, who wrote *Handbook of Humor and Psychotherapy*, reported that twenty seconds of laughter gives the heart the same workout as three minutes of rowing.

These and other benefits of laughter are described in our front-page article, "Physiological Benefits of Humor." Even if you are convinced that laughter is healthy for you, how do you bring humor into your workplace? Here are some tips to get your daily dose of giggles:

- Make a list of people who easily find humor around them. Seek them out when you're feeling blue.
- Keep a file of crazy emails that people have sent you and read one when you need it.
- Purchase a book of jokes and consider it part of your emergency kit for down-in-the-dumps days.
- Remember your most embarrassing moments in life, and, with the distance of time, go ahead and laugh about it now.
- Grab a friend and just stare at each other without blinking until you start laughing.
- Keep a mirror on your desk and make a funny face to remind yourself to not take yourself too seriously.
- Take a big breath and force yourself to fake a laugh as you exhale.
- Listen for someone in the office who is laughing and mimic them without even knowing the reason for their laughter.
- Have some pictures that remind you of funny people or humorous people and look at them and reflect.
- Call a friend and ask them to get you to laugh.

Create a humor emergency kit. Tap into your creative resources to fill it with stuff to make you laugh. Continually be on the lookout to add to this treasure.

Developing and enjoying humor is much more than telling jokes. It is creating resources and looking for opportunities to laugh. Seek and you shall find. Find and you shall be better for the effort.



If the eyes are the windows to the soul, then smiles are the doors to our emotions. I recently returned from the United Kingdom, where I conducted several communication workshops. For the 10 days

I was there, I was in awe of the dialect and customs. I smiled back whenever someone smiled at me, even though their English was new to my ears. I noticed that the people of the UK were a lot more forgiving of my mistakes as a traveler in a foreign country as long as I maintained a genuine smile on my face.

One afternoon, I was leaving the hotel to set out for some much-anticipated sightseeing. When I approached the front desk for help, there was a seemingly upset couple in front of me. I could not understand what was being said between the couple and the hotel clerk behind the desk, but the exchange was volatile. After the hotel clerk's voiced raised, the couple grabbed their keys, snatched their credit card, and darted toward the elevator.

The hotel clerk quickly uttered something and gave a quick, smug smile. Just as the couple boarded the elevator, one of them looked back and caught the smile of the clerk. By the look on the clerk's face, the clerk did not expect to get caught. At that moment, I realized something; I had been smiling for about a week at people whose customs, way of life, and English language were very different from my own. So what were the reasons people were still being so friendly to me instead of thinking I was only giving fake smiles?

After a thorough self-check, I recalled what we teach our clients. The difference between my smiles and the hotel clerk's smile are two things that involve sincerity:

**1. Eyes.** A true smile involves the eyes. A real smile requires cheek muscles to press on our tear ducts. If you REALLY smile hard enough, you could smile so strongly, you could cry! That's a genuine smile.

**2. Speed.** A real smile fades slowly. Even after the smile is gone, in a genuine smile, the face still models a relaxed and pleasant disposition. In fake smiles, you go from a huge "say 'cheese!'" smile to a totally tense expression. This exchange takes place in about two seconds.

The hotel clerk was caught when they read in his smile, "Boy, I sure am glad you are leaving my desk." Remember that people are watching us even when we are not watching them. We are always communicating. Practice the art of sharing genuine, warm smiles. In most cultures and in most situations, a real smile can make a positive difference. Some smiles are contagious. Is yours worth catching?

## CROCODILE TEARS



Have you ever seen a child sob large, self-induced tears to get his/her way? "Crocodile tears" are those fake cries used to manipulate others. Once the child has his/her way, the cries miraculously silence and the tears dry up.

The reason we call these fake cries "crocodile tears" comes from an old story about a crocodile that pretended to be in distress and sought the help of a nearby fisherman. As the fisherman drew closer, the crocodile cried and moaned louder that it desperately needed help and insisted the fisherman move in closer. When the fisherman came too close, the crocodile had a meal!

Strive to be genuine in all of your emotions. Crying crocodile tears, giving fake laughs, and giving phony smiles (see "Smile It Up!" on page 2) are deceiving and can lead others into thinking you are untrustworthy. If it is funny – laugh. If it is surprising – look surprised, if it is sad – cry. Whatever you do, be sincere, and be comfortable showing your emotions.

## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT: Hiwassee River Rail Adventure

Enjoy a wonderful 25-mile, 2-hour roundtrip rail excursion alongside the Hiwassee Scenic River to the TVA Apalachia powerhouse. This is the first passenger excursion on the "Old Line" of the former Louisville & Nashville Railroad in over 10 years.

These unique trips will run for 3 consecutive weekends in May. Shuttle busses depart the L & N Depot Museum in Downtown Etowah, Tennessee, on the following dates:

- 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>
- 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>
- 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>

Seating will be on a fully restored coach and by reservation only. The cost is \$29.00 per person.

To coincide with this event, we are offering a 10% discount for stays at our Spring Creek Retreat property during the month of May.

Contact information -

River Rail Ticket Line: 423-894-8028

Spring Creek Retreat reservation office: 1-800-488-7218, or [www.springcreekretreat.com](http://www.springcreekretreat.com).

## HUMOR CAN STINK

By Ben Cairns, M.A.

About fifteen years ago, I went on a five-day exploring trip with a friend in a 12-foot flat boat on a remote river. We had not previously spent so much time together, especially in such close contact. Ben Franklin wrote that "after three days, both fish and visitors stink." I think that expression was especially appropriate for the two of us!

My friend and I got into a heated discussion after he ran us directly into a tree and almost sunk the boat. We were getting sick of each other by that time, and our communication naturally reflected that. My friend, normally a quick wit, turned rather aggressive with some biting sarcasm. When I protested, "You use your humor as a weapon!", he threw it right back at me. After we calmed down, we had a great laugh about that line. But it was true, he did use his quick wit to cut me and push me away from him, and it was a pattern I had seen whenever he got defensive with others.

As with anything, there are good and bad uses for humor. Even a wedding gift can be used as a weapon if a person is mean or angry. So what differentiates good and bad humor? It has a lot to do with context. A locker room joke is not appropriate in the boardroom. In general, bad humor:

- Puts down or isolates individual people.
- Puts down groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, or any other distinguishing characteristic.
- Pushes others away.
- Hurts others emotionally.
- Is inappropriate for the situation.

In general, avoid or be extremely careful with humor that refers to: politics, religion, sex, culture, intelligence, or social class.

Good humor draws people together by pointing out ironies, contradictions, and difficulties. It allows people to identify with each other and lowers the emotional stress level of the interaction. Use neutral humor with others that you do not know very well. Self-deprecating humor generally works well, especially if you are referring to something that others can relate to. If you have **any doubt** about how someone else may react to what you are saying, **do not say it**. With bad humor, it doesn't take three days for your attitude, career, and relationships to stink!

## REMEMBERING JOHN

TLC remembers John Santagata with great admiration and affection. We will miss him.



### Remember to...

- **Notify your face that you are in a good mood.**
- **Laugh every day.**
- **When you receive a smile, pass it on.**

**A good laugh is sunshine in a house.**

**William Makepeace Thackeray**

**Funny is an attitude.**  
**Flip Wilson**



## CEO CORNER: "Vitamin H"

By Beverly Inman-Ebel,  
MA CCC-SLP



In my opinion, no doctor or psychologist has ever come up with a treatment that will do more for your health than a good rib-tickling belly laugh. Perhaps the best part of this good deal is that all you need is one friend who can crack you up at the drop of a hat. The next time you look like you just fell into a vat of lemon juice, pick up the phone to wipe the sour look off your mug and call this person.

Just in case your funny friend is not available, make a list of humorous contacts. People who jiggle your funny bone and can cause you to grab your stomach from the pain of contracted abdominal muscles are priceless. Isn't it a strange paradox that crazy people can keep you sane? Don't spend too much time analyzing the reason; just contact them for the shot of humor.

I have one such friend with whom I play the "ha; ha-ha" game. The rules of this game are simple. The first person says, "HA!" The other responds with twice the laughter: "HA-HA!" Back to the first contributor who says, "HA-HA-HA!" You keep adding a "HA" until one person genuinely starts laughing. Because genuine laughter is so contagious, the result will be healthy for you both.

In the office setting, when you partake of Vitamin H (H is for Humor), warn your neighbors, shut your door if you have one, or take a walk outside with your cell phone. Indulge in a few moments of ridiculous bliss. Become a sponge and soak up Vitamin H until it is seeping through your pores. When you are completely saturated, share with someone else. See if you can tickle their funny bone.

When was the last time you laughed until your belly shook? Life is filled with hilarity if you are looking for it. Look. Laugh. Live your dreams.

**A person without a sense of humor is like a wagon without springs - jolted by every pebble in the road.**

**Henry Ward Beecher**

**I think the next best thing to solving a problem is finding some humor in it.**

**Frank A. Clark**

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## ASK THE EXPERTS



**Dear TLC,**

I have a co-worker who has a great sense of humor. Yet, sometimes he is just too loud and his laughter interrupts those of us trying to work.  
Not Laughing

**Dear Not Laughing,**

Let your co-worker know that you enjoy a good laugh. Explain how his volume interrupts your concentration. Work out a system with him to let him know when his humor is getting too loud. Remember to smile during this discussion!

## FEATURED SERVICE: Spring Creek Retreat

Spring has arrived and the Cherokee National Forrest is alive with wildflowers and budding trees. Call Spring Creek Retreat to reserve your mountain home for a weekend or week. Also plan now to take your work family away so that they can come together. For pricing and reservations call 1-800-488-7218 or take a virtual tour at [www.springcreekretreat.com](http://www.springcreekretreat.com).

## Thoughts on Laughter

- ☺ What soap is to the body, laughter is to the soul. ~Yiddish Proverb
- ☺ Even if there is nothing to laugh about, laugh on credit. ~Author Unknown
- ☺ Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion. I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward. ~Kurt Vonnegut
- ☺ I've always thought that a big laugh is a really loud noise from the soul saying, "Ain't that the truth." ~Quincy Jones
- ☺ Seven days without laughter makes one weak. ~Mort Walker
- ☺ A laugh is a smile that bursts. ~Mary H. Waldrip
- ☺ Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face. ~Victor Hugo
- ☺ Laughter is a tranquilizer with no side effects. ~Arnold Glasow

TLC establishes long-term relationships with our clients. If we have helped you or if you believe our approach to change would work for someone you know, please communicate with us by email [[tlc@talklisten.com](mailto:tlc@talklisten.com)] or phone [1-888-232-2873]. We work with individuals and groups on the following subject areas: attitude, listening, body language, voice, leadership, compliments and corrections, behavioral style, teamwork, effective meetings, public speaking, accent reduction and much more!

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