

Humor is the ultimate stress relief

Would you be interested in a way to reduce stress, improve your health and uplift your mood all at the same time? If you are like most Americans in this time of financial crisis, your answer is, yes. How can all of these benefits be obtained simultaneously? The answer is laughter.

The effects of laughter are therapeutic both to the body and the mind. In fact, laughter is now scientifically proven to reduce depression. A research study by Dr. Jason Goodson of the University of Utah found depression was reduced in a group of subjects who merely watched thirty minutes of situational comedy on TV for a month period. No medication, and no cost, just good fun watching re-runs of *All in the Family*.

In my own experience, I have come to realize laughing bonds relationships and is seldom done alone. I was recently in my home upstairs and my wife was downstairs watching TV when she began to laugh hysterically. I was working on my computer at the time, completely unaware of what she was laughing at, and all of a sudden, I burst into laughing. The more my wife laughed, the more I laughed, and we were in separate rooms. My point in telling you this is the realization that laughter is contagious.

Laughing is both good for your psychology and physiology. The health benefits to the body include: reduced blood pressure, reduced stress hormones, reduced muscle tension, improved sleep, and improved immune system function (including cells that fight cancer). A well known book about how a man overcame cancer through laughter is *Anatomy of an Illness*, by Norman Cousins.

For the mind, laughter is also healing. Laughter improves our mood, and reduces guilt and shame. Laughter is an antidote to fear and changes the context of our lives by reframing the seriousness of life events. It is good to laugh at yourself and your life. Lastly, laughter counters anxiety and depression.

Here are some low cost ways to bring more humor into your life.

Watch your favorite TV sitcom. As the study cited in this article proved, thirty minutes of comedy on TV everyday for one month is all it takes to reduce feelings of depression. One of your favorite comedy programs from the past is likely on as a re-run. There is a cable TV channel called TV-Land which has everything from *I Love Lucy* to *The Brady Bunch*. Check it out!

Rent your favorite comedy movie. For a small fee, you can rent a selection from your local movie rental store. I love *Pink Panther* movies. Watch one with a friend and you both will be rolling on the floor.

Visit the library. The library offers no cost solutions with books, VHS, DVD's and the internet. All of which have humor selections.

I would also encourage a night out at a comedy club. Since laughter is contagious, it's hard not to laugh when you're in a room with a group of people who are laughing.

Laughter is a gift of being human. It bonds us together and makes us reconsider the seriousness of life. Laughter lifts your spirit and makes you healthy, so make an effort to bring more humor into your life. Make it contagious and share it with a friend!

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