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**Tickle Your Funny Bone**

**By Virginia Reeves**

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Practicing humor can lift tension, reduce stress, diffuse confrontation, improve communication, and enhance your relationship with others in any group. It can also increase productivity, learning ability, cooperation, teamwork, and profits while energizing you and others. Wow! Why wouldn't we want to incorporate even more of this no-cost action into our daily life? Here's more benefits:

Humor is the shock absorber that eases the bumps in life and laughter is a vaccine for the ills of the world.

Laughter increases your adrenaline which leads to a release of enthusiasm and optimism.

Aerobic breathing comes from laughter – your endorphins are super-charged.

Humor is associated with youth, vigor, intelligence and being "with it." The broad smile and light remark are welcome guests at any gathering. It says: I want to be friends. Humor enhances an image, motivates, and helps create a relaxed reality.

Expressing your sense of humor can be as simple as encouraging and responding to the merriment of those around you – even with just a smile. You don't have to be a joke teller. Think about words or images that bring a grin to your face. Here's a start:

- \* supercalifragilisticexpalodocious (I think I got it right – help Mary Poppins!)
- \* upsy daisy day (thanks to Stephanie West Allen who publishes an e-zine with this name)
- \* Snoopy (Charlie Brown's dog) dancing for the pure joy of it
- \* a child discovering something new (I remember my niece's first fun

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encounter playing in the sand)

\* the antics of Red Skelton, Carol Burnett, Bill Cosby, Lucille Ball, Robin Williams, Jim Carey

Have you given much thought to what makes you smile, giggle or burst out into a loud and refreshing belly laugh? What situations were you in or who are you with when you feel the most at ease to let your sense of humor come out and play? What are the circumstances when your senses are full of the magic of outright pleasure, entertainment and enjoyment?

Here's a real easy idea – share cartoon and funny stories with your

friends, co-workers and family. I recently sent a cartoon to a lady whose theme is to live with passion and gratitude – she was delighted that I thought of her and responded directly to her gardening interest. I took pleasure in knowing that I'd made her grin too. Many of you probably receive and forward some delightful tales and absurdities that you find on the Internet or in magazines. Last week I \*snail mailed\* a piece about ludicrous lawsuits and the cost of a child to some friends to give them a little lift to their day. Not only did they enjoy the silliness but they were also happy to get something other than bills and junk mail to open!

I've read that benefits are gained from smiling at a minimum of five people a day. If you are working alone or really can't find a good reason to smile at your co-workers or family that day – then find another way to make sure you bring a smile to yourself. Read some jokes in a book or on a humor site or e-zine. Watch a favorite TV show or rent a movie that you know will make you feel good. Another method is to look for five funny or absurd things a day – this keeps your mind thinking in the direction of being less serious.

Here's some great statements and thoughts to keep in mind.

- \* Take time to laugh, it is music to the soul.
- \* Every survival kit should include a sense of humor.
- \* A smile adds a great deal to your face value.
- \* He who laughs, lasts.
- \* Laughter is contagious...start an epidemic.
- \* Put on candid camera glasses every day.
- \* Find your own "mirth angel".
- \* Recharge your batteries and put more joy in your life.

Even Sigmund Freud, the famous psychiatrist, was a proponent of humor. His basic concept was that joking relieves repressed impulses and

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anxieties, and that laughter converts unpleasant feelings to pleasant ones.

Gene Perret, who wrote extensively for Bob Hope, Phyllis Diller, Carol Burnett and many others, said "Humor is not a condiment; it a main course. It's not a trinket; it's a gem. It doesn't need justification; it's essential".

Have you ever heard of PHUFS. It's an acronym for five points outlined in the book, *Laughter and Liberation*, by Dr. Harvey Mindess. Here's a brief recap.

\* Playfulness allows you to be lessen the grip that having too much seriousness can have on you (such as narrowing your perspective). Instead know that it's okay to let go of your normal routines now and again to be whimsical and imaginative.

\* Humility is being humble in mind or spirit. However, recognize that there's no need to make things look or sound more difficult than they

are – look for the crazy or absurd side to balance out the serious side.

\* Unconventionality lets you be less ordinary and more original in thought and deed. You are willing to accept unexpected occurrences as a bonus for they can heighten your awareness level when you allow them to enter your base of experiences.

\* Flexibility reduces the stiffness or rigidity in thinking patterns which helps you adjust more easily to change. You want to ask the questions of who, what, when, why, where, when, and how so that you don't fall into the trap of accepting and taking things for granted..

\* Spontaneity supports the idea of expressing your natural feelings and impulses without giving into the restraints you might otherwise pay heed to. A mind leap that brings about a connection between what is and what could be might even occur.

All in all, mirthfulness can have a very positive effect on your mind and body. It's difficult to remain angry, hurt, frustrated or depressed when exposed to something that tickles your funny bone. When you are having a good time you feel more hopeful, excited and vigorous. Your attitude affects your body and vice versa. Humor can help you attain a more positive balance psychologically and physiologically. Encourage laughter in your life and reap the benefits.

How healthy it is to set the child within us free to giggle, sing, or dance a silly jig. Let this article be a reminder of how important it is to break free of convention from time to time and let loose your normal grown-up restrictions about playfulness. Abandon your

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inhibitions for more than a moment or two. Revel in it. A healthy personality has a measure of unpredictability. Daily living ought to be spiced with playfulness as it makes everything you think and do a bit more delicious. Go ahead – smile right now (it does keep others guessing what you're thinking about!).

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### **Muscle Pain And Children Do Not Mix**

**By David Leonhardt**

I am in pain. I've been in pain all day. Last night, I was in "searing pain", which is pain multiplied by pain, divided by relief, then multiplied by pain to the tenth power. In case you are not a math whiz, that equals pain with 33 zeros after it. Two days ago, I was in pain (just regular pain, no zeros). In fact, I was in pain all week.

Welcome to my humor column.

Actually, pain is not really all that funny ... unless it happens to somebody else. Oh, come on. Don't get all sanctimonious on me. Pain is the very essence of the Bugs Bunny Show. And the Three Stooges. And every sitcom that relies on personal slights and insults. Without pain to tickle the funny bone, the entertainment industry would be no bigger today than George Bush's collection of feminist literature.

Of course, pain is funny only when it happens to somebody else. It's a lot like reality TV. If it was you stranded on a desert island with a dozen other maniacs, trying to cook worms without emptying your stomach first, would you feel "entertained"?

Fortunately for the deep-pocket sponsors of reality TV, it's not really very real. As long as somebody else is enjoying their makeshift meal of gourmet slimies, it's called entertainment.

Unfortunately for me, my muscle pain is real. It's in my back. It's in my side. It hurts when I bend, twist, or make any sudden movement not approved by the FDA, the DEA, the IRS, the RCMP, the CIA or Interpol.

I did something stupid. No, I did not try a triple summersault on my snowboard in the Rockies. Unfortunately, it was not that stupid. But I did pick up 37-pound Little Lady to place her in her high chair. And I did use just one arm, off to the side, while fiddling with the high chair straps.

I was keenly aware of the exact moment that God said, "It's about time you learn a lesson about physics and biology and all those other subjects you so smugly weaseled your way out of in high

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school." Ouch.

Parents of young children deserve immunity against muscle pain. A young child should be a "get out of pain free" card. You get to go directly to health, do not pass the hospital, do not pay \$200.

Why special treatment for parents of young children? Because they never get the chance to fully recuperate.

Children demand 100 times more physical interaction than adults. And guess what? They want it at their level ... which means bending over. Ouch.

Children are unpredictable, which means they might suddenly grab your leg with enough energy to fell an oak. Since there is rarely an oak in your living room, your leg falls with you attached. Or you react to keep yourself from falling ... which means twisting. Ouch.

Did I mention that kids want to play a lot? Running. Dancing. Chasing. Throwing. Rolling on the floor. Can you resist? Of course you can. "Catch, daddy." Oops, I forgot. Ouch.

OK, how about playing something calm. I sat Little Lady in her high chair (without twisting this time) and placed some Play Dough in front of her. "Please, please, please stop dropping chunks on the floor where I have to bend reeeeeeeally low to pick them up." Ouch.

A parent of a young child simply does not have the opportunity to heal. He just keeps re-injuring himself over and over and over and over.

So if you notice my columns growing less funny and more painful, please don't laugh. It's my pain, and it is real.

The author is David Leonhardt, The Happy Guy, publisher of Your Daily Dose of Happiness at

. Read more personal growth articles in his

Self-actualization Resource Center at

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his home page at

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Did You Hear The One About The Funny Quiz That Was Walking Past a Graveyard?

Why We Laugh!

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