

Humor and Health. A Perfect Pair

Do you like to laugh? Why? Let's start with the fact that it makes us all feel good. Whether you're the one initiating the laughter, or simply in the room and gaining the benefits of others' joy, it's all good. Laughter helps us to keep a positive, optimistic outlook through difficult situations, disappointments and loss. As we age, we certainly have opportunities to experience all of the above, making laughter that much more important.

According to Dr. Robin Dunbar, a psychologist at Oxford, the benefit of laughter is not the intellectual pleasure of cerebral humor, but rather the physical act of laughing. The simple act of laughing triggers an increase in endorphins, the brain chemicals known for their feel-good effect. Dr. Dunbar and his team have proven that laughter, through the release of endorphins, increases pain tolerance. What a wonderful natural drug! Add to that it's free, and it makes me wonder why we aren't all on a daily mission to consciously seek out laughter.

Another benefit to laughter is that it reduces stress and increases energy, enabling us to stay focused and accomplish more. Think about it. After a dinner with friends where the laughter flowed, don't you go home feeling more positive, relaxed and filled with energy?

So what can we do at any age and stage of life to add more laughter to our days?

- Smile – it's the beginning of laughter.
- When you hear laughter – move toward it. Don't wait for an invitation, they're too busy having fun to ask you to join them. You'll find people who laugh a lot are very welcoming!
- Spend time with fun, playful people. If you have many serious friends, add some playful ones into your circle too.
- Laugh at yourself – stop taking yourself so seriously.
- Pay attention to children and emulate them. Children spend less time worrying about what others think and more time invested in being happy and having fun.

We always have an excuse to be unhappy. Life is hard, it's not fair, it brings every one of us heartache and legitimate sadness. Yet every day, we can make a conscious choice to be happy. We get what we're looking for or what we're expecting to get. If we are looking for the best in people, we'll find it. If we're expecting to laugh every day, we will.

My wish for each of you is that you go forth and spread your JOY and LAUGHTER every day, everywhere, to everyone. Here's to humor and good health.

*This article is a reprint of a blog posted by
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