

Just For Laughs

Often when coping with an illness or health condition, we become preoccupied with visiting doctors, following medical orders, filling and taking prescriptions- -in short, our life is totally absorbed in doing everything we can to improve our physical bodies. This routine can get a bit tiresome and monotonous. For some, it heralds a downright depressing turn of events. Everyone wants to live a full life. No one wants to become a moaning mass of maladies whose days are full of traumatic treatments and torturous therapies.

While it is very important to follow doctor's orders and be proactive about maintaining and improving our health, we must keep in mind that **life is about living--and living should include a little levity now and again.** Remember the wise words of King Solomon:

***There is a time for every event under heaven...
a time to give birth, and a time to die;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance...***
Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, 4

Yes, each us needs a good laugh. You've certainly heard the expression, *Laughter is the best medicine...* We have all experienced the lasting and wholesome effects of a hearty laugh. Again, King Solomon wrote:

***A joyful heart is good medicine,
But a broken spirit dries up the bones...***
Proverbs 17:22

Being ill or facing the challenges of an aging body can be frustrating and depressing. It is good to talk about those feelings with others--but we need to be careful that we do not engage in a pity party which is always so damaging to our physical and emotional well-being. Having a good laugh does not mean our problems permanently disappear, but enjoying some lighter moments of laughter and fun can lighten our way and brighten our day. And laughter can certainly change our perspective--if only for a day. But today is all any of us can claim--and we must learn to live life one day at a time...

At the Midwestern Regional Medical Center in Zion, Illinois, an affiliate of The Cancer Treatment Centers of America, Katherine Puckett, Director of Mind-Body Medicine, advises: *Remember that feeling you had giggling uncontrollably as a kid? You still need it, especially if you're ill.*

A growing body of research supports the theory that laughter has true therapeutic value. Hearty laughter not only helps the spirit, but it gets the blood pumping, just like jogging--only it is a workout which even hospital patients can enjoy.

Laugh on a regular basis, and you can even boost your immune system, according to some research.

A study of 20 men and women conducted at The University of Maryland's School of Medicine revealed that 95 percent of the volunteers experienced increased blood flow while watching a funny movie. (See <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/PainManagement/story?id=711632&page=1> for more details.)

For many years, people have firmly believed in the healing properties of mirth and laughter. Now researchers in California are studying the actual physiological results of laughter. You can read about that at <http://archives.cnn.com/2000/HEALTH/alternative/05/08/laughter.health.wmd/index.html>.

Here in Florida, an organization called The HUMOR Project focuses on the positive power of humor. The following is taken directly from their website (www.humorproject.org):

Jest For The Health of It! Laughter enhances respiration and circulation, oxygenates the blood, suppresses the stress-related hormones in the brain, and activates the immune system. Indeed, laughter is the jest/best medicine.

Humor As An Antidote To Stress: Humor can help us move from a *grim and bear it* mentality to a *grin and share it* orientation. By using humor, you can prevent a *hardening of the attitudes* and thereby **add years to your life and life to your years.**

Sometimes we have to create our own **therapeutic fun**. Here are a few suggestions to help you observe National Humor Month in April...

Relax Your Mind - start with the comic section of the newspaper **and** be open to finding humor in the news section as well. Believe me, it's there☺...

Exercise - following your doctor's recommendations for safe exercise will relieve tense muscles, improve your mood and sleep, increase your energy, and ease symptoms of anxiety and depression. A walk on *the sunny side of the street* can do wonders...

Breathe Deeply - a great way to de-stress, breathing deeply actually alters your brain chemistry to calm you down. A good hearty laugh has the same therapeutic effect...

Connect With Others - sometimes people-watching can be quite humorous. Take a seat in the mall and watch toddlers and teen-agers in their awkward stages--and remember when you were just like them! And then watch some of the other folk who seem to have been dipped in vinegar--and pray you do not become like them! By the way, try not to laugh aloud when doing this exercise--

but you will! Then call a friend or relative and share what you have been up to--the laugh will do you both good!

Stay Involved In Spiritual Activities - studies have shown religious involvement and spirituality are associated with better health outcomes such as greater coping skills, less anxiety, and a lower risk of depression. Spirituality provides a sense of hope, meaning and purpose, a connection with others, and a way to interpret suffering and sickness. Prayer has been proven to provide the power to endure illness and the peace to embrace it.

Ask For Help – it is not only acceptable, but, even more, it is advisable to admit when you feel hopeless or helpless, languishing and lonely. Everyone needs a sympathetic shoulder once in a while. You've likely helped someone in need--now it's your turn to allow someone the privilege of doing the same for you!

Our CEO, John Aker, has spent his life helping others deal with emotional and spiritual challenges and he stands ready to help you with your current situation. If you are feeling heavy-hearted, give him a call. He may not be a comedian, but he will certainly try to help you find a reason to smile--maybe even laugh a little!

Call today, 561-955-6010.