

## *The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor: What the Research Says*

### Laughter and Pain

*Laughter releases endorphins in the brain that fight pain.*

## *The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor: What the Research Says Continued*

### Laughter and the Immune System

- 1. Laughter Lowers cortisol levels and protects our immune system*
- 2. Laughter increases antibodies, which fight infection.*
- 3. Laughter activates T-cells and prepares the body to fight foreign substances.*
- 4. Laughter increases Natural Killer Cell activity. Natural Killer Cells attack cancerous cells in the body.*

(Source: *Laughter and the Immune System: A Serious Approach*, by Lee Berk, Ph. D. and Stanley Tan, M.D.)

## *Therapeutic Benefits of Laughter Continued*

- Improves brain functioning and protects the heart*
- Increase oxygen in the blood which encourages healing*
- Reduces stress, depression, anxiety, and fear*
- Elevates mood and increases energy*

## *The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor: What the Research Says Continued*

### Laughter and Stress

*"Laughter is God's gift to human beings. You never see a cow laugh."*

Joan Rivers

*Laughter can decrease stress, lower blood pressure, and decrease muscle tension.*

(Source: "Neuro Endocrine and Stress Hormone Changes During Mirthful Laughter." *American Journal of Medical Sciences*, 1990, 298:390-396.)

## *The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor: What the Research Says Continued*

### Humor and Health

*"In a study of terminally ill patients, 4 out of 5 said they wished people would stop being so glum and joke with them!"*

*"For every 10 minutes I laughed, I had two hours of pain free sleep."*

Norman Cousins

*The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor:  
What the Research Says Continued*

1. *Studies of cultures where people often live the longest indicates that high esteem for old people and humor are key ingredients of longevity.*

*(Source: Longevity: Fulfilling Our Biological Potential, by Kenneth Pelletier)*

*The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor:  
What the Research Says Continued*

2. *Laughter gives the lungs a workout. When we laugh heartily, we take in six times more oxygen than when we are talking.*

*The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor:  
What the Research Says Continued*

3. *When we laugh, the heart pumps more, increasing blood circulation. According to Dr. Fry, 20 seconds of hearty laughter gives the heart the same exercise as 3 minutes of rowing.*

*The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor:  
What the Research Says Continued*

4. *People who laugh a lot have higher levels of immunoglobulin-A in their throats and nasal passages and come down with fewer colds than people who seldom laugh. One study found that new mothers who laughed a lot had fewer upper respiratory infections, and their babies did, too.*

*(Source: Humor Works, by John Morreall, Ph. D.)*

*Laughter as Prevention of Burnout and  
Compassion Fatigue*

*Stages of Burnout*

1. *Honeymoon*
2. *Stagnation (Reality sets in)*
3. *Frustration*
4. *Apathy*

### *Compassion Fatigue*

#### *1. The stress of caring too much*

*Compassion fatigue differs from burnout in that burnout is caused by organizational stress and feeling ineffective and compassion fatigue is caused by caring.*

### *Compassion Fatigue Continued*

#### *2. Emotional residue as a result of working with those who suffer*

#### *3. Secondary trauma – Secondary PTSD*

### *Compassion Fatigue Signs*

*Loss of energy*

*Loss of hope*

*Loss of enthusiasm*

*Loss of the ideal*

*Spiritual distress – "Where is God?"*

*A shift in one's world view*

*Are you more vulnerable to burnout which is caused by organizational stress and feeling ineffective or compassion fatigue which is caused by caring?*

*What are some things you do to prevent burnout and compassion fatigue?*

### *Laughter and Mental Health*

### *Laughter and Mental Health Continued*

#### *1. Humor raises endorphine levels in the brain and reduces emotional pain.*

*(Source: Margaret Caudell, M.D., Ph.D., Mind Body Clinic – Boston)*

### Laughter and Mental Health Continued

2. *It is also believed that humor activates neurochemicals in the brain, such as dopamine, and thus acts as an antidepressant.*

### Laughter and Mental Health Continued

3. *The emergence of a sense of humor is one of the signs of mental health and progress in therapy.*

*(Source: The Handbook of Humor, by Krieger)*

### *Counselor Humor*

*"A sign that you enjoy life is a good sense of humor."*

*Vanessa Williams Church*

*"A good sense of humor is one aspect of self-actualization."*

*Abraham Maslow*

### *The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor in Counseling*

*A goal of counseling is to help clients feel better and act differently. Many models of counseling attempt to reach this goal by interventions that focus on one of four areas: feelings; behavior; thinking; and biochemistry. Humor can affect changes in all four of these areas.*

### *The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor in Counseling Continued*

1. *It is the great equalizer.*
2. *It brings the idealized counselor back to life.*
3. *It can decrease resistance.*
4. *It can decrease cross-cultural tension.*

### *The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor in Counseling Continued*

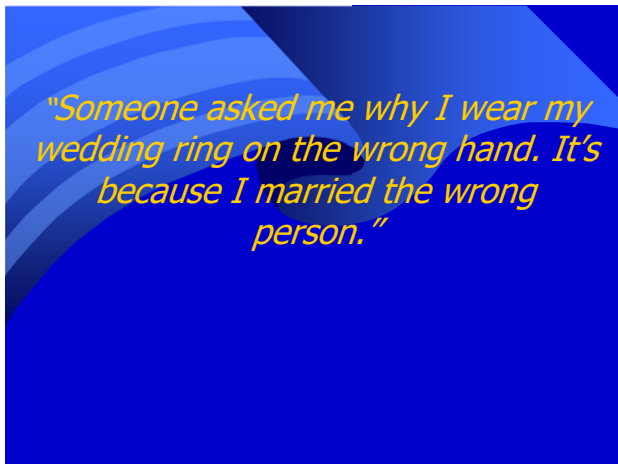
5. *It can facilitate bonding between counselors and clients.*
6. *It can facilitate self-disclosure – by creating a friendly environment.*
7. *It can allow some relief from pain.*
8. *It can allow client to change how they perceive a situation.*

### *The Therapeutic Benefits of Humor in Counseling Continued*

9. *It can ease some of the anxiety caused by taboo subjects*
10. *It can provide insight.*
11. *It can decrease stress and anxiety.*
12. *It can make the therapeutic hour seem quicker.*

### *Benefits of Laughter in Therapy Continued*

13. *Increases client talking and eye contact*
14. *Decreases client stigma*
15. *Helps client cope with loss and illness*
16. *Laughter is contagious. It facilitates bonding in group therapy*
17. *Laughter improves marriage and partnerships*



### *Utilizing Humor in Counseling With Clients*

*Many counselors agree that the best humor by counselors is thoughtfully spontaneous, well timed, and takes into consideration who the client is. The goal should be to lessen client tension, increase client comfort, and/or to help the client gain insight. The primary purpose of humor is to benefit the client.*

### *Utilizing Humor in Counseling With Clients Continued*

#### **Approaches**

1. *Planned spontaneity*
2. *Exaggerations*
3. *Changing dialects*

*Utilizing Humor in Counseling With  
Clients Continued*

4. Taking a "funny bone history"
  - A. What makes you laugh?
  - B. Do you like to tell jokes or hear jokes?
  - C. What kind of humor do you find unpleasant?
  - D. What kinds of things that make others laugh are not funny to you?
  - E. What are the funniest movies you have seen?
  - F. Who are your favorite comedians?

*Utilizing Humor in Counseling With  
Clients Continued*

9. The use of humor tools – movie clips, cartoons, anecdotes, signs, prompts, masks
10. Repeating a funny punch line

*Humor in Group Therapy  
Auction*

1. To be president
2. Peace of mind
3. A good pair of shoes
4. To smoke a joint
5. A gold mine
6. To influence the education of children
7. A new car
8. To snort cocaine

*Utilizing Humor in Counseling With  
Clients Continued*

5. Reframes
6. Offering a menu
7. Stories
8. Making fun of yourself

*Utilizing Humor in Counseling With  
Clients Continued*

11. Pointing out absurdities and illogical reasoning
12. The use of art
13. Role plays
14. Group activities

*Utilizing Humor in Counseling With Clients  
Continued  
Ethics*

**6 Types of Inappropriate Humor**

1. Laughing at the client
2. Cheap shots
3. Put downs
4. Sarcasm
5. Racist and sexist jokes
6. When there's not enough distance from the crisis.

### *When is Humor Inappropriate? Continued*

- *When the client is offended by it.*
- *When it makes the client feel like they're not being taken serious*
- *When it's used so often it's seen as boring*
- *When the counselor uses it to avoid dealing with the client's or their own anxiety*
- *When it is inappropriately timed*

### *Culture and Humor Knowledge of Culture*

- *Things I know*
- *Things I think I know*
- *Things that I don't know*
- *Things that I don't know that I don't even know I don't know*

### *Culture and Humor Continued*

*Micro-aggressions – intentional and unintentional slights*

### *Culture and Humor Continued*

*Geographical Linguistic Diversity*

### *"When I Was A Kid"*

1. *My favorite game was*
2. *My favorite food was*
3. *My favorite cartoon character was*
4. *My favorite song was*
5. *My favorite toy was*
6. *My favorite holiday was*
7. *My favorite teacher was*
8. *My best friend was*

### *7 Cousins of Laughter*

1. *Love*
2. *Hope*
3. *Faith*
4. *Touch*
5. *Creativity*
6. *Good nutrition*
7. *Goals and a sense of purpose*