Handout

Where There Is Laughter, There Is Hope
(The Role Of Humor In Coping)

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Mark Twain said, "A smile or laugh is, perhaps, the most exquisite thing in nature". Humor, however, is not an absolute. What is funny to me may not be funny to you. What is funny today may not be funny next week. Some things are funny with one group but not with another. Humor is subjective and everything depends on the perception of what we see or hear. Never the less, humor can ease pain, make a point or break the ice. Victor Borge said, "Laughter is the shortest distance between people."

This workshop cannot teach you how to be funny and will not try to convince you that laughter & humor are replacements for competent medical care or counseling.

Laughing exercises your lungs, stimulates your circulatory system, exercises your breathing muscles, increases the oxygen in your blood and benefits your cardiovascular system. When laughter subsides, the pulse rate drops and the skeletal muscles become relaxed.

Humor is a valid and sometimes necessary component for coping. Too often, it is ignored as a reliever of stress or overlooked as a way to build bridges between people. Humor and laughter can be a valuable aid in the maintenance of mental health and/or physical health. There are no calories, harmful side effects or artificial preservatives!

Laughing begins very early. According to the research of David Cohen, most babies are chuckling by nine weeks. At four years of age, children are said to be laughing every four minutes. I urge you to make friends with the child in you. Develop a sense of delight. Claudia Black says, "It's never to late to have a happy childhood."

An extensive and exhaustive 15-minute survey of available literature produced the following facts:

o The whole world loves smiles and laughter because they are associated with good, warm feelings. (Steve Allen)

o Humor heightens arousal and attention. Laughing listeners may learn more, especially if the issue of amusement relates to the subject at hand. Getting people to

laugh about a problem is to deal with discomfort and move on to other matters.
(Dr. Peter Desberg)

o The unique value and potency of humor derives mainly from its intrinsic attributes of intimacy, directness and humanness.
(Dr. Eliyahu Rosenheim)

o Being able to see humor in a less than ideal situation is a survival skill. (David Thomas)

o If it were not for laughter, we might be sicker. Without realizing it, day-to-day humor may be making a significant contribution to our physical well-being. (William F. Fry, M.D.)

o You can turn painful situations around through laughter. If you can find humor in anything, you can survive it. (Bill Cosby)

o A light heart lives long. (Shakespeare)

o Be happy. It's a way of being wise. (Collette)

o Wit contains ego-strengthening potential which should be reinforced. There is good reason to suspect that the patient with a sense of humor is more able to access the unconscious.
(Dr. Leanne Dommash)

o Happy patients generally respond more favorably to treatment and recover faster than do cheerless and complaining ones.
(L. Peter & B. Dana)

o The ability to get a laugh out of everyday situations is a safety valve that will rid you of tensions that might otherwise continue to build and damage your health. Perhaps it has much more to offer if you give it a little more concentrated attention. (L. Peter & B. Dana)

The Heart Institute of Louisville, Kentucky distributes an informational flyer. It says, in part, "Maintaining a good sense of humor is very important towards maintaining good health and a sense of well being."

Laughter In Appalachia, a book by Jones and Wheeler says "Humor reflects everything that is important to us... religion, jobs, health, and families." Humor was described as a way of coping with situations over which the people had no control. The people said, "We have endured, partially at least, because we could laugh!"

Bob Ueker, in his book, Catcher In the Wry says, "The world belongs to those who know how to laugh at it."

HUMOR RESOURCE LISTING

1. The Journal of Polymorphous Perversity. (A journal each spring and fall) Wry-Bred Press, PO Box 1454, Madison Square Station, New York, New York, 10159.

2. Peter Alsop, Ph.D.; Box 960, Topanga, California, 90290 (Tapes, CDs and Audio-Visual tapes of humorous and serious music).
   Phone 1-(800) 676-5480 for free catalog. Internet -> http://peteralsop.com

3. The Humor Project, Joel Goodman, Ed.D.; 480 Broadway, Suite 210; Saratoga Springs, New York, 12866. (Tapes, books & conferences) Laughing Matters, a Quarterly Journal. Write for free catalog.

4. The American Association for Therapeutic Humor; 222 S. Meramec, suite 303; St. Louis MO 63105; 1 (314) 863-6632. Write for free catalog.

HOW TO PUT HUMOR IN YOUR LIFE

Give these ideas a try or modify them to fit your needs and personality!

- Schedule a humor break into everyday. Read 10-20 pages of a funny book. Watch a sitcom or movie that will make you laugh. Start a collection of humor videos.
- Put a cartoon each person's napkin when you have a party.
- Leave silly messages on an answering machine.
- Throughout the year look for comics that will summarize events in your life. Include the comics in an annual holiday letter or any letter.
- Volunteer with your local art center or Community Theater- but always pick something lighthearted.
- Collect and share cartoons. Change the words to fit the person to whom it is being sent.

Very few of us are quick enough to think of a witty and clever response when we want. Replay situations in your mind. Think about what you could have said or done with humor.

Avoid putting others down. Research indicates that "laughing at" is based on insensitivity, is negative, can destroy self confidence, can cause pain and hurt that lasts a lifetime, and reinforces stereotypes and prejudice.

However, "laughing with" is based on empathy, can enhance confidence, is positive, can ease pain and feel good, brings people closer together, and is supportive. Norman Cousins said, "Life is serious, but it need not be solemn."

Should you attempt to put humor into a situation that involves others who are in a crisis, remember that individuals sharing the same crisis are likely to react differently depending on their closeness to the situation. For example, people in an earthquake, or

other disaster who do not sustain damage or personal injury are more likely to be receptive to humor than those who actually lost a home or loved one. Be sensitive to the other person's perception of your humor, and be willing to apologize if you hurt someone.

Laughter, like hope, is sometimes difficult to find. But, I have always believed that where there is laughter, there is hope.

Training Seminars & Conference Keynotes

Mr. Mitchell is available to provide programs for your organization. In addition to being a popular seminar leader, he frequently provides convention keynotes. He has spoken to more than 200,000 people in 47 States (including Hawaii) and Canada. For information contact Bob Mitchell, ACSW, PO Box 7281, Louisville KY 40257
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A web site contains workshop information, handouts, a resume, song sheets, and more.
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__ DVD for $20.00

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_Compact Disk for $17.00 (Humorous music about office and home)

"Where There is Laughter, There is Hope: The Role of Humor in Coping" (Humor and Wellness)
__ DVD for $20.00

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