

Week 23 – Humor

Day 2

Norman Cousins

Over 30 years ago, Norman Cousins lay dying in his hospital room at UCLA Medical Center. Doctors told him his disease was terminal and there was nothing they could do. They were half right.

Cousins did not accept their diagnosis. Though he was in excruciating pain from a rare disease that inflamed his spine, he found that after watching a Marx Brothers movie on television, he laughed so hard it exhausted him; he slept soundly without narcotics for the first time in weeks. He immediately ordered a film projector and all the Marx Brothers movies and slapstick comedy he could get his hands on.

He noticed immediate improvement. The pain decreased to a tolerable level. He slept soundly and amazingly, blood tests showed his immune system was healing and inflammation went down.

Cousins went on to chronicle his recovery in the highly acclaimed book, Anatomy of an Illness, published in 1969. This book is viewed as a cornerstone for awareness of humor therapy.

The average 5 year old laughs 500 times a day; the average adult 18 times a day. Why do you think this is?

Having a sense of humor affects the way you see things? How so?

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Day 3

Farris Jordan

Farris Jordan, the author of Stress! Are you in Control? would get up in the morning and before doing anything else, would stand in front of a mirror and laugh out loud for an entire minute. He explained that the exercise of laughing would massage all of his “insides”. By doing this, he was ready to face his day each morning.

Stress has been cited as a leading cause or contributing factor in disease. Some figures go as far as saying 80% of all disease is due to stress. Humor is certainly one way to release and cope with stress. You can't laugh and hold on to a blue mood for very long.

Laughter can improve circulation. Blood flow reaches all parts of the body more easily. Skin temperature increases and we warm up. Blood pressure lowers and the heart rate can stabilize. Blood chemistry even changes. Laughter has been shown to increase blood oxygen levels. That in itself can be a healing event. It certainly tends to reduce tension.

Other positive things happen with laughter. For example, your immune system is boosted. T-cell and multi-cell production is elevated when blood cell activity is increased. According to La Rocha, laughing has been shown to increase the production of other elemental immune system cells and gamma interferon, which are suspected of fighting cancer.

Endorphins increase with laughter. They are natural painkillers. Ten different muscles are exercised when we laugh. They contract and relax and in a very real way perform a sort of visceral massage on our internal organs. A Stanford study plugged catheters into college students and made them watch funny movies. With laughter, white blood cell activity increased immediately.

Name 4 things laughter does for us?

Why do people not laugh?

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Day 4

How to Use Humor

Would you say you are a role model for humor? This is really the goal; for you to become a role model for each of these qualities. Being a role model for humor is not being the class clown but rather using humor to lighten or diffuse a difficult situation.

Let's look at 3 examples:

Abraham Lincoln was in a political debate with Stephan Douglass for the senate seat in Illinois. Without TV or radio, this was the highest form of entertainment for people on the frontier. When the candidates spoke publicly, great crowds were drawn and they cheered just as we do at sporting events. During his speech, Douglass said Lincoln was two faced, saying one thing and doing another. When Lincoln responded, his reply was, "Do you believe if I had two faces, I would wear this one?" This response completely diffused the debate.

Lincoln was in the war room awaiting news from the front in a pivotal battle. It was dead silent and Lincoln told this story:

When Ethan Allen visited England after the Revolutionary War, he was treated with utmost respect with the exception of one British noble. During his visit with this noble, he excused himself to go to the bathroom and in the bathroom was a picture of George Washington. When he came back, the English nobleman asked, "What do you think about where I placed the picture of your President?" Ethan Allen replied that he thought it was very practical. If anything would scare the solid waste material out of Englishmen, it would be a picture of Washington."

Nick Saban, football coach at the University of Alabama, was asked to comment on a statement by a rival coach, who had never beat Saban. This coach said that he guaranteed that this year, he would win. Saban never hesitated with his response, "In golf?"

Using humor, bad feelings or violence can be prevented.

There is a Jewish proverb that states that it is better to laugh about your problems than to cry about them. What does this mean to you?

**Sometimes people take themselves too seriously and have a hard time laughing at themselves.
Can you share a time when you laughed at yourself?**

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Day 5

Evaluate Your Week

We've been focused on "Humor" this week, how did you do? For every goal not met, explain what happened and what you can do differently next week to have success.

If you completed goals, what did you learn?

Write down in complete sentences, something that you learned about "Humor" this week.

Of the three stories,"Norman Cousins", "Farris Jordan", "How to Use Humor", which had the greatest impact on you? Why?

Demonstration:

For each day of the week, give yourself either "+" if you demonstrated this quality or "-" if you did not.

M _____ T _____ W _____ Th _____ F _____ Sa _____ Su _____