

Have You Laughed Today?

By Ginger T Bisplinghoff

"Through humor, you can soften some of the worst blows that life delivers. And once you find laughter, no matter how painful your situation might be, you can survive it."

Bill Cosby

Every week I travel 3 hours each way to see my elderly parents who are in a nursing home. To make the trip more pleasant, I decided to buy a subscription to Sirius satellite radio. I have quite an eclectic list of programs from Motown music, Broadway, talk radio, Howard Stern and I find that my two favorite stations are Laugh USA, which highlights the great comedians (like Bob Hope, Phyllis Diller, George Carlin) and the Joel Osteen show, which features positive messages! Both are full of laughs and inspirational stories.

Most recently, Joel Osteen, pastor of Lakewood Church, spoke about the power of laughter and the healing power that laughing brought to one of his friends who suffered from fibromyalgia. It reminded me of the wonderful workshops that I took in the 1980s with Dr. Bernie Siegal, author of the book, *A Book of Miracles - Inspiring True Stories of Healing, Gratitude and Love*. He, too, spoke of patients who turned their cancer death sentences around by changing their perspective, looking for joy each day and living life to its fullest.

I'm not suggesting that laughter "cures" and I'm not denying it either. In 1978, Norman Cousins, who has been considered the modern father of laughter therapy, wrote *Anatomy of an Illness as Described by the Patient*. He recounts his experience of watching comedy movies to recover from prolonged pain from a serious illness.

We can't overlook the 1998 movie *Patch Adams* about Dr. Hunter Campbell who decided at age 18, after three hospitalizations and a challenging life to never have a bad day. I can't do justice to his incredible spirit and life mission. Learn more by going to <http://www.patchadams.org>

So why do we need laughter? According to some studies, laughter may help physically to:

- Boost the immune and circulatory system
- Improve Blood Pressure readings
- Ease digestion
- Relax the physical body
- Increase endorphins (the body's natural painkillers)
- Improve memory

Laughter is also the best medicine for:

- Reducing stress
- Improving sleep
- Attitude adjusting
- Enhancing quality of life

"From there to here and here to there, funny things are everywhere."

Dr. Seuss

How do you bring laughter into your life when it seems like nothing is funny?

- Watch funny movies or TV shows
- Spend time with a friend or family member who always make you laugh
- Get a pet
- Watch *Too Cute* on Animal Planet or find laughable videos on You Tube
- Look for humor everywhere you go
- Initiate a laugh by making someone else laugh
- Have a pillow fight with a child - they will love you for it
- Do something that made you laugh when you were young
- Find a *Laughter Yoga* class
- Most of all... give yourself permission to laugh, no matter what!



"Humor is mankind's greatest blessing."

Mark Twain