

## Coach's Corner

### Come laugh with me

By Sharon Pahlka, Kidney patient and life coach



"Will you come laugh with me," my friend asked. She invited me to a "laughter club," a new trend for achieving better health. Many of us are learning the key role laughter plays, especially as we get older. I remember a dinner with two

close friends, when I started describing a bummer date. Somehow, my description and timing were just right and we all began laughing hysterically.

Letting our mischievous inner kid come out to play is not only fun, it's good for our health, especially those of us with a chronic illness. Laughter is nature's multi-purpose medication.

- It relieves stress and tension, improves breathing and helps digestion.
- Researchers believe that humor may cause chemical changes in the brain that help our body's resistance to illness.

Some hospitals are so convinced of the benefits of laughter they have started "humor programs," including a "Laughmobile" full of funny audio tapes, books, and toys, and laughter workshops to encourage staff to add humor to their work and lives.

Choosing humor to approach life's problems, rather than anger and hostility, helps me take my situation and myself less seriously and give my faults less weight. Here are some ideas:

- Make your own laughmobile: put funny movies, cartoons and books in a basket where you can find them.

- Send a silly note, balloons, or funny item to a friend who needs cheering. (I love to send silly singing cards.)
- Most important, adopt an attitude of playfulness. Let others know you are a person who knows how to laugh.
- Invite a friend to come laugh with you. You figure out how to make it happen.

**Coaching Question:** When was the last time you laughed so hard you cried?

**Coaching Tip:** Try to laugh at least once a day. (Twice is better!)

**Quotes:** "Were it not for my little jokes, I could not bear the burdens of this office."  
*Abraham Lincoln*

"A merry heart does good like medicine."  
*Proverbs 17:22*

"If I had no sense of humor, I should long ago have committed suicide."  
*Mahatma Gandhi*

### Coping with kidney disease

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I've heard over the years that people are in denial. This means that they are unwilling to accept their kidney disease, follow their diet, take their medicines or stick to their dialysis schedule. They may lie around the house and complain to their family and friends.

These are self-defeating emotions and can lead to a downward spiral into a deep hole of sadness and depression. It's hard to climb out of holes when you feel weak, hopeless or sorry for yourself. The more depressed you are, the harder it is to crawl out. Although depression is very understandable in this situation, I suggest that you keep the hole as shallow as possible. The keys are activity and information – to stay active physically, mentally and emotionally. This is how you keep your spirit and body in balance.

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