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## Coach's Corner: Come laugh with me

By: Sharon Pahlka , Journal Newspapers

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"Will you come laugh with me?" my friend asked. She was inviting me to a "laughter club," a new trend for achieving better health. Many of us are aware of the important role laughter plays, especially as we get older. It is good to have our mischievous inner kid come out to play. Taking risks to be zany is sometimes good medicine. It can be exhilarating to let go and enjoy the good feelings that laughter elicits.

We can make laughter work for us. I think I would shrivel up and die if I could not use humor and laughter to get me through life. I have read some interesting things about laughter.

Laughter increases relaxation, relieving stress. The effects can last up to 45 minutes. The greater the laughter the greater the tension release.

A good belly laugh can improve breathing and help digestion. It also increases oxygen in the blood and benefits the whole body.

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 that encourage staff to add humor to their work and lives.

We can choose to approach life's problems and difficulties with anger and hostility or with humor. When I choose humor, I take my situation and myself less seriously and give my faults less weight. Here are some ideas to help you take humor seriously:

- \* Find things that make you laugh and do them. See a funny movie or TV show, read a funny book or cartoon, remember a joke and tell it, go to a comedy club, think about a humorous memory.
- \* Use humor to defuse tense situations (without making fun of others).
- \* Talk to someone who always makes you laugh.
- \* Play with a pet, or even a friend's pet.
- \* 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.

I remember a dinner with two close friends when I started describing a bummed date. Somehow, my description and timing were just right and we all began laughing hysterically. Tears were streaming; it was the greatest feeling. I won't forget it. I want one of my new mottos to be "come laugh with me."

**Coaching Question:** When was the last time you had a laugh that made you cry?

**Coaching Tip:** Laugh, it is good for you.

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

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

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

*Sharon Pahlka is a life coach and speaker. In her coaching, she helps her clients live well and meaningfully, especially those with chronic health challenges. Sharon's column, Coach's Corner, offers helpful tips from her work.*

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