

Laughter

Have you laughed yet today? Did you even smile? Did you know that laughter is good for you? Laughter, humor, and/or playfulness can help us psychologically. Laughter and humor can give us perspective on our lives as well as on the stresses we have. Our bouts of laughter may help us be better problem solvers; it may also get us in touch with ourselves; and it may aid us to find a safe and socially acceptable vulnerability.

If we can see humor or find a way to laugh at what is making us anxious or worried, then it may be the beginning of our mastery over anxiety or worry. Tell yourself a humorous story about what's worrying you; better yet, tell it to a friend, family member (hopefully they're friendly), or a co-worker.

Humor and laughter can help support emotional/psychological resilience. Biochemical research into the effects of humor and laughter is beginning to show us the positive changes to our immune system that can occur. Cognitively, humor and laughter interfere with rigid thinking and thus aid us in a clearer, often more realistic, appraisal of the situation or the stress. (For all of the English and theater majors reading this article, do you know who wrote, "Nothing is good or bad. It is thinking that makes it so"?) Emotionally, it is almost impossible to laugh and hold onto our depression or anger or anxiety. By developing humor and giving in to laughter, we can develop a very positive and helpful coping skill. Behaviorally, after a good laugh, we often feel energized.

Laughter occurs typically in playful settings, when a person is attempting to set a positive emotional tone, or sometimes to enhance feelings of belonging. What we laugh at, therefore, may actually not be humorous as in a comedy show or comedy routine. (There are few of us who are stand-up comedians.)

How do you laugh or express amusement? Are you a "quick smile person," a "toothy grinner" or a "soft behind the hand teeheer?" Let's see, could you be a chuckler or a giggler? Let's stand for the ho-ho-hoers of the world or the yakety-yaker and my favorite of all, the belly laugher.

Let the Counseling Center know what makes you laugh; a funny story you know; something that usually tickles your funny bone. If the staff agrees, We'll probably write about humor and laughter again. We'd be pleased to put some of your contributions in our next article. We'd enjoy hearing from you.