



Take Time to Laugh

- it is the music of the heart

By Rob McKelvey

Not only is laughter the music of the heart it is good for our health and general wellbeing. I'm sure that you have experienced the feeling of happiness and joy after having a good laugh. Laughing is contagious. It is extremely difficult to not join in the mirth when a group of people are laughing uncontrollably

Here is a little experiment to show you what I mean. Think of something that makes you sad. Now smile and start to laugh. It is virtually impossible to remain sad as a feeling of joyful release takes hold. Now think of something humorous and start to laugh. That same feeling of joyous release happens. It is a natural physiological and psychological reaction to laughter. And by the way having a sense of humour is not the same as laughing. Laughing is but a response to something funny. So you don't have to see or hear something funny to start laughing.

There are three traditional theories of what makes us laugh: the incongruity theory, the superiority theory, and the relief theory. The incongruity theory is when you expect a specific outcome and another one happens. The superiority theory is usually reflected in jokes or pointing out someone's mistakes, ignorance or stupidity. The relief theory is just releasing built up tension from stress, anger, guilt etc.

So why does laughter make you feel better?

Laughter actually stimulates the immune system. According to research by Doctors Berk and Tan in 1996, it reduces the level of cortisol, epinephrine, dopamine and the growth hormone. At the same time laughter boosts the presence of the Natural Killer cells, increases endorphins and neurotransmitters and T-cells. Laughing also reduces stress levels which can lower the blood pressure.

Laughter is also a good physical workout. It is great exercise for the cardiovascular system. Researchers estimate that laughing 100 times is equivalent to 15 minutes on an exercise bicycle...without the sweat. It gives your diaphragm and respiratory system a good workout. Your blood pressure comes down while vascular blood flow and oxygenation of the blood increases.

There is also a social aspect to laughter. A relationship with an individual or group of individuals is enhanced when there is humour and laughter involved. Laughter connects us to other people. After all, think of what you want in another individual and a sense of humour and the ability to laugh is high on the list of the desirable qualities. In fact, in a study by the University of Seattle, couples who laugh with each other at least once a day have a better chance of staying together.

No wonder laughing makes you feel good.

Do we laugh because we are happy, or are we happy because we laugh?

By the way, on average children laugh 400 times per day while adults only laugh 15 times a day. Come on folks let's have a laugh....especially when you feel stressed. We don't need to have something funny happen in order to laugh and get the benefits. Just start laughing.

Copyright © 2010 McKelvey & Associates Pty Ltd. ABN 38 084 409 674. All rights reserved.