

Laughter as Therapy

Is laughter the best medicine??

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Did you know that research indicated that young children laugh 300-400 times a day, whereas adults on average laugh only 15 times?

There are exceptions of course, and perhaps you have developed a very robust sense of humour to deal with the everyday challenges that are part of your life. Perhaps your L.Q. (Laughter Quotient) is way above average! However, we also live in a very stressful world and we need to find many strategies to deal with negative emotions which can undermine our health and well-being.

One such strategy is LAUGHTER!

Research has now validated that Laughter has many health benefits:-

1. Laughter is a form of aerobic exercise so even if you're fairly sedentary you can benefit from this form of exercise!
2. Although hearty laughter initially raises your B.P., after laughing you experience a "relaxation effect" and your B.P. drops.
3. Laughter reduces stress and tension and helps to reverse the effects of stress on the immune system. i.e. reduces cortisol levels.
4. Endorphins (our natural opiates) are released by laughter which can contribute to a feeling of wellbeing and pain relief.
5. Laughter strengthens the immune system by increasing anti-bodies and infection-fighting cells.
6. Humour and laughter contribute to our resilience - that is the ability to "bounce back" from the stressors we encounter in our daily lives.

So is this why Dr Patch Adams recommends that we look for more fun, humour and laughter in our lives to balance out the stress? Patch also talks about the "Pain Paradigm". By this he means all the bad news which ends up on your TV screen every night, in

newspapers and on the radio etc. Because of the speed of modern electronic communication and the fact that "bad news" sells, we are often overwhelmed by all the dramas and tragedies occurring around the world. Patch recommends that we reduce our access to "bad news", look for good news and share fun, humour and laughter.

As we each have a unique sense of humour, it's relevant to identify who or what makes us laugh so that we can access more opportunities to enjoy the benefits of laughter.

So who are the people in your life who contribute to your laughter? Could it be your partner, your children, grandchildren, pets, yourself (very valuable)!!! friends, colleagues, health professionals?

The most accessible form of laughter is that which emerges through interactions and conversations with other people where you exercise your sense of humour (essential so that it doesn't get flabby!).

What types of humour or comedy do you enjoy? Verbal, visual, British humour, US sitcoms, comedians, cartoonists, writers, movies, panels? You can often find humour on videos, in second hand book shops, tapes, and CD's, card shops, newspapers and periodicals, not to mention the Internet which has many references to humour, laughter and health. Keep a supply of "humour" for those low days and give yourself a lift!

So enjoy fun, humour and laughter with your family and friends. Use your sense of humour to help you through the challenging times and increase your laughter quotient (L.Q. = Laughter Score). Maybe add in a little love, hope, determination and purpose so that all these positive emotions override the effects of stress and help to maintain your sense of well-being.