

## The Power of Laughter Over Stress

By Patt Harper

Does morning traffic put your teeth on edge? Has work become a drag? Are you totally tapped out of vim, vigor and vitality? You may be suffering from laughter-deprivation. What you need is a good belly laugh. Laughter is an easy and wonderful tool for bringing comfort and health into your life. When you laugh, you can put things into perspective and life doesn't seem so bad after all. As George Burns said, *"If we savor humor, humor can be a life saver."*

Laughter is a simple quick-fix solution for fighting the battle of every day stress. It is easy, fun, carb and fat-free and inexpensive. Laughing doesn't take special talent, education or a license to practice. All you need is desire and self-permission.

Not laughing enough is the curse of most adults. The reasons vary from individual to individual but the most common excuse I hear is "I laugh when something's funny." We can't wait for laughter to happen. Although we may read the comics in the morning and watch sit-coms in the evening, there are several hours in between that we need to add humor. We can't wait on the sidelines expecting someone else to make us laugh. We must make it happen. Each one of us has the power to laugh away fears and stressful moments. We must consciously re-train our brain to find the humor around us. We must immerse ourselves in laughter.

Many of us were taught from little on that laughing and being silly is foolish and immature. Maturity means changing our childish behaviors for more child-like ones. Childish is being selfish, negative and self-centered. Child-like is being positive, energetic and loving. By learning to laugh at life's difficulties and looking for humor around us we become more responsible, caring and desirable individuals.

The first step to improving your laugh life is to adopt a positive attitude. Start each day by telling yourself "Today will be great – because I'm in charge." Remember, only you have the power to choose your attitude. Then, look around you with laughter vision. Watch the squirrels scurrying in your yard. Or count the number of times your dog circles in his pet bed. Or just look at the wonderful arrangement your hair has become during the night. Be observant and truly see the humor that surrounds you.

You must be pro-active about laughter. Make stressful situations an opportunity to laugh. If you are stuck in traffic, pop in a CD of silly songs or a favorite comic. If you find yourself wanting to rip out your co-worker's hair with your teeth, go to recess. Take a few minutes to play with toys. Or skip around the block singing camp songs. Do whatever it takes to put a smile on your face

Here are a few more laughter suggestions:

- Start the day by chanting “Ha Ha Ho Ho Ho” until it becomes real
- Have a joke file and re-visit often
- Wear amusing buttons
- Watch comedies
- Surround yourself with fun people
- Write your problems on a paper airplane and then fly them away.

We know stress can make us sick. Positive emotions such as love, joy and humor can help combat negative feelings during trying times. Laughter is the most powerful defense against life’s low blows.

Here’s a simple formula to help you stay on track:

- L**ook for humor.
- A**lways have a smile.
- U**se toys as tools.
- G**ive others a reason to smile.
- H**ave time for fun.
- T**ake yourself lightly.
- E**ncourage others.
- R**efuse to be negative.

Laughter has many rewards, but it only works for people who laugh often. It needs to be a regular routine to provide its maximum benefits. So schedule laughter breaks into your day. Plan laughter into your whole life to receive a continuous positive effect. Remember the words of a 17<sup>th</sup> century physician who said, “*Seven days without laughter makes one weak.*”

**Patt Harper is a motivational humorist, trainer and author. She has spoken before and worked with organizations across the United States and Canada. Her hands on presentations are designed to teach participants to use humor more effectively and be well in mind, body, and spirit. Patt is a Certified Laughter Leader through the World Laughter Tour organization. Learn more at [www.LAFF4Life.com](http://www.LAFF4Life.com). You can contact her at [patthaha@aol.com](mailto:patthaha@aol.com).**