

THE "LIGHTEN UP" LIST

Cultivate the laughter habit

When was the last time you enjoyed a good belly laugh? Maybe it's time to redevelop the laughter habit. This is a habit that will not take much time or energy to regain.⁶

Laugh at yourself

Don't take yourself so seriously, at least that way you can be far more accepting of other's slipups and mistakes. Taking yourself lightly is *not* the same as putting yourself down.⁶

Take a mini-vacation-laugh

Keep an eye out for those unexpected absurd events that happen on a daily basis that makes you laugh. Maybe call a friend and describe what just happen to you in the most exaggerated manner you possibly can.

Laugh like you were a child again

It is estimated that most children laugh more than two hundreds times daily whereas the average adult laughs no more than seventeen times in a 24-hour period. Obviously, life pressures and more responsibilities steal our joy and happiness little by little as we grow older.

Make a joy list

Jot down quotes from magazines, newspapers or books that make you feel great. Add to it statements from great leaders and individuals who have made their mark on this world or biblical texts that lift your spirits higher.

Collect Cartoons

I have collected hundreds of humorous cartoons over the years on all sorts of subjects such as religion, finances, politics, etc. and it is fun when you are feeling down to take a few moments and laugh again at history's humorous situations.

Laugh with God

"A happy heart is good medicine and a cheerful mind works healing." —
Proverbs 17:22



Remember God has a sense of humor. Consider laughter as another gift from heaven and failure to participate in it could be considered poor stewardship.

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The Stewpot

A potpourri of practical ideas to help you become a better steward

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Begin Anew—With Joy and Laughter

By Gordon Botting, DrPH, CHES.



You probably have never heard of Joey Grimaldi. He kept audiences falling out of their seats with laughter for four decades. The reason you have not heard of him is that he lived in the early 1800s. It is reported he could turn angry crowds into laughing and applauding audiences. The sad truth is that in himself, Joey was very unhappy. His personality joined the workaholic with the perfectionist. Thus, he was never completely satisfied with his routines, tales or sketches, and was forever seeking the brand new perfect one-liner or story for every audience.

Later, Grimaldi's body began to show the ill effects of his self-imposed anxiety and he sought the help of a physician who was also a stranger. At the conclusion of the examination the doctor reported he couldn't find a medical reason for the illness, except for the signs of anxiety and depression. The physician suggested he take a few days off and relax. Possibly go and see that great comedian Joey Grimaldi he had read much about in the paper.

"I understand he's hilarious and a few laughs could do your health some good."

Joey turned to the doctor and said, "You won't believe this but I am Joey Grimaldi."

Sadly, a few weeks later Joey collapsed and died from exhaustion. The comedian, who could make others laughs, could not bring joy into his own life.¹

Daily we hear in the news about record foreclosures, unemployment, bankruptcies, and the soaring national debt. The reports of gloom and doom seem to never end.

But life doesn't have to be all gloom and doom. We as Christian stewards

Stewardship is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality and finances.

“Laughter is the best medicine for a long and happy life. He who laughs – lasts.” — Wilfred A. Peterson

need not be sad; we can choose, this New Year, to activate our joy and happiness genes.

You might be asking in these hard times why simply laughing more would be helpful? Here are three great reasons.

1. Inner Jogging

A good hearty chuckle can enlarge over twelve genes that regulate the natural killer cells, those immunological assassins that destroy unruly cells to keep the immune system in harmony. According to wellness scientists a good belly laugh causes the inner lining of our blood vessels to expand, increasing the blood flow in our veins and arteries. Mothers who breast-feed have a greater reason to enjoy comedy because it increases the relaxing hormone, melatonin, in breast milk. With high glucose cases, laughter will increase certain proteins that prevent cellular damage in diabetics. Just the hope of joy can work wonders. Blood drawn from individuals just before they watched a delightful movie showed a beta-endorphin increase of 27% and a human growth hormone boost of 87%.² Laughter is so healing Professor William Fry of Stanford University, describes laughter as *Stationary Jogging*.

Another study found when people

were asked to show facial expressions of anger and fear, their bodies responded with an increase in heart rate and skin temperature so it made them sweat. But when the same



individuals were asked to smile their heart rates settled down and their temperatures dropped so they were no longer perspiring.³

2. One Laugh = 5 cents

Talk about landing a job. One of the large hotel chains, Holiday Inn, was seeking applicants for five hundred new positions. They interviewed five thousand job seekers. But, here's the kicker— they automatically disqualified any applicant that smiled less than 4 times during the interview.⁴ If you are seeking a position in this tight job market, bring a smile and a pleasant attitude to your next job interview. If you are employed maybe

an extra smile for your co-workers each day could influence your boss into giving you a raise. At the very least it will have a positive effect on the office atmosphere.

In a recent study to determine if wealth increased ones level of happiness, it was found that an annual income of \$75,000 was the top level for financial satisfaction. So envying Bill Gate's and Warren Buffet's billions did not bring more satisfaction, happiness or life contentment.

3. Smile, you're on God's Candid Camera

Far too many folks picture our Heavenly Father as a strict, harsh Deity, a judgmental God with an unforgiving Spirit. This distortion of God's character is portrayed so beautifully in an illustration found in Philip Yancy's book, *What's So Amazing About Grace?*

“In the church the other Sunday I was intent on a small child who was turning around smiling at everyone. He wasn't gurgling, spitting, humming, kicking, tearing the hymnals, or rummaging through his mother's handbag. He was just smiling. Finally, his mother jerked him about and in a stage whisper that could be heard in a little theatre off Broadway said, “Stop that grinning! You're in church!” With that, she gave him a swat and as the tears rolled down his cheeks added, “That's better,” and returned to her prayers. . . Suddenly I was angry. It occurred to me

the entire world is in tears, and if you're not, then you'd better get with it. I wanted to grab this child with the tear-stained face close to me and tell him about my God. The happy God. The smiling God. The God who had to have a sense of humor to have crated the likes of us. . . By tradition, one wears faith with the solemnity of a mourner, the gravity of a mask of tragedy, and the dedication of a Rotary badge.

What a fool, I thought. Here was a woman sitting next to the only light left in our civilization—the only hope, our only miracle—our only promise of infinity. If he couldn't smile in church, where was there left to go?”⁵

I'm glad that my personal picture of God is, as He sits on His heavenly throne, occasionally leans over to Gabriel and says with a twinkle in His eye, “Did you see what that human being just did!” I like the way the patriarch Job says it, “He will yet fill your mouth with laughter.” (Job 8:21 NIV)

As we begin 2012, don't take joy for granted. Determine this New Year to laugh more often *at* yourself and *with* others. Give the gift of laughter to all that you met knowing that it will heal bodies, soothe spirits, and mend relationships and above all else, adore our Creator.