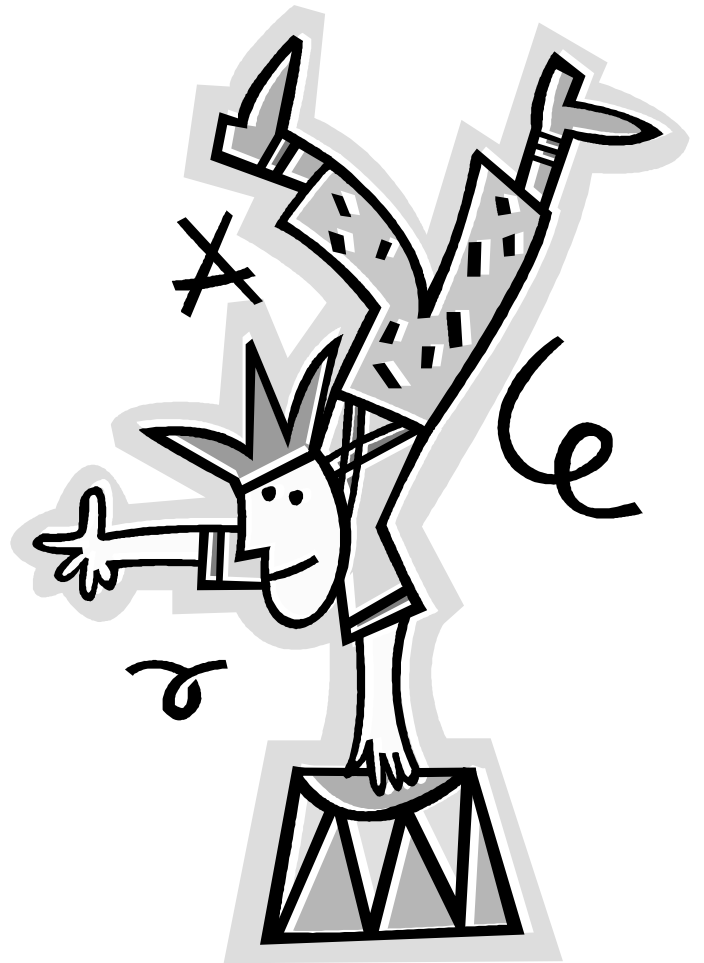


# Finding Humor and Purpose

## In the Midst of Life's Circus

Prevent Child Abuse NY



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# Finding Humor and Purpose In the Midst of Life's Circus

As much as we hate to admit it, ☹️ stress exists for all of us. When we're really stressed out, it's hard to have laugh and have fun. And that's sad because more and more research is indicating that laughter is good for our health and well-being (If you want to learn more, see the books listed on the last page of this handout and check out the research of Drs. Paul Mc/Gee, William Fry and Lee Berk).

Too much stress is a major contributing factor to a very "serious" disease called Hypohumorosis, the silent killer of fun.

## Definition of Hypohumorosis

Hypohumorosis is the degeneration of the Jokacytes... within the blood of an inner child. I'm talking about your inner child - not your inner diva or your inner stud. There's a big difference!

Just to review a little biology here: The jokacytes, of course, are the cells in the blood that attack things that are boring, stressful or related to accounting. When the jokacytes degenerate, it causes atrophy of the funny bone and that's when things can get serious. In summary, you need to keep your jokacyte level up to keep your inner child healthy, because it's your inner child that helps you deal with stress.



## Identifying the symptoms of Hypohumorosis (stress)

- Pains in the neck & pains in the butt
- Isolation & addiction to Nacho Cheese Doritos
- High blood pressure & spare tire pressure
- The arrival of mysterious packages from the Home Shopping Network

Here's the good news. 😊 Using positive, affirming humor is one of the quickest and easiest ways to reduce stress and improve relationships. This kind of humor allows us to connect with people through our hearts, rather than through our intellect. Positive, affirming humor is loving, healing, inclusive, and uplifting. It helps us get through stressful times and the surprises of life.

## Benefits of positive, affirming humor

- Helps us cope with difficult situations
- Keeps us mentally flexible
- Brings people closer together
- Offers insight and education



- Aids in communication
- Stimulates creativity
- Reduces stress
- Provides hope



## Benefits of Laughter (or what happens when treatment for hypohumorosis is working)

- Exercises the heart, lungs, abdominal muscles
- Lowers the blood pressure
- Increases intake of oxygen - similar to running but easier.
- Increases prod. of endorphins - the body's natural painkillers
- Increases activity of T-cells, natural killer cells and gamma interferon - these help us fight infection
- Decreases levels. of cortisol - a steroid that fights against our immune system

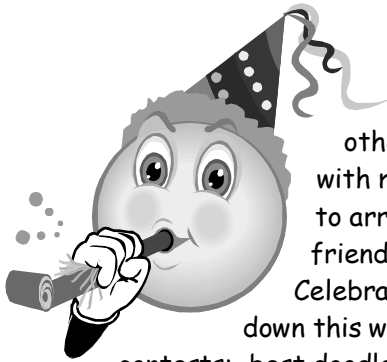
Laughter creates positive physiological changes in the body that have been documented by research. It promotes healing and helps the immune system function more effectively.

## 5 Suggestions to Help You Find More Humor, Joy and Fun in Your Life



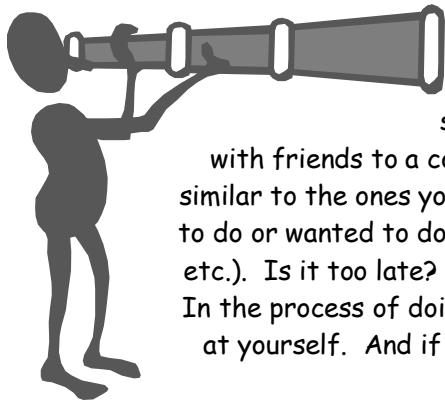
### 1. Reframe difficult situations with humor and creativity.

Look at life's situations in a positive, creative, or humorous way. Make a commitment to find more humor, joy and fun in your life. Write an affirmation and keep a copy in your wallet. Read or recite it at least once a day. For example, here is an affirmation: "Every day I am seeking out and celebrating funny, happy and joyful people and events." It's best to write your own affirmation, keep it positive and write it as if you are already doing it. Author Julia Cameron reminds us in her book *The Artist's Way*, "Enthusiasm is not emotional state. It is spiritual commitment."



### 2. Celebrate everything that you can.

Think of your day as an opportunity to live, love, laugh and share with other people. Get together with people just for fun. And start hanging out with more fun and funny people. Have a surprise party for yourself. Remember to arrive a little later than your guests, so you'll be surprised. Plan coffee with a friend, a walk, a sporting event, concert. It doesn't have to be complicated. Celebrate good news and bad things that didn't happen - the copier *didn't* break down this week! At work have a bulletin board for humor and cartoons. Create contests: best doodle of the week, best joke, best riddle, most embarrassing moment, football, basketball, match the pet, baby picture, etc., "Questions to Ponder" contest, e.g. If a turtle loses his shell, is he naked or homeless? Celebrate your living space! Decorate with colors that make you happy and create a colorful, fun environment.



### 3. Always look forward to something fun.

Plan fun events that will refresh and renew you. Just carve out some time to spend with your pet for a while. Make a plan with to go with friends to a comedy club or funny movie. And avoid serious movies about problems similar to the ones you face at work and in real life! Think about fun activities you liked to do or wanted to do as a child, (e.g., go fishing, take dancing lessons, drawing, painting, etc.). Is it too late? Probably not. Plan some of these activities into your day, every day. In the process of doing these things, you'll learn to laugh more. And you'll learn to laugh at yourself. And if you learn to laugh at yourself you'll never lack for entertainment!

### 4. Create a humor first aid kit. Look for humor around you. Ask yourself,

'What's funny about this situation...my job...my relationships...my significant other...my pet...my car...my life...my friends...my habits...my perspective on life?' Then start keeping a humor journal and explore these things. Also write down the funny, happy and joyful things that happen to you. If events and situations don't seem funny now, write about how they could be funny or might be funny at a later time. Collect funny toys, cartoons, funny lists, humorous props. Put together a humor first aid kit for yourself - and make an extra one for a friend! Take a look at the suggestions on the following page.



## Some ideas for your humor first aid kit

Jokes	Funny signs	Games	Silly putty
Stories	Kaleidoscope	Music	Doll
Cartoons	Balloons	Picture books	Puppet
Crown	Prism	Photo albums	Crayons
Tiara	Ball	Audio tapes	Animal noses
Kazoo	Funny DVDs	CDs	Funny glasses
Noisemakers	Crazy string	Joke books	Etch-a-sketch
Bubbles	Clown nose	Yo-yo	Smile on a stick
Slinky	Bells	Colored paper	Coloring book
Humor books	Whistles	Puzzles	Magic wand
Funny lists	Toys	Playing cards	Teddy bear
Bumper stickers	Squirt guns	Whoopee cushion	Maracas

**5. Share humor and laughter with others.** You don't have to be a comedian. Smile, share a funny story, something funny that happened to you, a riddle or a joke. If you get a funny card, share that with other people. Spend more time with children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews. If you don't have your own, borrow some. Watch them "in action," having fun! Notice their approach to conversation, new situations, food, play, etc. How does it differ from yours? What can you learn from them? Just remember to be yourself. There's humor everywhere. And the wonderful thing is that it's gift that we give and receive at the same time.



A few comments about Internet Humor:

Yes, there's lots of humor on the web! If you have e-mail, you've probably seen all kinds - the good, the bad and the ugly! Please remember to share humor that is positive and affirming, loving, healing, inclusive and uplifting (See the humor pledge). If you receive humor that is negative, offensive, racist or demeaning to any group, delete it immediately, tell the sender you don't like it and ask him/her to stop sending this type of humor. Don't spend too much time on the internet, though. Look for positive humor in your everyday life and then spread it around in person! Humor is much more healing and beneficial when it's shared face to face with mutual laughter.

Remember: Every day you work with and come into contact with people who are under stress. Many are doing the best they can on a daily basis to cope with the situations in their lives. It could be financial problems, loneliness, addiction, divorce, incarceration, homelessness - all kinds of personal struggles and losses. We've all been there in one way or another. Most likely you'll never know what you mean to others when you smile at them, listen to them, laugh with them, connect with them and give of your time. *George Washington Carver* once said:

How far you go in life depends on your being  
Tender with the young,  
Compassionate with the aged,  
Sympathetic with the striving,  
And tolerant of the weak and the strong.  
Because someday in life,  
You will have been all of these.

## The Humor Pledge

I will use humor for positive, loving, healing and uplifting purposes.  
 I will strive to take myself lightly while taking my work and life seriously.  
 I will seek to be uplifted by others' attempts at humor. When in doubt I will assume they mean well.  
 I will avoid using humor to camouflage hostility or prejudice.  
 I will accept laughter as a treasured gift and laugh generously at the humor of others.  
 I will avoid teasing and ethnic humor unless it is by mutual consent and mutual exchange.  
 I will respect topics that are uncomfortable or offensive to the listener.  
 I will apologize if I offend someone with my use of humor.  
 I will look for the jokes and absurdities of the universe and share my observations with others.  
 I will strive to use my humor to cope, to survive, to heal, to grow, and to pass on loving-kindness.  
 On the day of my death I will look back and know that I lived, loved and laughed fully and well.

*Christian Hagaseth, MD*

To laugh often and much;  
 To win the respect of intelligent people  
 And affection of children;  
 To earn the appreciation of honest critics  
 And endure the betrayal of false friends;  
 To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others;  
 To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child,  
 A garden patch or a redeemed social condition;  
 To know even one life has breathed easier  
 Because you have lived.  
 This is to have succeeded.  
*Ralph Waldo Emerson*



Always remember to take good care of your Inner Child.

**About the presenter:** Emily Ballance, MEd, LPC entertains, educates and inspires audiences with her humor, honesty and lively stories. Her presentations have been described as "highly entertaining, uplifting and thought-provoking." Emily frequently presents on humor, stress management, communication and wellness at regional, state and national conferences. And she wants to speak at your next conference or meeting. Emily is a member of the National Speakers Association and the American Association for Therapeutic Humor. She volunteers her time with older adults and the Autism Society of North Carolina. A Licensed Professional Counselor, Emily is committed to helping people use positive, affirming humor to enhance their health, happiness, work and well-being. **Contact Emily at 919.878.1685** or visit her website at [www.emilyballance.com](http://www.emilyballance.com).

## Books about Humor and Related Topics

This list includes books about humor, humor and health, humor in the workplace, adding humor to your life or books that are just plain humorous.

- Adams, Patch. Gesundheit! Rochester, Vermont: Healing Arts Press. 1993.
- Ader, Robert. Psychoneuroimmunology. New York, NY: Academic Press, 1991.
- Ayres, Alex. The Wit and Wisdom of Will Rogers. New York: Meridian. 1993.
- Baker, Russell. Russell Baker's Book of American Humor. New York: W.W. Norton. 1993.
- Barry, Dave. Dave Barry Turns 40. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1991.
- Barry, Dave. Dave Barry Turns 50. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc. 1998.
- Berle, Milton. Milton Berle's Private Joke File. New York: Three Rivers Press. 1989.
- Blumenfeld, E., and Alpern, L. Humor at Work. Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers, 1994.
- Bombeck, Erma. If Life is a Bowl of Cherries, Why Am I Always in the Pits? New York: Fawcett Crest. 1971.
- Bosker, Gideon. Medicine's the Best Laughter. St. Louis: Mosby, 1995.
- Cameron, Julia. The Artist's Way - A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity. New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc., 1992.
- Carlin, George. Braindroppings. New York: Hyperion. 1997.
- Cosby, Bill. Love and Marriage. New York: Bantam Books. 1990.
- Cousins, Norman. Anatomy of an Illness. New York: W.W. Norton and Co. 1979.
- Cousins, Norman. Head First: the Biology of Hope. NY, NY: Academic Press. 1991.
- Dance, Daryl Cumber. Honey, Hush! An Anthology of African American Women's Humor. New York: W.W. Norton. 1998.
- Degeneres, Ellen. My Point and I Do Have One. New York: Bantam Books. 1995.
- Goldberg, Whoopi. Whoopi's Goldberg Book. New York: Avon Books. 1997.
- Gold, Todd. Comic Relief. New York: Avon Books. 1996.
- Goodman, Joel. Laffermations - 1001 Ways to Add Humor to Your Life and Work. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, Inc. 1995.
- Hageseth, Christian. A Laughing Place. Fort Collins, Colorado: Berwick Publishing Company. 1988.
- Keillor, Garrison. Lake Wobegon Days. New York: Penguin Books. 1985.
- Klein, Allen. The Healing Power of Humor. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1989.
- Letterman, David. David Letterman's Book of Top Ten Lists. New York: Bantam. 1995.
- Martin, Steve. Pure Drive!. New York: Hyperion. 1998.
- McGhee, Paul. Health, Healing and the Amuse System. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall-hunt Publishing. 1996.
- McPherson, John. The Get Well Book. Kansas City: Andrew and McMeel, 1998.
- Morreall, John. Humor Works. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, Inc. 1997.
- Myers, James. A Treasury of Senior Humor. Springfield, Illinois: The Lincoln-Herndon Press, Inc. 1992.
- Paulson, Terry. Making Humor Work. Los Altos, CA: Crisp Publishing. 1989.
- Ritz, David. Sinbad's Guide to Life - Because I Know Everything. New York: Bantam Books. 1997.
- Weinstein, Matt. Managing to Have Fun. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997.
- Wooten, Patty. Compassionate Laughter - Jest for Your Health. Salt lake City: Commune A Key Publishing. 1996.