

# Lighten the Load with **HUMOR AT WORK**

*The most wasted of all days  
is one without laughter.  
~ E. E. Cummings*

## Laughter ... the Best Medicine

There are few better ways to break out of a funk than with a deep belly laugh. As it turns out, the “medicine” that laughter provides is very real. Research proves that laughing not only lightens your mood by releasing pleasure-inducing endorphins, it also inhibits stress hormones and lowers blood pressure.

## Coming Together ... By Cracking Up

Ever notice how just one person can lighten the mood of an entire group? It's the same reason that a comedian is always funnier when you're right there in the audience cracking up along with everyone else -- laughter is contagious.

Now why would that be? Well, some medical researchers suggest that laughter is more about social bonding than humor. It makes sense if you think about it. There are very few interpersonal conflicts that can't be at least temporarily diffused by a healthy dose of humor. Laughter is a release that naturally breaks tension, and the effects are immediate.

## Why We're So Afraid to Have Fun

That being the case, why are so many offices so lacking in humor? Part of the reason is that the business world often frowns upon humor, viewing it as being unprofessional or a sign that people aren't working hard.

The other part is that we simply become conditioned to lose our sense of fun and silliness as we grow older. We're expected to be serious. And for those of us who aren't naturally funny, social inhibition can keep us tied to a safe, quiet demeanor.

## Making Laughter Part of Your Day

- Laughter is part of a healthy work environment and best of all, it's free! So let humor be your secret weapon the next time you're feeling overwhelmed. Here are some tips to lighten your mood and get the laughs flowing when you need them the most.
- Choose to find humor in situations. Instead of saying, “I’ll laugh at this one day,” choose to laugh now.
- Learn to laugh at yourself. Self-deprecating humor is the easiest to pull off (and often most appealing to others).
- When you find yourself having a hard time finding humor and laughter, surround yourself with positive people. Be there to support others in time of need.
- Make a game of being silly. Find a coworker you're comfortable with and try to outdo each others' absurdities.
- Develop an “Emergency Laughter List”.<sup>1</sup> List five memories, jokes or even funny internet videos that always make you smile. Use the list as needed.
- Fake it ‘till you make it. Research shows that simply smiling will improve your mood.
- Develop a humor bulletin board that encourages fun and appropriate humor. *Readers Digest* is an excellent source for jokes and funny stories that most everyone can relate to.



- Use fun, laughter (and music) in training to encourage engagement and memory.
- Bring a few kids toys with you to work and keep have them ready for the next time you need to blow off steam.

<sup>1</sup>Teaching is Too Important to Take Seriously  
by Scot Endres with permission and other contributions and  
inspiration by Patricia Vanderpool, LPC, CEAP, SAP,  
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## Using Laughter Resources to Jump Start the Fun

*Not all of us can be comedians. Sometimes the jokes need a little push. Try clipping a few of your favorite office humor cartoons like Dilbert and sharing them with coworkers. Better yet, ask everyone to bring in an example of something that made them laugh. Not only will it lighten everyone's mood, you may just be surprised at what you learn about each other.*