

Laugh Out Your Pain

by Judith Parker Harris

How many times do you think a child laughs each day? Some lucky researcher counted up an average of 425 times a day. How many times does an average adult laugh a day? Sadly, only eight. Now why do you think that is? Do we lose our sense of humor? Are we too important? Too serious? Too shy? Too self-conscious? Too afraid? Too busy?

Probably a combination of all of the above. I'm guilty, too. Health-esteem is all about feeling emotions before they make you sick. I've compared tears to lifeboats, carrying away pain, stress and toxic emotions. If tears are life boats, however, laughter is the fountain of youth. Laughter sets free powerful endorphins (Morphine like Neurotransmitters that impart a profound sense of contentment). It can also alter the heart rate, blood pressure and various hormonal secretions. Laughter makes us breathe deeply and open our heart centers. Laughter allows us to let a joyful noise out into the world. I love laughter.

Last night coming home from the movies I started to have the hiccups. I suddenly remembered that as a child, every time I hiccuped, I laughed. Sometimes I'd hee and hic so hard I'd end up rolling on the floor. I prepared to start laughing, but just as soon as my hiccups arrived, they disappeared. I was so disappointed. I wanted to laugh. So, guess what I did? I pretended to hiccup and at least I got a giggle or two out of it.

My admonition for you this month is not the classic, "Grow up!"

It's "Kid down!" Get down with your kid self and have a good laugh. Let me give you some examples:

1) You're in heavy traffic and some @#!@#!#@! cuts you off. Your blood pressure rises, your face flushes and expletives fill your throat as your arm prepares to gesture rudely. Instead, when you open your mouth, let a laugh come out. It may sound like an Urgh, Urgh, Urgh at first, but breathe deeply and open your mouth wide as you expel a big Ha, Ha, Ha! And that pesky little arm? Let it go out to your side and then come back and allow the hand to settle over your heart. Do that a couple of times as you continue to laugh and you will have opened your heart center and left little room for anger or high blood pressure.

2) Ladies, you're in the dressing room of your favorite store and you're looking at your image in a dress one size too small, 2 decades too young and 3 times more money than you'd spend on liposuction to make it fit. A familiar frustration mixed with anger and a tinge of sadness begins to creep up. Instead have a laugh at the designer who dreamed up the confection, the ads that make women feel we have to fit into them, and your own temporary lack of good judgment for trying to look like someone else's expectation of you.

3) Gentlemen, you're attending your favorite athletic competition and watching your team get trounced. You and your buddies start screaming obscenities at the umpire and at anyone who happens to be rooting for the other team. Your children look up at you with a mixture of awe

and horror. Instead, take a deep breath and have a good laugh at the absurdity and THE FUN (remember why you're there?) of it all. This applies to moments on the golf course or tennis courts when a shot gone awry finds you trying to wrap your 9-iron or tennis racket around the closest tree.

4) In general, every morning when you wake up, laugh as soon as you can. Kid down. Laugh it up. You'll live longer and happier!

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