



## **Laughter Cures: Keep Your Funny Side Up**

The gift of laughter is probably the most potent medicine ever prescribed by man. Ask Norman Cousins. Laughter literally helped save the life of the eminent lecturer, author, and editor. Suffering from a painful, paralyzing disease, Cousins claims her reverted the condition by checking into a hotel and consuming large doses of vitamins and laughter. Confined to bed and barely able to move, he watched "Candid Camera" film clips and old Marx Brothers movies.

"Healthy laughter actually fortified my body against pain," he said. "It have me two hours of pain-free, pill-free sleep." Just ten minutes of solid belly laughter brought relief. Encouraged by this laugh therapy experiment, he stopped taking medications and with this physician's approval began ingesting massive amounts of Vitamin C. Within a few months, reported Cousins, he had returned to a healthy state.

For Victor Frankly, as for Norman Cousins, laughter literally proved a lifesaver. The famed psychiatrist, who founded the logo therapy method f treating mental illness, survived the horrors of World War II Nazi concentration camp by using humor. He and a fellow sufferer devised a system to save their sanity. Each day they forced themselves to invent and tell each other an amusing anecdote.

Humor is not so much in the situation as in the eye of the beholder. "From there to here, from here to there, funny things are everywhere," points out Dr. Seuss, mirth-maker extraordinary, who's kept generations of kids (and their parents) in stitches because of his books. Look for the laughable in your life.

Throughout the days be your own best comic. Make yourself laugh by recalling amusing incidents and making up jokes to amuse friends. Carry a joke book with you to ease tense moments. While waiting in line or hanging on for a tardy phone call, read away your irritation. Take a laugh break at work instead of a coffee break. Humor is healthier than caffeine.

Tickle your funny bone as often as possible. Linger over light verse. Those of us who daily experience the miracle of laughter agree with William D. Ellis that humor is a most effective means of coping with life's difficulties. "It can be used for patching up differences, getting the other fellow to do what you want without losing face," say Ellis. "Humor is an agent of psychological liberation", adds psychologist Harvey Mindress, fundamental to mental health. "To savor the ridiculous in life and to laugh at ourselves and our troubles is an asset of the greatest magnitude. It represents a source of vitality and a means of transcendence second to none." No wonder he who laughs, lasts.

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