

# Laughing when the chips are down

by Lisa McKimm



In my last column (Let there be music) I talked about making fun memories and creating laughter in the family. When I take classes on how to do this, the first question that people want answered is 'How do you laugh when life is full of stress and worries? There's nothing to laugh about!'

It has been said that the whole art to life is the ability to turn anxiety into laughter. So how can we achieve this cost effective, stress reducing, memory-making experience!

We all need to laugh and play during the good times – when things are going well, to celebrate. But we also need the healing power of laughter and play for ourselves and our families, just as much during times of stress and pressure. At these times we often put any ideas about having fun on the back burner – as if it would be an irresponsible or inappropriate thing to do.

I'd like to challenge that!

Have you ever had a good laugh unsuspectingly sneak up on you while you were under stress? If you have, then you'll know that it provides the most wonderful emotional release. It has no unpleasant side effects (like mood enhancing drugs), it is instant; and even better, – it's free!

It's interesting to know that in fact about 80% of the things we laugh about are not essentially funny. (You only have to watch Funniest Home Videos to see how we tend to see the funniness in disasters!).

Sometimes the funniest stories that we tell are about some embarrassing or hair-raising event that happened a few years ago in our lives. When I was growing up we often roared with laughter about a memorable family outing to the movies. Dad was returning to the seated family after the lights had been dimmed, carrying six ice-creams in cones. That was in the days when cinema designers (in their wisdom) created every step in the aisle erratically in one of three difference sizes. Misjudging the next one, our portly yet dignified father nose-dived and planted his carefully groomed goatee directly in a cold and creamy sea of hokey pokey.

Needless to say, the four of us – Mum included – nearly wet ourselves laughing. Why do I share this tale which reveals my sad lack of sensitivity? The point is that if you think that you are eventually going to laugh about something – why not flag the agonising part, and go straight to the mirth! Dad enjoyed the retelling of that story many times over – and each time his face creased with laughter.

Have you ever stood in a bookshop reading funny cards silently holding in the laughter? Don't stifle that amusement. Laugh out loud. Others will be compelled to join you at the card stand!

Therefore consider this possibility. We don't need to be happy to laugh. We do not laugh because we are happy – we are happy because we laugh! Be open to spontaneously seeing the funny side of life. Let laughter into your life, and yield to the relaxation that it brings. Make it a prime requirement of your day – and not just an optional monthly extra. It will reverberate in your interactions with your family, so in the end it becomes a gift to everyone around you!

Awesome athletes get coaching, why shouldn't awesome parents!! Want to be an awesome parent?

One of my daughters once bought me a little wall hanging. On it was a motherly-looking woman announcing "If Momma ain't happy, Ain't Nobody happy!" It made me laugh out loud. It is true though that our mood is contagious. If we are happy, then there is a greater chance that our kids will be too. And of course it will provide an important role model of how to view life, and what it serves up to us. Patch Adams once said that 'Adults should look as though they are having fun – it gives kids a reason to want to grow up'.

What better motivation could we need!

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