



## [DR. SHIRLEY SAYS...]

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# Laughter: A lifesaver

You know the feeling. Your alarm clock doesn't go off, and you awaken with 30 minutes to get to work. On your way, you get a traffic ticket. When asked for your driver's license, you realize that you've left your wallet at home.

At work, you spill coffee on your suit. Later, when being criticized by the boss, it dawns on you that you've locked your keys in the car. By coffee-break time, you don't know whether to laugh or cry.

You should definitely laugh.

*The benefits of laughter can be felt immediately, and they're available to anyone at any time.*

Laughter not only helps preserve your sanity, it can improve your health, your outlook on life and your ability to communicate effectively. Abraham Lincoln once said, "With the fearful strain that is on me both night and day, if I did not laugh, I would die."

In today's world, millions of Americans diet for good health, engage in all manner of strenuous exercise regimens and gulp down dozens of vitamins. Yet, the vast majority of us overlook what could be the most important contribution to creating good health — laughing on a daily basis.

How often do you make a conscious effort to laugh? The cause for your mirth may be something

as simple as your co-worker's coffee mug that reads, "The secret to staying young is lying about your age." Or the bumper sticker that proclaims, "To err is human, but to think of someone to blame it on is pure genius." Or the sign that your child's teacher has taped next to the clock, "Clock watchers: Time will pass. You, however, may not."

Whatever your reasons for laughter, with all of life's pressures, laughter is not an option; it is a necessity.

Count the ways we feel pressure: economically, morally, socially, academically and politically. Our rubber-band existence is tightly stretched to its limits. For some of us, it's already snapping in one or more areas. However, no matter how difficult or insurmountable our problems seem at the time, that wonderful gift of laughter is always standing by to help smooth things out when the road gets rocky.

Laughter is the best medicine. It needs no prescription. It's good for what ails you. It's better than any medication and won't cost nearly as much.

The benefits of laughter can be felt immediately, and they're available to anyone at any time. Best of all, laughter is one of the few pleasures that hasn't been taxed.

I saw a sign not long ago that read, "Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly." There's a message here: many of us take our-

selves too seriously. We don't have a sense of humor. When we have problems or get angry, instead of trying to find a little humor in the situation, we become frustrated and create high levels of stress for ourselves. Just think of how much easier it would be if we'd choose to grin, bear it and deal with it.

A smile is a powerful weapon. Smiling makes you feel better. It's called the "facial feedback effect." The mind says, "Well, we're smiling. Things are looking up. The sun must be shining." While stopped at a red light several days ago, I looked up and, much to my surprise, saw a billboard that read, "While you're sitting here, think of the good things in life and smile real big!"

If you're still asking yourself why laugh, let me give you 10 good reasons:

- To feel good.
- To heal.
- To enhance relationships.
- To entertain.
- To resolve conflicts.
- To instruct.
- To put life into perspective.
- To motivate.
- To connect, get in touch and communicate.
- To keep one's sanity.

Remember, if you live your life with laughter, you will also live your life with love, happiness and peace.

**For more information, please contact Dr. Shirley White at (800) 932-3170. □**