

Laugh Your Way To Weight Loss

By Shirley Best (the hilarious alter ego of nationally acclaimed Windsorite Author & Motivational Humorist, Zandra Bell)

Apparently scientists in California (where else) involved in a study on the effects of humour on health, concluded that the “high” humans get from laughing is similar to that rush you supposedly attain from aerobic exercise. You know, when the happy little “endorphins (aka endorphins)” start swimming around in your brain!

Not that I am much of an expert on physical fitness myself. Last time I went to the health club I fell down the Stairmaster. It had me thinking though, if it's true what Dr. Lee Berk from Loma Linda University says that “mirthful laughter” is like “internal jogging” in that it reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, and boosts the immune system, then just think of how positive a role humour could play in your workplace.

I mean let's face it, it's not easy out there in today's modern, fast paced, frenzied, accountability obsessed, safety conscious, go green til' you gag, dog eat dog, cold, hard, cruel, competitive world.

See now I understand stuff like that because I sell Mary Kay cosmetics. Day after day, battered by budget restraints, stymied by staffing shortages, you're busier than one of Don Cherry's fashion ensembles. No time to be proactive, only radioactive.

Overwhelmed by it all, employees tend to lose that sensible sense of work/life balance that allows them the objective perspective to see that the “travesty” of that one co-worker consistently leaving five minutes early, after arriving 15 minutes late, is just not worth 50 weeks of seething bitterness, unless you own stock in acid reflux medication.

In work environments where people sit cloistered away in convoluted clusters of cubicles, like science experiment rats who never made it out of the maze, it actually makes for a certain intimacy really when you can't help overhearing every syllable of your co-workers' conversation. You know when their VISA is over limit and their sex life is under.

Thing is, it also seems to disproportionately increase employees' preoccupation with the petty. Little annoyances are magnified, like when people keep purloining your pens, or shamelessly storing long term science projects in the staff refrigerator. Just coping with computers alone is enough to suck out your brain. By the end of the day most times you can't even think straight without a curser.

You can moan and wail and gnash your teeth, but you can't change most of these frustrations, or injustices. The only thing you have control over is the way you react to them. That's where the change has to be made. Why, in the 15 years I have been researching corporate culture, (as in work environments, not as in what's growing on the science projects) I have found situations where a little light hearted levity in the workplace was not an amusing option, but an essential survival technique!

In one government department, for instance, I discovered two sections of employees working together on the same floor who would not cross into each other's areas. No one knew why. It just wasn't done.

Management, in a futile attempt to remedy the situation, even remodelled the floor, repositioning the lunch room to one side in hopes the two factions would mingle. No.

Rather than use the food facilities on forbidden ground, the other people pooled together and bought themselves their OWN little fridge and microwave for their side! I don't know which was more shocking, how firmly entrenched this workplace division was, or government workers spending their own money. (Note: I worked for the Feds for 13 years). Remember kindergarten where they taught you consideration, respect and how to get along with the other kids? It's amazing how many people were away that day.

Well, maybe we can't all be a part of Berk's study group, whose blood samples, after watching stand up comedy routines, showed, among many other health positives, a noticeable reduction in stress hormones.

“The body's response to repetitive laughter is similar to the effect of repetitive exercise.”

We can, however, within ourselves, work to put a humorous perspective on the frustrating inanities and insanities that go on around us, so we don't end up with one of those dreaded wellness breakdowns, your brain just disintegrating like Kleenex false in a wet t-shirt contest. You see it all the time. You know what I'm saying. The wheel's still turning, but the hamster is dead.

So before you flip out over some insult and/or assault on your dignity and/or intelligence on the job, ask yourself, if the world were to be struck by a giant meteor tomorrow how important would this be? Why are you stressing out about this tiny thing when you



“Shirley Best” is a campy, yet charismatic, 60 something housewife whose mid-life search for self fulfillment transformed her into a globe trotting stress management consultant, fashion icon, and self appointed “certified credit card utilization counsellor”. Photos courtesy of Sherry Campeau

should be out making the most of the time you have left? Maxing out your charge cards. Hello!

So you didn't succeed. You'll get the next big assignment or promotion. For now if you can't achieve corporate world domination, just settle for office thermostat control. Hormonal global warming, I tell you girls, it can really sneak up on you.

In essence, if you just stand back from the irritation that's upsetting you and try to see the “funny” in the situation, you're half way to resolving it.

You can address the issue with a sense of humour, and objectivity instead of overemotional pent up rage. Isn't it rather hilarious just in itself, that you are rendered homicidal just by the fact you have to let other people into YOUR elevator every morning? Maybe it's time to cut back on the caffeine.

And laugh, just laugh! You might even lose some weight. And after all it's a hell of a lot easier to laugh than go jogging – especially when your margarita keeps sloshing out of your glass! ☺

Zandra Bell, Corporate Motivational Humourist and Windsor native, is well known on the conference scene for creating original, intelligent hilarity to inspire, and enhance human potential. She is the driving force behind the innovative “infotainment” company, “at wit's end”, specializing in customized motivational presentations specifically researched and created according to her clients' business objectives. Bell is also the author of the comedy book, “I'm Listing – Musings From A Modern Middle Aged Wild Wise Woman.” Please reference www.zandrabell.com for more information.

