



Those Who Laugh Last!

by Patti Hathaway, Business Advisor & Author

To face the frustrations of dealing with cranky customers and constant change, we must develop the light approach to life. This is an area I constantly have to work on. I married my husband Jim in part because of his sense of humor and ability to “smell the roses” along life’s journey. Although I use a lot of humor in my speaking, I’m a fairly intense workaholic. I love what I do - work is fun for me. Therefore, I don’t have a lot of need for fun. As a result, taking time out of my schedule to have fun with Jim or our boys is a commitment I have to make. Since I’m a natural-born scheduler, I schedule monthly “date nights” with Jim. When it works well, Jim and the boys travel with me to a speaking engagement. I love to speak and Jim and the boys have fun in whatever location we are at -- I join them for fun evening activities or we spend an extra day sight-seeing. It’s a win/win. What are you doing to incorporate more “fun” into your life?

Ken Blanchard, author of *The One Minute Manager*, uses a perspective-setting technique he calls the “zoo mentality.” He developed it when his children were growing up. Blanchard noticed that whenever he was at a park or zoo, there would be parents yelling at their kids for running around, misbehaving, and generally having a great time. It seemed ironic to him to take children to a place to have fun and then yell at them. So, Blanchard decided he would get into a “zoo mentality.” If his kids started acting silly or chasing each other, he would join in the fun. Now he uses that skill at his company’s management meetings.

How is your sense of humor? Gauge your sense of humor by answering true or false to each of the following statements.

Sense of Humor Inventory:

1. ___ I frequently laugh during the day.
2. ___ I read the comic section of the local newspaper each day.
3. ___ I look for cartoons and quips in my reading.
4. ___ I repeat to my friends and associates stories that make me laugh.
5. ___ I seek out funny movies.
6. ___ I feel comfortable sharing embarrassing moments with friends and co-workers.
7. ___ I am able to laugh at my silly mistakes.
8. ___ I collect examples of humor in cartoons, tapes, jokes, etc.
9. ___ I enjoy playing with children.
10. ___ I consider myself a person who enjoys levity.

If you answered false more than three times, your sense of humor needs work. People who take themselves too seriously often have a difficult time establishing easy, enjoyable relationships with others. If you have a hard time letting loose, try to gradually make some changes. The next time you make an embarrassing mistake, laugh it off. Or practice telling a funny story that you enjoyed hearing. You'll find that lightheartedness can be contagious -- both to others and yourself.

The ability to laugh at life is right at the top, with love and communication, in the hierarchy of our needs. Humor has much to do with pain; it exaggerates the anxieties and absurdities we feel, so that we gain distance and through laughter, relief.

Sara Davidson

Improving Your Sense of Humor

A sense of humor is learned - not an innate - trait. Here are some ways to get your laugh mechanism in working order.

- ***Redefine how you react to things.*** Try to find the light aspects even in serious situations. Ponder what was embarrassing for you years ago and reframe your view of it to see the funny side.
- ***Consider that being childlike can sometimes be beneficial.*** Seek to recapture some of the joy and wonderment you experienced as a child. When our son Drew was three and a half years old, he was running errands with his dad. While they were driving along, Drew noticed a squirrel lying in the road and asked his dad, "Was that a squirrel?" To which Jim replied, "Yes it was." Drew somberly asked, "Is he dead?" "Yes, he's dead, Drew." Drew thought about that for a moment and quietly said, "He must not have looked both ways."
- ***Take humor breaks.*** We take lunch breaks, coffee breaks, and exercise breaks; we can accent the light side of life by taking humor breaks. A humor break could be reading the newspaper's comic section, getting together with a friend who makes you laugh, or watching one of your favorite comedies.

We kept a log of funny things our boys say as they are growing up. The boys love reading those funny stories and lines. It re-creates the humorous moments we treasure as a family. Program yourself to laugh at regular times just as you program yourself to sleep a certain number of hours.

- ***Give more than you take.*** People-oriented individuals tend to think more of others than themselves and thus do not take themselves too seriously. Strive to be people-oriented. Make yourself do a kind deed for someone else each day.

- **Share your humor.** When people hear you tell a funny story or repeat a caption of a cartoon, they will look at you differently and will be more likely to have fun with you. Remembering a funny anecdote to tell someone else will help you keep in mind the humorous side of life. Keep in mind that poking fun at yourself is where true humor comes from - not poking fun of someone's race or gender. Most people enjoy funny, true stories more than a joke.
- **Build a laugh library.** Assemble a collection of your favorite humor writers, cartoon, records, tapes, and jokes. One of my favorite "funny people" is Bill Cosby. I love how he relates hysterically, funny true stories that happened to him.
- **Be playful.** Look for humor behind words, associations, and situations.

*Excerpted from the book **Untying the 'Nots' of Change Before You're Fit to be Tied**. Patti Hathaway, CSP, **The CHANGE AGENT**, is one of fewer than 7% women worldwide to have earned the Certified Speaking Professional designation from the National Speakers Association for her proven presentation skills. She is a Business Advisor and the author of 6 books that have been translated into 5 languages and have sold over 100,000 copies. Patti solves your people challenges by providing highly customized solutions to meet your needs. Contact Patti at 1-800-339-0973 or at her web site: www.thechangeagent.com for information on her speaking and consulting services or to receive her free e-mail newsletter/blog.*