

Humor: Play at Work

Mary Kay Morrison

Humor and fun in the workplace can build trust and increase productivity. Here are some initial ideas to help you lighten the mood in your workplace, while allowing you to rise above the current economic turmoil and stress that have impacted so many organizations.

1. **Adjust Your Altitude:** Soar with the eagles, even if you feel like a buzzard! The only person you can change is YOU. Make it a habit to find the humor in every situation. When we can laugh about something that is challenging, we are able to cope with it!

2. **Be A Joy Giver:** Bring joy to others and it will increase your own happiness. Send unexpected 'thank you' or greeting cards to a mix of people. Start with those who aren't expecting it, but deserve it. Then, send a couple to people who aren't expecting and don't deserve it. Then, pick a couple names at random out of the phone book that certainly aren't expecting it and have no idea who you are! Seriously though, make it a habit to put appreciation notes in colleague's mailboxes or via email.

3. **Spice Up The Workplace:** Post funny signs, quotes and quips. You can put these on the bulletin boards, on bathroom stall doors or on your web sites. One group created a newsletter for the bathroom stall called: "The Flush". Some quick quotes:

- ☺ Did you know that research causes cancer in rats?
- ☺ If ignorance is bliss, Congress must be paradise.
- ☺ If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you!
- ☺ Energizer bunny arrested; charged with battery.
- ☺ Worry is like a rocking chair, it gives you something to do, but doesn't get you anywhere!

4. **SMILE!** Make it a high priority to elicit a smile from others. Before a co-worker gets a chance to speak, say "Thank you so much for all you do!" Show your pearly whites often, and say something special to everyone you meet. Have some silly words or phrases that you use to get others to smile.....supercalifragilisticexpialidocious , Dum, Ditty, Dum, Ditty, Dum, Dum, Dum; or My dog can lick anyone!

5. **Chew On It!** Put a pack of bubble gum in your coat pocket. At the next staff meeting offer some to everyone! Engage in a bubble blowing competition. When you are upset about something –chew on it for a while!

6. **Pop Goes the Stress:** Save your bubble wrap! It's a great stress reliever. Pop it with your fingers, knees and toes! Dance on it! Pop it with the help of colleagues! Pop it, in unison, to the beat of music!

7. **Foster Creativity:** Start meetings with something fun! Yes, icebreakers do work. Activity example: Think of what would happen if certain companies merged. For example: Fairchild Semiconductor and Honeywell Corporation would become Fairwell Honeychild. Grey Poupon and Docker Pants would become Poupon Pants. If FedEx joined UPS, they might become

FedUP.

8. **Exaggerate The Problems:** Comedians overstate things to get a laugh. You can too! When there is a challenge in the office ask colleagues to use exaggeration as a way to cope with humor. See who can come up with the most hilarious exaggeration.

- ⊗ Example-It's been so hot, the trees are whistling for the dogs.
- ⊗ Our finances are so bad that the empty toilet paper rolls are snatched up quickly to be used as...
- ⊗ The copier has been broken so many times that.....

9. **Practice one-liners:** Prepare to greet grumpy people (humordoomers) with some gentle fun! Everyone has a bad day once in a while. For those who are consistently sour, you can plan a counter-offensive.

- ☺ I resemble that statement.
- ☺ What would Scooby Do?
- ☺ Pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional.
- ☺ There is no time like the pleasant.
- ☺ Never take life too; seriously, you won't get out alive.
- ☺ Life is wonderful, without it you are dead!

10. **Create Riddle Days:** Once a week, send a riddle through office email in the morning. Colleagues can guess the answer by sending their response to a designated "judge". Winners are eligible for a goofy prize or traveling trophy. A drawing can be held if there are multiple winners. You can make it a 10-minute "break time" event in the afternoon.

A focus on humor and fun can relieve workplace stress and improve communication within the culture. Check out additional research through AATH (Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor), my favorite not-for-profit organization.

Never take life too seriously, you won't get out alive.

*For links to the research supporting the use of humor in learning, please go to Mary Kay's web site <http://www.questforhumor.com/>. Mary Kay is past-president of AATH (Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor) <http://www.aath.org/> and is the 2016 **AATH Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient**. She is the founder of the AATH Humor Academy Certified Humor Professional (CHP) Program. Invitations to present to your group are welcomed with enthusiasm! You can find her on twitter [@marykaymorrison](https://twitter.com/marykaymorrison)*