

The Top Ten Reasons Humor is FUNdamental for Living

By Mary Kay Morrison, Humor Quest

Today's mighty oak is just yesterday's nut that held its ground.

Humor is just the fertilizer needed to nurture stressed and anxious folks as they cope with the cognitive/technological revolution that is shaping the 21st century. A review of neuroscience research indicates that healthy and positive humor can have a significant impact on lifestyle. The intentional cultivation of humor practice nourishes our energy (humergy) and can have a powerful impact on our life. Here are the top ten reasons that people purposefully choose humor as an essential strategy for optimal well-being:

- 10. Humor plants memories.** Powerful emotions are at the root of long-term memory. Think about your strongest memory of early elementary school. Chances are that this memory is linked to a strong emotional experience—either positive or negative. **When the memory goes-forget it!**
- 9. Humor grows coping skills.** Humor has often been used as a survival technique for prisoners of war. Most of us are trying to survive the constant change of new technologies. Just trying to figure out how to operate our phones can be stressful. Some research indicates that laughter increases adrenaline, oxygen flow, and pulse rate. After experiencing laughter, most people report feeling relaxed and calm. **No sense being pessimistic, it wouldn't work anyway!**
- 8. Humor cultivates energy and engagement.** Purposeful games directed play and physical activity all promote humor and learning. The research on the benefits of movement and learning supports the idea that play, and laughter increase the oxygen levels and energy that are critical for well-being. **Energizer Bunny Arrested; Charged With Battery!**
- 7. Humor captures and retains attention.** Laughter and surprise can hook even the most reluctant learner. Emotion drives attention and attention drives learning. The brain cannot learn if it is not attending. Humor generates the unexpected, which alerts the attentional center of the brain and increases the likelihood of information recall. **Lost In Thought-It's Unfamiliar Territory!**
- 6. Humor neutralizes stress.** Humor will decrease depression, loneliness and anger. The contagious nature of laughter is caused by mirror neurons or “brain cells that become active when an organism is watching an expression or behavior that they themselves can perform.” If you see someone laughing, even if you don't know the reason for the laughter, you will probably laugh anyway. Laughter is contagious. Catch it! Spread it! **He Who Laughs-Lasts!**
- 5. Humor enhances relationships.** They may not remember what you said, but they will remember your sense of humor and how they felt when they were with you. Build a *Humor Haven* in your workplace or your home filled with joke, riddle and humorous books. Make time for play. Fill your life with things that bring you smiles, including clown noses, squish balls, games/ puzzles. **What would Scooby do?**

4. **Humor nurtures creativity.** The employment market has transitioned from agriculture and manufacturing jobs to positions requiring ingenuity and inventiveness. Humor promotes creativity and critical thinking skills. Often humor comes from unconnected, random thoughts. Grow creativity through laughter yoga, telling funny stories or playing games. **Do Not Disturb, I am Disturbed Enough Already!**
3. **Humor facilitates communication.** Humor is a great way to build relationships with others. Understanding your humor style will assist your humor practice. Humor is a social lubricant. It has the power to generate a culture of trust in your organization. If you understand and nurture a constructive humor style, it will positively impact your ability to communicate. Humorous interaction between coworkers encourages a healthy, productive work environment. **A Closed Mouth Gathers No Foot!**
2. **Humor supports the change process.** We are faced with change on a daily basis. When you can laugh about unexpected challenges or even your own health issues, you know you will survive and even thrive. A great strategy is to create a top ten list of “What’s So Funny” about the change or challenge. **Change is good-you go first!**

And now for the number one reason to laugh frequently and often...

1. **Humor Is FREE and FUN.** Living well includes humor and joy. The current fast pace of many lifestyles can bury a sense of humor. Dig around for humor resources to share with your friends and colleagues. Do not let anything rob you of your passion for bringing joy to your life. **I want to live forever- so far so good!**

Nurture your sense of humor, by spending time in developing and growing your humor practice. Consider keeping a humor journal, spending time with colleagues who make you laugh, and purposefully including humor in every lesson everyday. Carefully cultivate your *humor being* to fully share the abundance of joyful living Remember humor is a fundamental factor in the cognitive/technological revolution that needs to shape 21st century education.

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

*Mary Kay Morrison is the founder and director of [Humor Quest](#). She has been providing staff development on the health benefits of humor, play and laughter for over 40 years. Her books are the foundation for numerous university humor studies classes. Mary Kay is past-president of AATH (The Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor) and founder and director of the AATH Humor Academy graduate program and CHP (Certified Humor Professional) course. She is the recipient of the 2016 AATH Lifetime Achievement Award. Her mission is to share the health benefits of humor play and laughter and is reflected in her new book: *Legacy of Laughter*.*