

Laughing like a walrus on nitrous oxide

Mark Pavilons

?The only way to get through life is to laugh your way through it. You either have to laugh or cry. I prefer to laugh. Crying gives me a headache.?

? Marjorie Pay Hinckley

Not a day goes by



where I?don't break down and laugh out loud.

And that's a very good thing.

Who would rather cry than laugh from the belly?

A sense of humour is what separates us from lower life forms. Of course, the dolphin is the exception because I'm confident they laugh at us all the time.

Laughter identifies us as a species like nothing else. We may be the only intelligent creatures in the universe who can engage in knee-slapping, falling over, uncontrollable giggle fits.

We've had dogs most of our lives and while they can express joy and excitement by knocking over every breakable with their tails, I'm not sure if they find things very amusing. My yellow labs are pretty smart, but chewing on dryer softener sheets is not considered amusing by us humans. I've already lost two barbecue brushes this season to our puppy.

By the same token, don't we laugh at the antics of our pets at least once per day? They're like kids in a candy store, free to express themselves with no limits, no bounds and no discretion! We can't figure out just what's going on in those tiny brains of theirs, but our family members have been brought to teary laughter by both Marley and Lola.

I?believe there's nothing sweeter and more uplifting than laughter.

And modern medicine supports this.

Laughter relaxes the whole body and can leave you tension-free for almost an hour after a good chuckle.

Laughter boosts the immune system by decreasing stress hormones and increases immune cells. It triggers the release of feel-good endorphins.

Laughter helps your heart by fostering blood flow.

It's also enjoyable!

Parents know full well the healing power of a kid's cackle. Hearing your children laughing and playing together like they actually love one another is not only one of life's most cherished sounds, it's like a salve for the soul.

It's the cheapest, cleanest resource on the planet!

One study revealed the most pleasing sound was a child's laughter. Whether you hear it on a radio ad or see it on a TV commercial, you can't help but laugh out loud ??it's really quite contagious.

My youngest tends to laugh at life's simple things. Whether it's a comment on one of her TV shows, funny pictures in a book or on AFV, her funny bone is very close to the surface.

My boy child, like his mother, prefers slapstick humour and quite enjoys ?painful? videos and the likes of The Three Stooges. Both of my charges got quite a chuckle when I?cut into a hard-boiled egg that had just spent some time in the microwave. Trust me, don't try this at home!

Cute can be funny also. This past Father's Day, my youngest, who's still writing phonetically, wrote in her card that I was a "jinys" (genius). She's quite astute. That still makes me smile.

I find it very interesting that even babies laugh and have a sense of humour, indicating it's inherent not learned behaviour. How can amusement be pre-programmed in our DNA? It must be deemed by the Creator, and subsequently boosted by evolution, to be vital to our survival.

Humour is one thing, but comedy is quite another. Being funny is an art form.

I learned early on that humour is attractive and funny people make us feel good. I had to compensate for my aesthetic shortcomings by honing a rapier-sharp wit and espousing levity.

My Grade 5 principal didn't share my sense of humour when I was caught playing handball in the girls' bathroom. I told her it had to do with acoustics and wall structure, but that did not win her over. With my parents present, I was "rewarded" by a few whacks on the back of the hands with a ruler. As I continued to snicker, my dad requested that I be whacked a few more times for good measure.

Oh, how things have changed!

In high school, I was more apt to provide caustic responses than serious revelations. Being a good student, teachers put up with me, but my barbs seldom got me out of detention.

Being a "class clown" took hard work convincing a rather tough crowd. It was almost like being elected class president. Like any standup comedian, my material had to be fresh.

I tried standup once in college and believe me, it's much harder than it looks. Wearing a chicken costume, I thought I had a good shot, but mid-way through my "routine," my classmates literally carried me off stage.

I've since learned humour is merely finding the light-hearted aspects of life and society. It abounds all around us. Humans are the best source of jocularity in the universe.

Humour is also about tolerance and laughing at our shortcomings.

Humour won't save our planet, but it does make life a lot more palatable. We simply have to laugh in the face of danger, tragedy and sorrow. We need to poke fun at our plight.

Despite possessing a finely tuned funny bone, I can get quite grumpy sometimes and my wife is quick to point it out. I'm often frustrated by life's trials and tribulations, and the lack of common sense exhibited by my fellow men and women. I know it's better on my digestive system to chuckle than bang my head against the wall (even though the latter burns 150 calories per hour).

Yes, the world presents us with plenty to frown about. Right next to a healthy diet is an ample helping of laughter to keep us fit and trim.

I can't imagine a day without laughter. Can you?