

The value of a well developed sense of humour

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?A well-developed sense of humour is the pole that adds balance to your steps as you walk the tightrope of life.?
William Arthur Ward

Most people would rather laugh than cry. In fact, just a few minutes of laughing each day will add years to your life. We humans enjoy a good joke and if we had our way we would laugh from the belly all day long.

I try to. I sure beats crying. And beating one's head against the wall burns only 150 calories per hour!

Like art and music, humour is not only very subjective, but it's a true reflection of the human condition. It identifies us as a species, like nothing else can.

It separates us from the lower forms of life that share our planet. As smart and wise as our pets are, I?have yet to hear a good knock-knock joke from our yellow labs. They are quite comical, however and statistics reveal that pet owners laugh and smile much more than those without the company of these creatures.

I've seen dolphins in action and one followed me along the dock in Nassau, eyeing me up and down. Smart yes, but funny? Maybe in their own way. They seem to laugh a lot.

There's really no scientific information to indicate that animals don't laugh, or enjoy a ?good one.? I've seen some pretty strange grins on the mugs of yellow labs, gerbils and bunnies. There has to be something to all that tail-wagging and mischievous behaviour. And who better to laugh at than their human owners??We likely give these critters all sorts of reasons to grin and laugh.

I?believe there's nothing sweeter and more uplifting than laughter. If you're a parent, you know full well the power of a child's chuckle or the impact of your kid's cackle. It not only parts the clouds on an overcast day, it almost has the ability to heal. To hear your children laughing and playing together like they actually love one another is another of life's most cherished sounds.

Give it a try this March break and give them ample reasons to laugh, until it hurts!

One recent survey ranked the impact of various ?sounds? and that of a baby laughing took top honours. Anyone who's listened to a recording, or seen a YouTube video of a baby laughing just can't help themselves but join in.

It's the very essence of humanity, plain and simple. It's the cheapest, cleanest, renewable resource on the planet! And so environmentally friendly.

It's something that can't be adequately reproduced ? it has to be witnessed first-and to be truly appreciated.

My youngest daughter is a chatterbox and she breaks us up time and again as she struggles with finding the right word in her explanations and stories. Her vocabulary is growing, almost faster than her mind. It results in some great one-liners.

Little ones get great pleasure out of simple things in life ??a dog wearing a tutu, slapstick humour and of course, those old reliable body sounds.

As I watched all three of my children evolve, laughter is one characteristic that developed early, almost out of the blue. It's odd that an infant would find something hilarious. As they grow, humour comes naturally to them. Is it inherited, or learned??Can it be honed?

I don't think they're learned, considering we all giggle, howl and snicker long before we can walk and talk.

Perhaps it's an art form.?Mine is a concoction of wit, satire and sarcasm, blended nicely together in a palatable brew. I tried stand-up comedy once in college ? it is much harder than it looks.

I?learned, at an early age, that humour is as attractive as good looks, as swell as bubble gum and as cool as comic books. Funny people make us feel good and we want to be around them.

Of course, it's a way of compensating for our faults and I?quickly became class clown, a title I was quite proud of.

It did get me into a wee bit of trouble from time to time. My Grade 5 principal didn't think playing handball in the girl's bathroom was funny at all. And this was despite my argument that the wall structure and acoustics were much better than in the boy's bathroom. My reward was a couple of well placed whacks on the back of the hand with a ruler. Oh, the price of artistic genius!

In high school, I?often provided more caustic answers in class than serious revelations. I was tolerated by my teachers because I was a quick learner. I?learned that a joke won't get you out of detention, but it's a sure way to earn one.

But class clown comes with great responsibility and it was a title I did not take lightly. My material had to be fresh and new. Stale limericks and old jokes weren't enough to fool a discerning audience.

These days, finding the proverbial funny needle in the haystack of the absurd requires intestinal fortitude, dedication, patience and

tenacity. But, given the nature of our fellow men and women, there's plenty of fodder for humour.

As finely tuned as my funny bone is, I can get caught up in some dreary moments. The February blahs for me are still clinging to me in March! I find I'm constantly frustrated by a lack of common sense or downright stupidity. I question why things are made a certain way, and often ask myself 'what genius thought of this?'

I suffer from acid reflux and I'm fully aware that laughter is much better on the system than stress and dreary thoughts.

Humour may not save our planet, but it sure helps us through our days and nights. When all else fails, a good barb hits the spot. If that doesn't work, try Cipralex (one of the most prevalent prescribed medications).

If we ever make contact with aliens, I can think of no better ambassadors than Robin Williams, Ben Stiller, Kevin James or Eddie Murphy.

The world presents us with plenty to frown about, even though that takes more muscles than smiling.

Right next to a healthy diet and exercise is an ample dose of laughter. Yuck it up, everyone!