LAUGH AND LIVE LONGER!

Combined Sections Meeting 2015

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Learning Objectives
At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:
• Define humor and identify the characteristics of healthy humor
• Relate how humor is experienced
• Describe the physiological and psychological responses to laughter
• Describe the positive benefits of including humor in health care
• Discuss the literature supporting the use of humor and laughter in patients with cardiovascular and pulmonary disease, cancer, chronic pain, type 2 diabetes, depression, and other health problems
• List seven ways to improve humor skills
• State three precautions regarding the use of humor with patients

What is humor?
• A holistic experience that promotes the perception of funniness
  – Physical
  – Social
  – Personal
• Related to the brain experiencing a sudden shift or twist in logic when punch line is delivered

How is humor experienced?
• Mirth
  an emotional feeling of amusement
• Laughter
  the physical response to the feelings of mirth

Characteristics of healthy humor:
• Accepts one’s fallibility and promotes courage to be human
• Facilitates creativity
• Produces feelings of hopefullness/optimism
• Produces movement toward a desired state or result
• Develops social interest and connectedness

What is humor?

When do we first begin to appreciate humor?

When do we begin to laugh?
Expressions of Humor

• Smirk
• Smile
• Grin
• Snicker

• Titter
• Giggle
• Chuckle
• Chortle

Laughter involves every major body system:

• Musculoskeletal
• CNS
• Respiratory
• Cardiovascular
• Endocrine
• Immune

Health Benefits of Laughter

• Exercises facial, upper extremity, thoracic and abdominal muscles + diaphragm

Health Benefits of Laughter

• Respiratory System:
  • ↑ tidal volume
  • ↑ pulmonary perfusion
  • ↓ functional residual capacity
  • mobilization of airway secretions

Health Benefits of Laughter

Cardiovascular System:

• ↑ stroke volume and cardiac output → ↑ circulation of blood
• Improves endothelial function
• Dilates blood vessels → ↓ BP
• ↓ arteriovenous oxygen difference

Health Benefits of Laughter

• Burns calories
  - 10 – 15 min of laughter burns 10 – 40 Cal
• Releases muscular tension + ↑s relaxation
• ↓ levels of stress hormones
Health Benefits of Laughter

• Improves immune system function
  – ↑ # and activity of natural killer cells
  – ↑ activation of T cells
  – ↑ IgA
  – ↑ gamma interferon
  – ↑ IgG and Complement 3

• Provides pain relief
  - 10 min of laughter provides ~2 hr of relief

• ↑ release of endorphins

Health Benefits of Laughter

• Improved mental health
  – Reduces anger and hostility
  – Increases joy and vitality
  – Promotes more positive and optimistic mood
  – Enhances sense of control
  – Fosters connectedness

• Other research findings:
  – Reduces postprandial rise in blood glucose
  – Improves immune responses in pts w/ RA
  – Decreases allergen-specific IgE production in atopic patients
  – Improves digestion and absorption

Health Benefits of Laughter

• Helps patients feel better about themselves
• Improves view of world
• Acts as a natural diversion from current situation
• May help in the overall healing process

Studies of Humor in Non-Medical Work Places:

• Boosts productivity
• Aids mental acuity
• Diminishes alienation, conflict, and absenteeism
Positive Benefits in Patient Care:

- ↓ feelings of anxiety, apprehension, helplessness
- Symptom relief, ↑ cohesion, ↑ coping ability
- Facilitates pain management and ⊗ emotions
- ↓ postoperative recovery time
- ↓ anger and hostility → ↓ CAD and ↑ longevity
- Enhances patient/provider interactions
- Helps combat fatigue and burnout in staff

Ways to Increase Your Sense of Humor and ↑ Laughter in Your Life

- Tell yourself it’s OK to have fun & laugh
- Figure out what tickles your funny bone and get a daily dose of it
- Add comedy to your commute
- Start a humor library
- Find a laugh partner

Ways to Increase Your Sense of Humor and ↑ Laughter in Your Life

- Look for humor in everyday, ordinary things and situations
- Laugh at yourself
- Start a humor library
- Learn to play
- Act silly once in awhile
- Make fun of your fears

Ways to Increase Your Sense of Humor and ↑ Laughter in Your Life

- Learn the basics of humor
  - learn to tell jokes
  - take a class
- Visit the zoo and watch the animals
- Lighten up! Develop your positive side

Precautions Re: Use of Humor

- Humor doesn’t work with everyone
- Laughter is painful following abdominal surgery – use a cough pillow for splinting
- Excessive laughter occasionally causes bronchoconstriction
- Patients with mental illness may not respond to humor

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