

Hi, everyone,

In this week's Play Tip, we're going to talk about the importance of humor and laughter.

The idea that humor can heal can be traced back to biblical times; in Proverbs 17:22, you'll find the maxim "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." More recently, physicians like Norman Cousins and Patch Adams have advocated the use of humor in medicine, and some researchers have argued that humor may have evolved specifically as a strategy for coping with stress.

The American psychologist Rollo May believed that humor allowed people to distance themselves from their problems, view them from a different perspective, and thus reduce the feelings of anxiety and helplessness they experienced. And the British philosopher Bertrand Russell once said, "Laughter is the most inexpensive and most effective wonder drug. Laughter is a universal medicine."

Humor has been shown to reduce stress, relieve pain, and improve the overall quality of life. Laughter can lead to changes in heart rate, skin temperature, blood pressure, pulmonary ventilation, skeletal muscle activity, and brain activity. It may also improve immune function by blocking the production of stress hormones (like cortisol, ACTH, and adrenaline) and stimulating the production of feel-good chemicals (like endorphins). Laughter may even increase the activity of natural killer cells, which help fight infection and keep cancer at bay.

Here are some tips for benefiting from humor and laughter:

1. Lighten up! Many of us entrepreneurs tend to take ourselves and our work too seriously. It's really important to take a step back, get some perspective, and remember that even the most difficult problems are eventually resolved, or at least shift.
2. Watch movies or TV shows that make you laugh on a regular basis. If you watch TV, you might as well watch shows that will actually improve your health! Just don't watch too much, or the benefits of laughter might be outweighed by the harm of sitting on your butt for too long.
3. Go to a live comedy show. Watching a live stand-up comic or improvisation performance has the added benefit of laughing with a group of people. Watch for listings in your area and make this a regular event.
4. Go on a news diet. Let's face it: the news is often depressing. While I believe it's important to stay informed and not avoid or deny tragedy when it occurs, your life will not be enriched by hearing about every murder, car crash, and catastrophic event that happens in the world. Consider limiting your news consumption to fifteen minutes per day on most days, with perhaps a longer read of the Sunday paper.
5. Avoid people who bring you down. This isn't always possible, and there's a certain amount of interpersonal struggle we all have to face in life. But there's no reason to go looking for it or to invest your limited time and energy in relationships that are a constant drain on you.

6. Play with your kids and pets. Kids and animals are experts in humor, play, and fun. We can learn a lot from them.

Okay, that's it for now ... and this is the last video of the course. I hope that you've gotten a lot out of it and that it will prepare you to thrive and succeed in the full course. I'm looking forward to seeing you there!