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Manage your 'stress' with 'humor' & 'laughter'

By: **Gerry Hopman, BA, C.H.R.P., C.Y.L.L**

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Manage your '*stress*' with '*humor*' & '*laughter*'

By: Gerry Hopman, BA, C.H.R.P., C.Y.L.L

**Laughter is cheaper than 'Prozac' and there are
no side effects.**

- Author unknown

A recent survey showed that 70 -90 percent of us feel stressed at work and in our personal lives. Today's fast-paced lifestyle is putting a toll on us,

**So why would we want to use humor to relieve stress? Well
there are a number of good reasons:**

You get immediate results

It takes no special talent, ability, or skill

You don't need a master's degree, diploma, or license

It makes you feel good

It's fun

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It's cholesterol and fat-free

And you don't need any batteries

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Instead of 'worry wrinkles' - develop 'laugh lines'

Gerry Hopman

One of the most effective ways to fight stress is **'laughter!'**

Humor, jokes, a good laugh make you forget, re-evaluate the most gloomy and stressful moments.

It has been scientifically proven that laughter helps to alleviate physical and emotional pain.

Doctors tell us to keep our spirits high, to laugh more and we will be healthier and heal faster.

Any of the following will improve your attitude and outlook on life:

Watching comedy movies, videos

Listening to funny audio cassettes or tapes

Telling a funny joke, sharing a funny experience

Reading humorous books

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Watching TV comedies

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Sure signs that you are under stress

You can achieve an 'athlete's high' by just sitting up

You say the same sentence over and over without realizing you do

You begin to explore the possibility of setting up an IV drip solution of espresso coffee

You can skip without a rope

It appears that people are speaking to you in code

You believe that if you concentrate hard - you can fly

You wonder if brewing is really a necessary step for the consumption of coffee

Antacid tablets become your sole source of nutrition

You have an irresistible urge to bite the noses of people you are talking to

You and reality file for divorce

Losing your mind was okay, but when the voices in your head quieted, it was like losing your best friend

You call the "Time and Weather" number every day, because the person who supplies the information really understands you

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You take the 'Don't walk; traffic sign personally

You get lost on you way home on your driveway

You listen to relaxation tapes on high speed

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Gauging your stress level

The bags under you eyes are almost large enough to carry your groceries

You Can't remember the names of family members although they look vaguely familiar

You can travel without moving

Your blood pressure causes the machine at Wal-Mart to break down

The sun is too loud

You leave on vacation and forget one of your children

You want to smell the roses and now you can't remember why you satnd in front of the rose bush

You can achieve a 'runner's high' by sitting up

Your blood pressure goes up because your computer boots up too slowly

You feel irritated when a real person answers the phone and you have to talk to a person instead of a machine

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If you have more than 3 of these symptoms, you suffer from 'extreme stress!'

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Why worry?

There are only two things to worry about;

Either you are well or you are sick.

If you are well, then there is nothing to worry about;

But if you are sick, there are only two things to worry about;

Whether you will get well, or whether you will die.

If you get well, there is nothing to worry about;

But if you die, there are only two things to worry about;

Whether you go to heaven or hell.

If you go to heaven, there is nothing to worry about;

And if you go to hell you'll be so busy shaking hands with old

Friends, you won't have time to worry.

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Worry and stress go together like 'bread and butter,' however, it is important to remember:

40 % of worries involve things that never happen

30% of worries involve things that already happened

12 % are needless worries about ours and others health

10 % are petty worries - like who squeezed the toothpaste in the middle, or who took the paper clips

8 % are real concerns

50 % of the 'real concerns' we cannot change

50 % of the 'real concerns' we can act on - which represents 4 %

It is a proven fact that the 'worries of today - become the laughs of tomorrow!'

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Indicators that life is stressful

You have nightmares about losing your 'daytimer,' but none about losing your kids.

You bought a book titled '**Stress management,**' but are too stressed, and can't find the time to read it.

We look for everything '*instant*' to avoid the stress of waiting:

Instant on - kitchen appliances, TV, DVD, Stereo etc.

Instant foods - minute rice, instant pudding etc.

Instant remedies - cols, headaches etc.

And we've become impatient:

In stores

In banks

Traffic

A friend of mine told me, he even gets impatient and stressed if he has to wait 2 minutes in front of the microwave.

We need to give ourselves a reality check, slow down and smell the coffee/roses!

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Not only are people stressed today, they are:

Short fused

Impatient

Intolerant

And just plain 'peeved off!'

Humor is a great stress reliever, because it makes you feel good and you can't feel good and feel stressed at the same time.

Let me illustrate that with an exercise you can do right now.

Move your 'right foot' clockwise on the floor in front of you

At the same time make the number 6 in the air in front of you

Impossible right?

It is the same with humor and stress. You can't have fun and be stressed at the same time.

To nurture this:

Have a '*laugh night*' at home once a week

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At work:

- have *'laugh sessions'*
- form a *'humor-laughter'* committee. Appoint a *'Humor Coordinator'* on a rotating basis, to come up with funny and humorous ideas to keep Humor and laughter on track.

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It has been statistically proven that one out of four people in this country is not only stressed out, but is also mentally unbalanced.

Now close your eyes and think of three of your closest friends.

If they seem okay - You're the one!

A word of advice! Don't beat yourself up with:

I should have

I could have

Why didn't I

Live in the present - you can't undo the past!

For those of you who can't do without self-pitying, moaning and whining, there is a cheap martyr kit that I can recommend.

Get yourself a strip of Velcro, glue it to your wrist and forehead, and you'll be able to go all day bringing your wrist to your forehead - oh my God..... oh poor me.....

It makes self-pitying, moaning and whining a whole lot easier.

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Tickle your stress before it tackles you.

Author unknown

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One of the biggest obstacles to 'peace' and 'harmony' in our lives is the fact that we take situations and people around us way too seriously.

Here are 10 ways to deal with everyday stress:

Reduce worry, tensions, anxiety and guilt

Balance life at home and at work

Maintain and improve your health

Learn how to cope with high pressure

Understand the crucial balance between 'acting' and 'reacting'

Take yourself less seriously

Increase self-esteem and be motivated in all areas of life

Discover how to be an optimist

Be able to laugh at yourself

Remember that yesterday's worries become tomorrow's comedy and

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laughter

Don't sweat the small stuff - it's only small stuff!

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It started out as a '*bad hair day*' and it went downhill from there.

Gerry Hopman

Relax on your way to and from work:

Humor up your vehicle - with humor buttons, slogans etc.

Stay away from cell phones. If you must impress others - use a toy plastic phone.

Listen to relaxing music, CD's, tapes, cassettes

Sing, hum

Look for funny bumper stickers on the vehicles ahead of you

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Tips on using 'humor' to release 'stress'

Humor reduces stress and builds up the immune system in the body. A good laugh increases the blood circulation. It's like an internal massage

Laughter relieves stress tension in neck and shoulder muscles

Avoid negative people, negative situations and negative self-talk. Socialize with positive and fun-loving people

Mentally put yourself in the shoes of your favorite comedian. For example Robin Williams. What would he do in your situation?

Give yourself permission to have 'fun' and 'to laugh.' It's a good feeling to release 'the child,' 'the clown' within you once in a while.

When things are stressful, try to look for the 'humor' in the situation. If you can think, or say to yourself: "Someday I'm going to laugh about this" - **don't wait!** Laugh about it now! Develop a 'humor' perspective.

Schedule your own 'humor breaks,' whether it is reading about 'humor,'

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watching comedy TV, comedy DVD's, or listening to humorous audios, or CD's.

Take your job, your relationship, your responsibilities seriously, but learn to take yourself lightly.

Laugh at yourself at least once a day.

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The 71/2 habits of effectively dealing with stress

1 Laugh more - fret less

Learn to laugh at your problems, so that they don't develop into stressors

3 Take deep breaths

Take a few deep breaths and award your body with a 'mini vacation'

3 Practice meditating

You can meditate:
At your workstation
Your desk
Or anywhere in the house

Here is how:
Clear your mind
Fold your arms

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Close your eyes
Hum.....

It will recharge and refresh you!

4 Share good news!

People spend 75 % of their daily conversation **being negative**, so is it any wonder that we are swimming in an epidemic of **global misery**?

Share good news. It is a wonderful way to become **more optimistic** and **hopeful** towards ourselves, as well as to others.

5 Value the possibilities of the 'positive' over the emptiness and destructiveness of the 'negative.' It will open up a whole new world for you.

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6 Eliminate your negative and pessimistic thoughts

Don't allow negative and pessimistic thoughts to rule your mind. Eliminate them and replace them with positive, happy and cheerful thoughts.

Practice 'mind over matter.' Control the 'matter' that enters your mind.

7 Sing.....Hum.....

When you sing or hum, you feel good. While feeling good, it is impossible to feel stressed at the same time.

7 1/2 Listen more - Talk less

Give yourself a break. When someone else is talking, you can enjoy a rest. And who knows - you might even learn a thing or two.

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If it weren't for stress, I would have no energy at all

Author unknown

Tips on how to lower your daily stress

At home, at work, or even as a customer, don't tick off the person who has the power, or ability to provide you with what you want or need.

If you're having a bad day, keep it to yourself. Others may be experiencing an even worse day than you.

If you have a problem, or concern about something, go to the person who can resolve or rectify the issue instead of bitching to the innocent, and uninterested.

If your weight bothers you, stuffing yourself will only feel good when it passes your taste buds. Is it worth the guilt that comes soon after?

Don't build a mental hairball about an issue - bring it out in the open! Pent-up anger such as sighs, dirty looks, rolling of the eyes, the silent treatment, or being sarcastic only add to your stress. Furthermore the person you direct this to may not pay any attention to your antics, or may simply ignore them.

If you're not happy with your job, find something that is better suited to you. If economically this is not possible, find external ways to provide you with some satisfaction and happy feelings.

Smile and laugh more, walk, exercise, treat yourself to some comedy instead of adding more stress into your life by listening or watching chronic bad news.

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You are the master of your mind. Know when to re-direct your thoughts towards the positive, the happy and productive goals.

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Five ways to replace stress with 'joy'

If you've watched a child at play, you know what unlimited joy looks like. Can you remember what it felt like to skip on a sidewalk, jump in a puddle, or plunge into a pile of Fall leaves?

Kids don't have the monopoly on 'joy and happiness.' Just because we are grown-ups we can release the child from within and take back the 'joy' we enjoyed as children.

1. Make a joy list

On a sheet of paper, make a list of 20 things that are 'fun' to do and bring you 'joy.' Simple things like going for a walk, reading a relaxing book, listening to your favorite music, watching a video, or movie.

2. Give the gift of joy

Making other people happy, helping others, volunteering..... It's a proven fact that making others happy provides personal 'joy.'

3. Experience the joy of everyday life

Stop and smell the roses, or the coffee, or both if you have the opportunity. Enjoy time with young children and let their joy and excitement affect you. Celebrate small achievements. Enjoy the company of family and friends.

4. Fill your mind with joy

Choose happy thoughts. Be optimistic and enjoy the moment. Do so will reduce stress and make life much more enjoyable.

5. Put some joy and bounce in your steps

Moving more joyfully. Don't let stress determine the way you move. Use walking, exercising and sports participation to clear the stress from your mind.

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Closing **remarks**

Humor and laughter brake the tension causes by time-lines and time commitments.

They serve as an outlet for frustration.

They provide a healthy escape from realty.

Remember that the 'crisis of today' becomes the 'joke of tomorrow.' A good example are 'most embarrassing moments.' At the time they are extremely stressful and devastating to us, however, when we reflect back on them after some time has elapsed they can be hilarious.

Opt for humor and laughter instead of stress!

Remember there is always another day!

Smile, laugh, lighten up, enjoy life and live longer!

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Gerry Hopman, BA, C.H.R.P., C.Y.L.L., is a Humorist, Humor Motivational Speaker and Author.

He believes that humor and laughter are essential to finding and maintaining balance in life and career.

His website www.humorlaughter.com shows people that humor and laughter are a lot more than being the results of entertainment. Humor and laughter are vital to people's health and wellness, stress management, anti-aging. Longevity and much more.....

Be sure to visit Gerry 's website! Take the '**humor quiz**' and find out what your humor capacity is, and sign up for his monthly newsletter "**The Humormeister's Forum**"

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Please Visit Gerry Hopman's website here:

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