



201  
Dempsey Hall

University of  
Wisconsin  
Oshkosh

800  
Algoma  
Boulevard

Oshkosh  
Wisconsin  
54901-8613

(920)  
424-1078

Fax  
(920)  
424-1066

# UPDATE

Volume 5 • Issue 1

Spring 2001

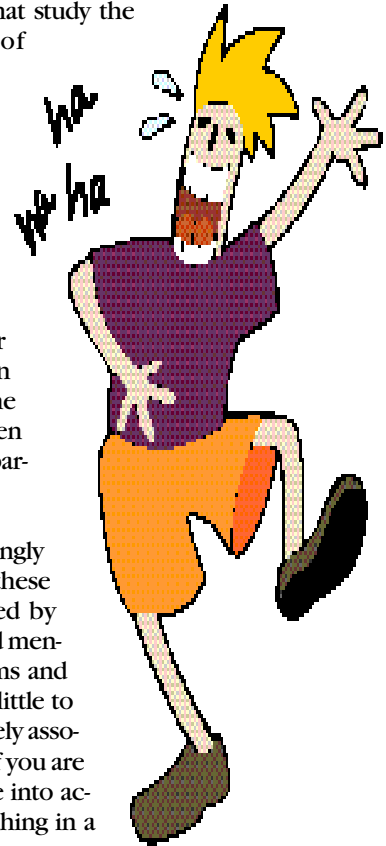
## “He who laughs, lasts.”

By Vicki Woschnick  
Program Assistant, Counseling Center

**What is it that makes people laugh? Surely there is no guaranteed method to elicit laughter. Humor can lurk in something as simple as a knowing glance between friends or as complex as the flawless timing of a veteran comedian. How we laugh or why we laugh is, at best, enigmatic; however, there is growing evidence that suggests because we laugh we are giving ourselves physical and psychological benefits that will far outlast any punch line.**

According to medical and mental health experts that study the mind-body connection in the field of psychoneuroimmunology, there are numerous case studies that demonstrate how patients with serious illnesses have been able to arrest, reduce, or in some rare instances eradicate terminal diseases through maintenance of a positive attitude. Laughter therapist Edna Junkins explains that learning to laugh at ourselves and our situations - even in the most adverse conditions - allows humor to “shift our perspective and problems shrink to a manageable size. We don’t diminish importance, but we are less overwhelmed.” While humor offers a certain degree of relief from the pain and tension associated with physical illness, it is only one aspect of the constructive use of laughter. Laughter has also been proven effective in reducing stress brought on by daily events, particularly those in connection with the work place.

Deadlines. Meetings. Phone calls. Periods of seemingly endless interruption. All workers have or experience these things routinely and, likewise, carry the stress produced by them. If humor is a natural release that leads to increased mental health and productivity, why aren’t conference rooms and office buildings ringing with laughter? The answer has little to do with workers’ inability to crack a joke, and is more likely associated with the tacit “rule” of the American work ethic: If you are having fun, you can’t be working. Translating that adage into action often equates to dealing with everyone and everything in a



*continued on next page*

Assistance for Employees and Family Members Since 1979

(continued from front page)

literal manner so as to be “taken seriously.” While there are certainly work situations that demand decorum, the Center for Behavioral Health cautions that the all-consuming seriousness workers strive for on the job is not necessarily a worthy goal. It breeds anxiety by “demanding that [they] give meaning to mystery, and leave no question unanswered” thereby placing an unduly large emphasis on constant productivity.

Fortunately, this “nose to the grindstone” approach to work is being challenged. The physical benefits of laughter are well documented. A good laugh can lower blood pressure, exercise the lungs, and increase the production of endorphins (the brain’s organic pain killer.) However, laughter’s positive psychological corollaries have not undergone the same extensive research until recently. As attention paid to this area has increased, so too has its credibility. And, many industries have taken notice. Why has humor become an asset to the work place? According to Dr. Steven M. Sultanoff, President of the American Association for Therapeutic Humor, the answer is multifaceted:

- ☞ Humor facilitates communication by providing a non-threatening medium through which an employee or employer can communicate with others.
- ☞ Humor builds relationships among co-workers who share “office jokes” as a means of taking the seriousness of work lightly.
- ☞ Humor reduces stress through making workers feel good. No one can feel good and feel stressed simultaneously.
- ☞ Humor provides perspective by making workers look at the big picture, taking the focus off the demanding minutia.
- ☞ Humor promotes attendance and energizes a work place through inviting moments wherein workers can “let go” of built up anger and anxiety.

Workers can incorporate humor into their work place by adopting a healthy new maxim: Take your job seriously and yourself lightly. This is not to suggest that there are no parameters for job related mirth. Humor should never distract from the business at hand, be used in blatant disregard of appropriate feedback or criticism, be insensitive, sarcastic or hurtful to others. Keeping that in mind, [humorforyourhealth.com](http://humorforyourhealth.com) has posted five tips that will help workers relax and recharge with smiles, fun and laughter:

1. Lighten up - Things can only be as serious as you want to make them.
2. Let go of your need for control - You cannot be in charge of everything and everybody at all times.
3. Embrace change - It is a constant. Work with it.
4. Be spontaneous - Be willing to break from your routine.
5. Smile - It is the curve that sets everything straight.

Laughter, then, is paramount on the job and a sense of humor is rapidly distinguishing itself as a choice attribute of desired employees. Levity is key in sustaining a positive daily attitude that leads to results similar to or in excess of those once thought achievable only through solemn labor and toil. Apparently, the unwitting joke has been on us.

## Feeling hopeless can be bad for your health.

Eric Nagourney reports for the New York Times, on a study from the University of Michigan published in the journal “Hypertension.” The research suggests that “...people suffering persistent periods of hopelessness may be at greater risk for hypertension...” It may be worth your investment now to address those feelings of hopelessness, because in doing so you could buy the time of a healthy future.

(Nagourney, Eric. “When Despair Invades the Blood Vessels”. NYTimes. 2/29/2000.)



“If you use your computer frequently, you may touch the keys up to 200,000 times a day – the equivalent of your fingers walking ten miles,” reports Jaime Berry in the January/February 2001 issue of Natural Health magazine (“Computer Hazards, p. 24).

## Brown Bag Three-Part March Series

### Parenting Adolescents!

Do you sometimes wish there was a magic button you could push to get it right with your adolescent son or daughter? Being an adolescent is high risk these days. Come and discuss key parenting issues with other parents. Come for all three for continuity, or just one as your schedule allows.

### Bullying and What Can be Done

Mary Drecktrah, Ph.D.  
Wednesday, March 7, 2000  
Noon - 1:00PM  
201 Dempsey Hall - EAP Meeting Room

A video called "Bullying" will be shown (25 min), research will be shared that was conducted in schools to assess the perception of bullying by staff and students, and discussion by participants. A handout with suggestions for teachers and parents will be available.

### Talking to Your Adolescent About Sexuality

Joan Killinger, M.S.  
Wednesday, March 14, 2000  
Noon - 1:00PM  
201 Dempsey Hall - EAP Meeting Room

A program to help parents adopt a positive approach to sexuality in the adolescent. Topics include teenage sexuality, sexual facts versus sexual myths, clarifying attitudes and values, being an "askable parent" and using "teachable moments."

### Raising Drug Free Kids in a Drug Filled World

Joe Abhold, Ph.D.  
Thursday, March 29, 2000  
Noon - 1:00PM  
201 Dempsey Hall - EAP Meeting Room

This interactive presentation explores the important role of parents in preventing their children's drug use. The critical ages for discussing drug/alcohol issues and the specific how-to's of these conversations bring this vital information "home" in a clear and practical manner.

**Back by popular demand!**

## More EAP Brown Bag Seminars

### Choosing and Using Herbal and Vitamin Supplements for Health and Vitality

Fran Nelson, Ph.D.  
Wednesday, February 14, 2001.  
Noon - 1:00PM  
Reeve Union 219

This program will review the best choices in the herbal, vitamin and supplement market to prevent illness, promote great health and vitality and treat chronic illness. Information on quality, price, safety and access will be included as well as resources for further study.

### Ten Days In Beijing

Paula Hayford  
Wednesday, March 28, 2001  
Noon - 1:00PM  
Reeve Union 219

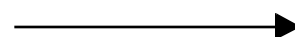
Visit the delightful city of Beijing through a slide presentation. Paula will enhance her presentation by including how Traditional Chinese philosophy permeates the entire culture and structures of one of China's most beautiful cities.

### Myths, Fads and Facts of Exercise Health

Dan Schmidt, Ph.D.  
Thursday, April 12, 2001  
Noon - 1:00PM  
Reeve Union 220

This brown bag will consider the "top ten myths" of exercise and discuss the merits and misconceptions of various gismos, gadgets and exercise fads. There are cheap, effective ways to lose weight, build cardiovascular fitness, improve muscle tone and build muscle strength and endurance. Recommendations and approaches to improving general fitness will be outlined.

More EAP Brown Bag Seminars



## Brown Bag What to do When ... Series

### What to do When ... There is Conflict

Don Merz, M.Ed.  
Wednesday, April 18, 2001  
Noon - 1:00  
Reeve

This presentation will explore the choices available to a supervisor or department chair when conflicts arise: a) between co-workers, or b) between a supervisor and an employee. When and how EAP can help will also be addressed.

## UPCOMING

### Wellness Fair

Wednesday, March 7, 2001  
11:00 - 2:00 PM  
Reeve 201-202

- ☞ bicycle safety helmets
- ☞ golf swing analysis
- ☞ body fat analysis
- ☞ yoga information and supplies
- ☞ sports footwear
- ☞ organic food information and samples
- ☞ glucose and cholesterol screening

and much more!



### Letters to the Editor

EAP Update invites comments related to EAP articles of interest to employees, or relevant to the University community. Space limitations may prevent all letters from being published, however, every effort will be made to accommodate submissions. Letters must be constructive, civil, and present a serious discussion of your point of view and suggestions. EAP staff retain the sole right to edit provocative, inflammatory, and devaluing usage or refuse publication that would fuel controversy in a counterproductive manner. Submit letters of 250 words or less in Microsoft Word to

[Barbour@uwosh.edu](mailto:Barbour@uwosh.edu)  
or by campus mail to 201 Dempsey Hall. Anonymous letters will not be published.

**If you missed an EAP Brown Bag – you can borrow the tape of EAP Brown Bags by signing them out from the EAP Office!**

### EAP Update Publication Change

Beginning with this volume of the EAP Update, Volume 4, the EAP Update will publish three, not four yearly issues. The summer issue will no longer be published.

### EAP Update Staff:

For further information contact  
Employee Assistance Program  
at 920-424-1078

Susan E. Barbour, Ed.D., EAP Director

IRC - Layout

Document Services - Duplication

