

The Age Sage – Humor and Laughter

Dear Age Sage,

I come from a large family. I remember how much fun we had every holiday when we would all come home. Everybody laughing and kidding around; my mom was many times the biggest tease of all, and would often get us all going. Now that she is older and having lost dad a year ago, the humor seems to have left our family. Now when we get together it is all seriousness – worrying about mom: will she be able to stay in the house, she seems to becoming a little more forgetful these days, what about that fall she had a few months ago... How can we start to have fun again, or is this just the way it is going to be?

Signed,

I miss the good times...

Dear I miss...:

It is not easy losing a father, watching your mom grow older, and feeling the burden of taking care of her. But think of what it is like for her; she lost her spouse and maybe some friends, she wakes up most days having not slept well the night before, with aches, pains, worries and not much to do. She doesn't want to be a burden on you, but sometimes she doesn't know who to turn to when she is feeling so vulnerable. With all of this going on, it's no wonder, no one is laughing.

But the fact is you can have humor and laughter even in the face of all the trials and tribulations that aging brings. I hope when you read all the benefits that "lightening up" can bring, you'll realize how important it is for you to lead the way for your family start laughing again.

The sound of roaring laughter is far more contagious than any cough, sniffle, or sneeze. Humor and laughter can cause a domino effect of joy and amusement, as well as set off a number of positive physical effects. Laughter activates the chemistry of the will to live and increases our capacity to fight disease.

A good hearty laugh can help:

- reduce stress
- lower blood pressure
- elevate mood
- boost immune system
- improve brain functioning
- protect the heart
- connect you to others
- foster instant relaxation
- Make you feel good

Laughter's Effects on the Body

Laughter lowers blood pressure.	People who laugh heartily on a regular basis have lower standing blood pressure than the average person. When people have a good laugh, initially the blood pressure increases, but then it decreases to levels below normal. Breathing then becomes deeper which sends oxygen enriched blood and nutrients throughout the body.
Humor changes our biochemical state.	Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases infection fighting antibodies. It increases our attentiveness, heart rate, and pulse.
Laughter protects the heart.	Laughter, along with an active sense of humor, may help protect you against a heart attack, according to the study at the University of Maryland Medical Center. The study, which is the first to indicate that laughter may help prevent heart disease, found that people with heart disease were 40 percent less likely to laugh in a variety of situations compared to people of the same age without heart disease.
Laughter gives our bodies a good workout.	Laughter can be a great workout for your diaphragm, abdominal, respiratory, facial, leg, and back muscles. It massages abdominal organs, tones intestinal functioning, and strengthens the muscles that hold the abdominal organs in place. Not only does laughter give your midsection a workout, it can benefit digestion and absorption functioning as well. It is estimated that hearty laughter can burn calories equivalent to several minutes on the rowing machine or the exercise bike.
Humor improves brain function and relieves stress.	Laughter stimulates both sides of the brain to enhance learning. It eases muscle tension and psychological stress, which keeps the brain alert and allows people to retain more information.

So next time you talk to your mom, let her see a glimpse of your old self. Get the worried and anxious look off of your face. Stop grilling her about her doctor appointments, medications, and home maintenance issues. Treat her like you always did; kidding around with her, being a little irreverent and maybe even a little sarcastic.

Yes, your mom is older and maybe sicker and not as sharp as she once was, but what she wants from you, is to be treated like her old self.

TIP:

Next time you see your mom, tell her this cute story to make her smile:

A police car pulls up in front of Grandma Bessie's house, and Grandpa Morris gets out. The polite policeman explained that this elderly gentleman said that he was lost in the park and couldn't find his way home.

"Oh Morris," said grandma, "You've been going to that park for over 30 years! How could you get lost?"

Leaning close to grandma, so that the policeman couldn't hear, Morris whispered, "I wasn't lost. I was just too tired to walk home."

Until next month,

The Age Sage

Please contact me at:

Extended Family

32 Miller Avenue

Portsmouth, NH 03801

603-430-6863

theagesage@extended-family.net

www.extended-family.net