

# How's YOUR Laugh Life?

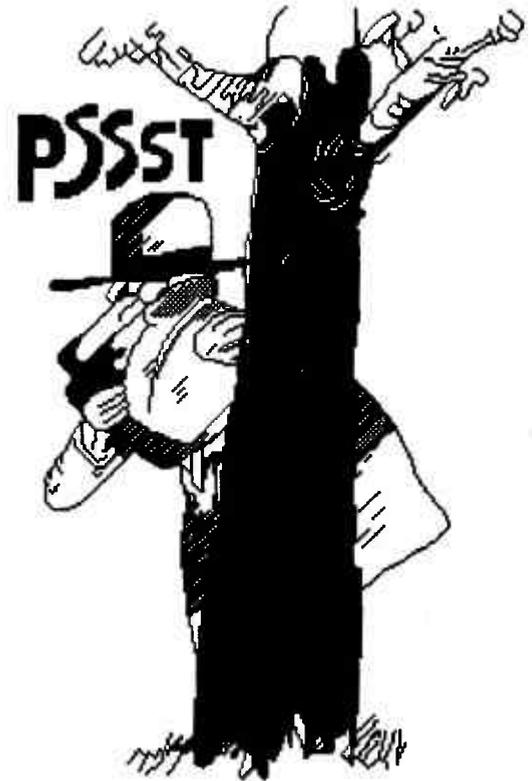
By Carla Rieger

When was the last time you had some really great....laughter? Plato, the ancient Greek philosopher, once said, "Life was meant to be lived as play". In Northern European based cultures, most people act as if life was meant to be lived as *work*. The Protestant Work Ethic seems to permeate the systems and traditions of our society. No pain, no gain. Life was meant to be a struggle. Laughing and playing are a waste of time if you are an adult. When we laugh, it is often in rebellion to having worked like a dog all week. Thank God It's Friday! Even in our revelry, there is an underlying feeling of guilt. Dr. R. F. Gumperson once said "Children have more energy after a hard day of play than they do after a good night's sleep." The same could be said about adults.

## *Laughter is the Best Medicine*

For years people have been calling laughter the best medicine. In the last 20 years or so, the medical establishment took it upon themselves to actually prove that theory. Norman Cousins started the whole trend with his book, *Anatomy of an Illness*. He contracted a terminal illness and was told he had only 6 months to live. His chance of recovery was one in 500. He knew in his heart that all the years he spent worrying, getting irritated, and denying himself fun had caused the dis-ease, the imbalance. He was in tremendous pain, so much so that he could not sleep. He noticed that for every 5 minutes of laughter, he had two hours pain free. He watched hours of comedy movies, read humorous books, had friends tell him funny stories. He had a complete remission and went on to live another happy, healthy, and productive 20 years. He credits visualizations, the love of his family, and laughter for his recovery.

Laughter, therefore, can help us regain balance in an *all-work-no-play* kind of society. A daily dose of laughter reduces stress (Staying Tense Regularly Even though you See that it's Stupid). Regular fun helps the immune system, cures depression, revitalizes the body, mind and spirit, and has no unpleasant side effects. Being playful stimulates your creative mind, changes your perspective, enhances rapport with others, and makes you more attractive to other people! Laughing and playing is organic, low-fat, with no pesticides, no preservatives, no artificial ingredients and is 100 percent wholesome. It takes no special training. In fact, babies can laugh within the first few weeks of life. It is free. You don't need to go to a specialist to get laughter



treatment. And contrary to popular thinking, almost anyone can create opportunities to laugh all during the day, alone or with others.

## *The Laughter Balance*

How can this be done? Is there a movement that stimulates the *play centre* of the brain? Can I simply massage the Neuro-Lymphatic points for the *Laughter Meridian*? Of course. The *Playfair* company recommends holding both hands in the air in a gesture of triumph as if you've just finished running a marathon, or perhaps just finished running the vacuum cleaner. While holding this position, you say very loudly and very proudly "I'm Depressed!" This activity can instantly activate the Laughter Brain (located somewhere in the Gestalt Brain, we think). As for the *Laughter Meridian*, it is a bilateral meridian starting at the funny bone, running up the arm to the cheekbone, then on down to the belly, past the urethral sphincter, and out the baby toe. This leads us to more fully understand those who laugh so hard they end up peeing in their pants. The Neuro-Lymphatic points are on either side of the ribs. A quick ten finger massage, and your client will be laughing in seconds.

A *Laughter Balance* often involves some kind of healing of the "Inner Fool". Traumatic experiences from childhood get fused in the system. Parents say "don't tell that joke, people will think you're strange", the teacher says "wipe that smile off your face" or a friend says "if you keep acting like such a goof, you'll never get a date". After a while, a person can become humorously challenged, laughter impaired, or simply....an old stick in the mud.

### *Healing the Inner Fool*

The Fool is a part of our mythic heritage. It is part of every human being's psychological make up. The Fool shows up in many great works of literature, in many oral traditions, and in all the major religions. In the myths and stories of Europe, wise Kings and Queens would not think of ruling without a Court Fool or Jester to express the joy of life and to entertain them and the court. The Court Fool also has a license to say what other people would be hanged for, and to generally provide balance to the kingdom by breaking the rules and thereby allowing an outlet for forbidden insights, behaviors and feelings. The Fool, of course, is making a great resurgence today, as it often does during stressful times in history when society is undergoing tremendous change. Comedy clubs have boomed 85 per cent in the last decade, cartoonists are becoming millionaires, there are more comedy plays, movies, and TV shows than ever before. People want to get in touch with the Fool again, with that playful, irreverent side.

The Law of the Reversed Effect proves the theory of the inner fool. It states that you will not find the inside of something unless there is also an outside, just as you will not find a mountain without a valley, nor a wave without a trough. If that is true, and we believe that we are sane and serious individuals, it must also be true that somewhere deep down inside of all of us is an insane fool dying to come out and play. Now the trick is, to let that fool out to play consciously everyday. Otherwise, the fool may decide to come out and play UNconsciously. Conscious foolery can, therefore, prevent much unneeded embarrassment.

Laughter opportunities can spring up anytime, anywhere. Listening to the suggestions of your inner fool is a great place to start. Try singing "Woolly Bully" with a friend in a parkade. The acoustics are great. While on an elevator, introduce yourself to everyone. If you are alone on the elevator get down and dance to music. Wear a clown nose and wave at people whenever you are stuck in heavy traffic. Bring oversize sun

glasses to a luncheon meeting and have your dining mates wear them throughout the meal. You will get excellent service, and the meeting will remain lively and fun. Wear buttons on your label such as "Yes, I am a movie star" or "All I want is a warm bed, a kind heart, and unlimited power". These are always great conversation starters. When you are going through a tough time imagine what a great story it will make someday.



In a group, or with your family, plan one day or evening a week dedicated to angelic foolery. Head out on the town together dressed in clashing outfits. Leave some change in a pay phone change return. Plug parking meters that have just expired. Go up to a person on the street with a loony and say "I think you just dropped this", then walk away quickly. Collect litter. Blow bubbles on passers by. Sing some rounds while you're at it. You can create a joy gang within your company or organization – a small team of people responsible for creating an upbeat atmosphere by organizing events, contests, and activities that easily help people play and laugh together.

There are hundreds of play inducing activities for every style of person, and for every type of environment. Experimentation and persistence pay off handsomely in this arena. Just remember, as some old wise person once said "We don't stop playing because we are old, we are old because we stop playing". Join the mythical P.L.O. (Play Liberation Organization) today, and help make the world a merrier place.

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