

CONCERN[®] Services

We're More Than An EAP...

Our goal is to Help People Live Better & Help People Work Better. The following information from the **CONCERN WorkLife Services** program is intended to help you accomplish that goal and remind you that, as your Employee Assistance Program, we are here for you and your family. Visit us on-line at www.ak.concernservices.com or call (513) 891-1627 / (800) 841-5002 for no-charge, confidential assistance.

Health Benefits of Humor and Laughter

Humor is infectious. The sound of roaring laughter is far more contagious than any cough, snuffle, or sneeze. When laughter is shared, it binds people together and increases happiness and intimacy. In addition to the domino effect of joy and amusement, laughter also triggers healthy physical changes in the body. Humor and laughter strengthen your immune system, boost your energy, diminish pain, and protect you from the damaging effects of stress. Best of all, this priceless medicine is fun, free, and easy to use.

Laughter is strong medicine for mind and body.

Your sense of humor is one of the most powerful tools you have to make certain that your daily mood and emotional state support good health."

-Paul E. McGhee, Ph.D.

Laughter is a powerful antidote to stress, pain, and conflict. Nothing works faster or more dependably to bring your mind and body back into balance than a good laugh. Humor lightens your burdens, inspires hopes, connects you to others, and keeps you grounded, focused, and alert.

With so much power to heal and renew, the ability to laugh easily and frequently is a tremendous resource for surmounting problems, enhancing your relationships, and supporting both physical and emotional health.

Laughter is good for your health.

- **Laughter relaxes the whole body.** A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress, leaving your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes after.
- **Laughter boosts the immune system.** Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease.
- **Laughter triggers the release of *endorphins*,** the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.
- **Laughter protects the heart.** Laughter improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, which can help protect you against a heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.

The Benefits of Laughter

Physical Health Benefits:

- Boosts immunity
- Lowers stress hormones
- Decreases pain
- Relaxes your muscles
- Prevents heart disease

Mental Health Benefits:

- Adds joy and zest to life
- Eases anxiety and fear
- Relieves stress
- Improves mood
- Enhances resilience

Social Benefits:

- Strengthens relationships
- Attracts others
- Enhances teamwork
- Helps defuse conflict
- Promotes group bonding

Laughter and humor help you stay emotionally healthy.

Laughter makes you feel good. And the good feeling that you get when you laugh remains with you even after the laughter subsides. Humor helps you keep a positive, optimistic outlook through difficult situations, disappointments, and loss.

The Link Between Laughter and Mental Health

- Laughter dissolves distressing emotions. You can't feel anxious, angry, or sad when you're laughing.
- Laughter helps you relax and recharge. It reduces stress and increases energy, enabling you to stay focused and accomplish more.
- Humor shifts perspective, allowing you to see situations in a more realistic, less threatening light. A humorous perspective creates psychological distance, which can help you avoid feeling overwhelmed.

More than just a respite from sadness and pain, laughter gives you the courage and strength to find new sources of meaning and hope. Even in the most difficult of times, a laugh—or even simply a smile—can go a long way toward making you feel better. And laughter really is contagious—just hearing laughter primes your brain and readies you to smile and join in on the fun.

The Social Benefits of Humor and Laughter

Humor and playful communication strengthen our relationships by triggering positive feelings and fostering emotional connection. When we laugh with one another, a positive bond is created. This bond acts as a strong buffer against stress, disagreements, and disappointment.

Laughing with others is more powerful than laughing alone.

Shared laughter is one of the most effective tools for keeping relationships fresh and exciting. All emotional sharing builds strong and lasting relationship bonds, but sharing laughter and play adds joy, vitality, and resilience. And humor is a powerful and effective way to heal resentments, disagreements, and hurts. Laughter unites people during difficult times.

Using humor and laughter in relationships allows you to

- **Be more spontaneous.** Humor gets you out of your head and away from your troubles.
- **Let go of defensiveness.** Laughter helps you forget judgments, criticisms, and doubts.
- **Release inhibitions.** Your fear of holding back and holding on are set aside.
- **Express your true feelings.** Deeply felt emotions are allowed to rise to the surface.

Laughter and Relationships

Mutual laughter and play are an essential component of strong, healthy relationships. By making a conscious effort to incorporate more humor and play into your daily interactions, you can improve the quality of your love relationships—as well as your connections with coworkers, family members, and friends.

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