

Coping with College Series

Have You Laughed Today?

by Sandy M. Muraoka
Staff Counselor
Student Counseling Services

How many times have you laughed today? If you are like most people, you probably laughed more often and more easily when you were a child. As we grow older, we laugh less frequently, and our ability to see humor in things decreases. Research shows that we don't even smile very often. Why does this happen? As adults our many responsibilities and roles create stress and sometimes irritation. In our busy lives, sometimes we forget to laugh and enjoy the simple things.

Yet, it is important to include laughter in our daily lives. Not only is it good for your health, it also reduces stress, and a hearty belly laugh can even give your abdominal muscles a workout! Laughter and smiles are also contagious. Have you ever seen a laugh box? These were created with the idea that if someone hears laughter, before long she/he finds herself/himself joining the laughter. So remember to share your laughter with your friends and family.

Here are some tips to help bring laughter and smiles to your life. As you read through them, use those that you think might work for you. Create your own tips!

- Create a "laughter" notebook. Collect comics strips and stories that make you laugh. Keep them in this notebook and treat yourself to some chuckles between classes.
- Take some time to be silly. Surprise your roommates by buying bubble makers for all of you, and take 15 minutes to just blow bubbles at each other.
- Spend some time with children and observe what makes them laugh. Learn from them. Laugh with them.
- When you see someone walking down the Quad with a frown on their face, flash him/her your best smile. This can brighten someone's day as well as your own.
- Bookmark some pages on the Internet for yourself. Find a page on the net that you find amusing, and go back to it often. Many of the popular cartoons (such as Calvin & Hobbes, Garfield, etc.) are available on the Web.
- Browse the comedy section in bookstores. Most stores carry a variety of humorous books, from those written by comedians (such as Paul Reiser), to ones with funny quotes from children.
- Browse the humorous greeting card section. Buy silly or funny cards to send to friends or family.
- Decrease stress in situations by dreaming up alternative humorous responses. For example, if you get upset because your roommate plays loud music when you are trying to study and you usually yell at him/her to turn it down, try doing a wild, silly dance to the music before you ask him/her to turn it down. This will get you both laughing and will make the situation less tense, thus easier to talk about.
- Design funny gifts to give to your friends. Sometimes you can find inexpensive gag gifts at garage sales or at discount stores.

Keep this list handy when the semester gets too stressful and add things that make you laugh. Remember that being an "easy laugher" (as Seinfeld might say) can be helpful to both your psychological and physical health.