

Coping with College Series

It's a Laughing Matter

Kathy Glodz- Peer Counselor

The other day I came home from my night class completely exhausted. It had been such a long and stressful day, but it was nowhere near over. As I sat thinking about everything I had to do before I went to sleep, my friends came in my room and asked me if I wanted to watch *Billy Madison* with them. As I'm sure you all know, *Billy Madison* is one of the funniest movies ever made, so I was really tempted to take a break. Did I watch the movie? Of course not. I was way too stressed to put my homework aside for a brief moment of fun! Well, thinking it over later, I think I made a big mistake.

As we grow older, good laughs become few and far between. Did you know that adults laugh about 15 times a day, whereas children laugh approximately 400 times a day? Our busy schedules leave us little time to have fun! Throughout the years, stress has taken the place of laughter, and unfortunately has brought with it many harmful side effects. Children might know a secret that we've long forgotten—laughter truly is the best medicine!

When you take the time to laugh, you may be helping your body more than you know. Medical studies indicate that laughter increases levels of endorphins, the body's natural painkillers, and suppresses levels of epinephrine, the stress hormone. Research also tells us that laughter boosts immunity, stabilizes mood, rests the brain, enhances communication, inspires creativity, maintains hope, and raises morale. With all this positive information, we would be fools not to laugh.

Now that you know how important laughter is, here are some ways to utilize that knowledge on a daily basis. Be willing to laugh at yourself. Accept your mistakes as a learning experience and move on. Set aside time to have fun with your friends, even if only for a half hour. Read comics and jokes for a quick pick-me-up. Remember that smiles are contagious; smile at people around you and they will smile back. Most importantly, become aware of what puts you in a good mood and surround yourself with that as much as possible. There is no right and wrong answer when it comes to humor; what is funny to you may not amuse someone else. Well, with that said, I think I'm going to go watch *Billy Madison*.