

Make a decision to laugh daily

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We all know laughter is healing. We have read about people who have cured their bodies from cancers with humor, funny movies and positive thinking.

We also know that when we take life too seriously, we can get self-righteous, justify our anger and wreck our true relationship goals of compassion, love and harmony. And more often than not, we insult and assault our own bodies by increasing our stress, raising our blood pressure and heart rate, tensing our muscles, decreasing our oxygen and flooding our system with adrenalin. Not good.

Then why don't we make humor and laughing a daily habit?

Try this 'Seriousness in Life is Justified Quiz.' Simply mark each statement true or false, if it has applied to you anytime in the last month.

- I decided it was serious that I was right and a friend was wrong, frowned, and now wish I hadn't made such a big deal out of the situation.
- At work, I decided that a serious approach, complete with frown, was necessary in order to have my ideas considered valuable.
- I decided to be serious about a situation, rather than say, "it isn't life threatening," which in retrospect is a more accurate statement.

If you marked any statement true, and I confess, I did, laugh the next time you find yourself in a similar situation. Laugh a big belly laugh. Just expelling all that hot air can change our stress physiology. But even a quiet little chuckle and an upturned mouth can bring about a big change in outcome. When we change our countenance, our perceptions of the situation will also change. Letting go of seriousness, a value many of us think is adult, can actually free us to see more options and make more creative solutions to problems.

If we think laughing is only an automatic response, not a decision we make and can't be faked, just try it. Picture yourself in those situations you just used for examples in the 'Seriousness is Justified Quiz'. Now laugh, and keep laughing until it doesn't feel fake anymore. Notice how you emotionally and physically feel. Notice if you took in big gulps of air when you finished laughing. Do you feel more relaxed?

Laughing is a natural talent, much more valuable than most words and conversations. But if we've gotten too caught up with our own importance and seriousness, we may need to relearn it. If a day goes by and you haven't laughed, really hard, practice these suggestions. Notice they are decisions.

- Decide that after brushing your teeth every day you will laugh as you look in the mirror. Others in your family may start laughing, too. If you live alone, you can even experiment more! What a nice way to start a day. Notice if your “serious” situations become fewer.
- When faced with a challenging situation silently say, “Taking myself lightly, instead of seriously, is a gift of self-love.” Then notice the creative solutions that come your way.
- Laugh with your children, as they’re the best teachers of laughter. They don’t even need a reason to start laughing. Notice if you feel closer to them after a good laughter session.
- See funny movies rather than serious ones. Notice the difference in your conversations, your moods. Ask your companions if they notice a difference.
- Play more board games with your family or friends. The goal is not to win, but to laugh.

When it comes right down to it, what is really serious?