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A sense of humor is what keeps us humans going

by Mark Pavilons

?Laughter is the closest distance between two people.? ??ictor Borge

Life is funny, in every sense of the word.

My trusty lexicon defines funny as ?causing light mirth and laughter ... amusing ... seeking or intended to amuse ...?

It can also mean something different, peculiar, perplexing even suspicious or eccentric.

While most of us believe humans are the only ones with a funny bone, some of our animal brethren share our joy. Apes, rats, dolphins are known to share a good rib-tickler.

While they may not be able to grasp the total nuances of a good knock-knock joke, they can experience laughter. And that, my friends, is what makes everything on this planet so very special.

Can you imagine a world without laughter? Heck, I?laugh 10-15 times per day, and sometimes at myself. My family members often catch me chuckling under my breath.

Laughter in humans is inherent, and children as young as 15 weeks express themselves this way.

Really, what's funny at 15 weeks? Fact is, babies laugh before they can speak.?Cool, eh?

Some scientists argue there are some very good reasons why we smile and laugh. It's a mechanism that everyone on the planet recognizes, regardless of language or culture. Laughter tickles many parts of our brains, from the prefrontal cortex and hypothalamus to the limbic system.

Most of us laugh to express joy and this feel-good mechanism also releases tension and even ?psychic energy.? Laughter is also used as a therapeutic tool.

Mark Twain said the human race's one really effective weapon is laughter.

Laughter, according to talk show host Stephen Colbert, is medicine. ?It's an entire regime of antibiotics and steroids. Laughter brings the swelling down on our national psyche and then applies an antibiotic cream.?

And there's the rub. Was humour invented, or is it part of what we are as a species??What creature could survive the harsh, cruel world if it were not for flippancy, jocularity, whimsy and playfulness? We'd surely go insane.

Yet it literally took us thousands of years to embrace humor. It wasn't used the same way we use it today until the 18th century. Previously, few scholars, writers or philosophers gave it much thought. Sure, Shakespeare played around with comedy, but his tales were far from humorous. Plato even said ?the ridiculous is a certain kind of evil ...?

Of course, there was little to laugh about in Medieval Europe and the Puritans surely didn't express themselves thusly.

For such an intrinsic and necessary part of human nature, I?find it funny (pun intended)?that the brains of our forefathers neglected tomfoolery.

From an early age, I recognized the power of levity. The value of a well-placed wisecrack is immeasurable. Apparently, studies have shown that the vast majority of men and women value a sense of humour in their partners.

So, through my school years, I?was, more often than not, the class jester, promoting amusement at every chance. Sure, it landed me in the principal's office from time to time, but it was well worth it.

As complicated as humans are, I?have always found humour to be a rather simple thing. It levels the playing fields, all the time. It has the ability to bring people together ? even a room filled with strangers.

Humour has to be spontaneous, reflect life, and be hard-hitting at times. What's wrong with making you laugh and think at the same time?

To me, humour is like a shovel, digging my way out of a dark and dreary hole. It doesn't really matter how I?ended up in this void, but jocularity is often my ladder, the only way I can climb out.

When one is stricken with a life-altering ailment or disease, humour becomes even more important. During my time so far ?coping with cancer,??I?must say that a few wisecracks have saved me from misery. I've lived my entire life with playfulness in my heart, why give it up now?

I've even welcomed the odd one-liner from my family members, remarking on my chemo-induced hairstyle. If clowning around could lead to a cure, I'd be all set.

I will continue to fight the dark shadows with my balloon sword and well-placed jabs.

Studies have also shown that keeping those funny bones clanging can improve one's health.

In my cancer journey, I will admit I've been dragged down more often that I should have permitted myself to be. My shiny armor of laughter has been dented and tarnished, but I will not admit defeat.

From relieving stress to boosting creativity and productivity, laughter is the key. It's been said that a sense of humor is how we experience and navigate life's challenges.

I don't know if a positive outlook and frequent guffaws will improve my immune system.What I believe is humor is a great tool to create social bonds, workplace relationships and even enhance our family dynamic. Most of my family members think I'm nuts and the smirks begin before the strange words even leave my lips. I?am glad they have all developed their own, unique senses of humour. It's a gift.

Mix it with a dash of sarcasm, facetiousness and mockery, and you've got it made!?Laughter heals all wounds, and that's one thing that everybody shares. No matter what you're going through, it makes you forget about your problems. I think the world should keep laughing.? ? Kevin Hart