

Laughter: A Medicine With No Expiry Date

'Laugh and the world laughs with you' goes the axiom. Laughter like any other positive emotion is a potent healing force. A hearty laugh has therapeutic value. Laughter is as good as a workout, for it speeds up the heart rate, raises blood pressure, accelerates breathing, increases oxygen consumption, gives the muscles of the face and stomach a workout and relaxes the muscles not involved in laughing. It increases immunity level and helps in sounder sleep.

The most wasted of all days is one without laughter.

- E.E. Cummings

Human beings are uniquely endowed with capacity to explicitly express their feelings—pleasure and pain, happiness and sorrow, anxiety and despair, excitement and calmness. An involuntary, spontaneous expression of amusement is generally a laugh, though some reserved by nature exhibit a smile and yet a few remain quiescent in a similar state. The variety of the manifestations of joy and happiness reflect on the person's countenance.

Laugh

Happiness being the ultimate purpose of life with the exception of few seers and mystics, who contemplate divine contentment and bliss, laugh and smile assume great importance for each individual as he voyages through the harsh reality of the world, alone.

'Laugh and the world laughs with you' goes the axiom. An unadulterated hearty laugh is like a perfume that permeates the environment around. It is beyond language. It is the universal body language of love and acceptance. It is not only the shortest distance between two people, it also bonds them. It is a startling catalyst that adds colour and texture to life. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar advises, "There is some area deep in you that is

left untouched. Hold on to what is untouched. Then you will be able to keep laughing."

Each letter of the word 'laugh' is symbolic, signifying:

L – Love for all,

A – Amusement,

U – Unity,

G – Gaiety, and

H – Harmony.

Laughter like any other positive emotion is a potent healing force. A hearty laugh has therapeutic value, advocate physicians. It has also been scientifically proved that laughter is the best medicine for all ailments with no side effects. It is the medicine that has no expiry date. It increases immunity levels, flexibility of thought and creativity. To Charlie Chaplin, "Laughter is the tonic, the relief, the surcease of pain."

The clinical research of Dr. Walsh proved that hearty laughter stimulates internal organs, 'by making them work better through the increase of circulation that follows the vibrating massage that accompanies laughter, and heightens resistive vitality against disease'. Laughter, scientists have discovered, is as good as a workout, for it speeds up the heart rate, raises blood pressure, accelerates breathing, increases oxygen consumption, gives the muscles of the face and stomach a workout and relaxes the muscles not involved in laughing. It increases immunity level and helps in sounder sleep.

Research has also proved that the salivary immunoglobulin A (sIgA) concentrates go up in



— CA. Geeta Das

(The author is a member of the Institute. She can be reached at dasgeeta@rediffmail.com)

people who laugh a lot. During laugh, there is a release of "good chemicals" including endorphin, the feel good hormone. The secretions provide protection against certain viruses. Doctors all over the world therefore advise patients to laugh every day to set the mind free and to get rid of overwhelming tensions. Scientists have also proved that laughter increases creativity and flexibility of thought.

Eminent authors like Henri Bergson in "Laughter" and Strickland Gillilan in "A sample case of Humour" have defined and classified laughter as the laugh is on you or the laugh is on me. In this context it is relevant to quote Shirley Maclaine, "The person who knows how to laugh at himself will never cease to be amused."

Dr. Madan Kataria, a physician and founder-president of the Laughter Club International started the movement with five members on March 13, 1995. Its popularity and growth has been phenomenal. Presently there are 1,300

It may not solve all problems, but it would certainly help to look at them differently. It also helps to remain detached and not take things personally. A genuine laugh means an open spirit to share joys with others.

clubs in India and 700 abroad, including USA, Europe, and the far east. And now the World Laughter Day is celebrated on the first Sunday of May every year. Although the idea started from a simple theory, research has shown conclusive evidence that a laugh is good in all circumstances. It is thus, advisable to laugh even for no reason.

A good, real, unrestrained, hearty laugh is a sort of glorified internal message, performed rapidly and automatically. It manipulates and revitalises corners and unexplored crannies

of the system that are unresponsive to most other exercise methods. It may not solve all problems, but it would certainly help to look at them differently. It also helps to remain detached and not take things personally. A genuine laugh means an open spirit to share joys with others.

Smile

Smile is a reaction of being pleased and satisfied when something pleasant or pleasurable happens. It is an involuntary reflection of happiness, a small simple thing that costs nothing. According to Mahatma Gandhi, "You are not fully blessed until you wear a smile on your face." Smile begets a smile relegating stress, anxiety, despair and creating a pleasant feelings. Smile opens up new horizons and builds relationships. It also acts as an apology when a mistake or mischief is committed.

Smile symbolises:

- S – security,
- M – message,
- I – inner strength,
- L – long lasting, and
- E – enjoyment.

A newborn within a few days starts smiling on seeing a recognisable face, a toy and anything new. A child does not have much expectation. He smiles and laughs 300-400 times a day, unlike adults, where the number comes down drastically. In this context Mother Teresa was of the view, "Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing."

Humour

It is well known that food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless, clothes for the unclad and relief from pain for the diseased are sources of pleasure. The need escalates and varies for each one as per his perception. The stressed strive for calmness and the deprived for love. People, in general tend to enjoy either

with nature, in silence, listening to music, wit, satire or joke. They, by nature are on an eternal quest for new ways to attain joy and humour is a powerful mode. "Humour" as Sri Aurobindo puts it "is the salt of existence." It can help to emphasise a point, to dispel the gloom, to ridicule the self important, to lighten the atmosphere or simply to gladden the heart and tickle the funny bone.

Though Indians are blamed for lack of sense of humour, history of ancient India is replete with role of the vidushak, the court jester in the king's darbar. They were specially employed to create mirth amidst mundane administration. The wit and cynicism of Birbal in emperor Akbar's court, Tenali Rama, in the court of Krishnadevaraya of the medieval Vijaynagar empire and the bearded Mullah Naseeruddin are still remembered and enjoyed by many.

There is poignancy in humour. It affirms laughs, it is an exuberant 'yes' in the face of all that is dark and miserable. It also alleviates stress. In a study of 56 undergraduates by Dr Rod A. Martin and Herbert M. Lefcourt, of the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada, four tests were designed to gauge their ability to enjoy humour

in different circumstances. Three out of four tests showed that those who valued humour the most were also most capable of coping with tensions and severe personal problems. True it is, 'humour has the ability to see three sides of the same coin'.

Conclusion

'He who laughs lasts! Nobody ever died of laughter' are the facts of life. "Take time to laugh. It is the music of the soul" says a prayer. It is rewarding and fulfilling. Thus health, happiness and peace could easily be achieved through laughter.

The Chartered Accountants as account wizards would certainly appreciate and choose the better investment option: 'laugh' or 'frown' as the former with a small investment, utilising only 16 muscles assures unexpected gain whereas the expected return against bigger outlay for the latter, requiring 34 muscle movements is only negative re-action.

Friedrich Nietzsche's observation "Perhaps I know best why it is man alone who laughs; he alone suffers so deeply that he had to invent laughter" is relevant. Indeed laughter is a blessing! ☐

Non-Receipt of Journal

This is for the attention of Members/ Subscribers of the Journal who fail to receive 'The Chartered Accountant' journal despatched to them either due to unannounced change of address or postal problems.

The membership numbers of the members/ Subscribers numbers of the Subscribers whose journals have been returned undelivered are hosted on the website of the Institute at the link [http://](http://www.icai.org/icairoot/announcements/announ890.pdf)

www.icai.org/icairoot/announcements/announ890.pdf for the information of Members/Subscribers.

Please inform the respective regions immediately after you change the address so that we can subsequently update our mailing list and ensure regular and timely delivery of journals to you. Other queries and complaints in this regard can also be sent to journal@icai.org or call at 0120-3054847.