

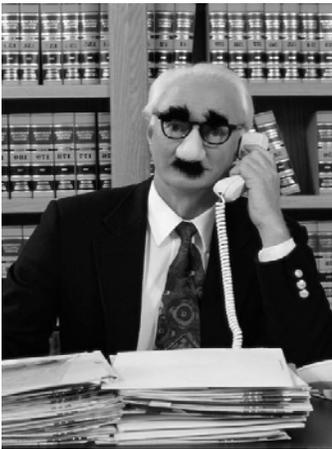


FACULTY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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Laughing in the Face of Change: How Resilient Professionals Cope

A willingness to poke fun at ourselves can ease tension in the workplace.



Change in the workplace can stir up anxiety, sadness, a sense of loss, frustration, anger and fear. Even small changes can challenge our sense of competence and test our ability to cope.

“Change makes us confront our fear of exposure,” says motivational humorist Mark Gorkin, *The Stress Doc™*. “It can be especially difficult for people who function at a high level and who need to have a sense of control. There’s usually a learning curve involved, and because we place such high demands on ourselves, we can feel uncomfortable or inadequate during that adjustment period.”

Gorkin’s book, *Practice Safe Stress: Healing and Laughing In the Face of Stress, Burnout and Depression* and his related workshops focus on techniques for creatively managing stress in times of change.

“One of the things I encourage people to do when they are facing stress related to change is to learn to poke fun and laugh at themselves,” Gorkin says. “When we can do that kind of self-effacing humor, it’s a

sign of self acceptance. It’s also a show of courage. It lets others know we’re OK with not being perfect. Those awkward moments

Productions. “It demonstrates to us that even in the midst of the unknown, we can still control our response to it. Being able to



can then be turned into stories we share with the group that’s going through the same experience. When you start laughing together at the absurdity of a situation, it breaks the tension and helps release pent-up anxiety.”

A flexible funny bone is a part of every resilient professional’s anatomy. “The ability to laugh in the face of change helps us accomplish several things,” says motivator and humorist Karyn Ruth White, owner of Denver-based Laugh and Learn

find the humor in a fearful or stressful situation allows us to maintain some perspective on that situation and our role in it.”

“The gift of perspective opens the door of possibility,” White continues. “If I can see the humor in something, I can see that there are several ways to look at the same situation. Once I know that, I can then objectively choose how I wish to see it. Being aware that we have a choice of response

Continued on page 2

Laughter as a Coping Strategy

Continued from page 1

gives us a sense of power and control in a situation where it is easy to feel powerless.”

White, co-author of *Your Seventh Sense, How To Think Like a Comedian*, says she

wishes more people saw humor as a powerful sanity-management tool rather than thinking of it as a frivolous, counter-productive activity. “I wish as humans, we made laughter a priority in our lives.

Laughter is tonic for the soul and I see a lot of thirsty people out there.”

Resources:

Mark Gorkin, The Stress Doc™
www.stressdoc.com

Karyn Ruth White, Laugh and Learn Productions, www.karynruthwhite.com

In order to stay centered, seek out people and things that make you laugh.



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How to Create Humor in Times of Change

Motivator and humorist Karyn Ruth White offers these tips for navigating and celebrating through times of change.

Do a happiness check-up

Laughter is indeed the best medicine. A healthy, happy soul is a moment-to-moment investment. Check in with yourself every day. Ask yourself: How am I doing? How am I feeling? What do I need? Then look for ways to provide that for yourself.

Stay centered

I have clients who say that they know they are losing their center when they

have stopped laughing. To stay centered, seek out people and things that make you laugh. Build a full humor library that consists of favorite movies, sit-coms, comedians and books. Pull from it often to fill your spirit and regenerate for the next challenge ahead. Unless you are a buoyant, centered spirit, you will be of no help to others. Heal thyself first and keep laughter at the top of your personal prescription pad.

Choose your response

When faced with a potentially stressful

situation, quickly ask yourself these five questions:

“Is there anything I can find to laugh about right now? How important will this be in an hour? Do I want to let this ruin my day? What is my most positive response? Would this be funny, if it were happening to somebody else?”

Asking these questions creates a buffer zone of time in which you can choose your response, rather than reacting instantly and creating results you may regret.

Exploring the Link Between Heart Disease and Depression

“Recent findings have shown an increased risk of cardiovascular events in patients with depression including stroke and myocardial infarction,” says cardiac electrophysiologist Francisco Cardona, M.D. at Northside Hospital & Tampa Bay Heart Institute.

“Depression is a powerful predictor of the future

development of coronary disease in healthy people,” reports cardiologist Richard A. Stein, M.D., in *Outliving Heart Disease: The 10 New Rules for Prevention and Treatment* (Newmarket Press, New York, 2006). The book includes recent research on heart disease and the mind-body connection, and offers charts and checklists for

assessing your own heart disease risk. It also discusses how depression, anxiety and stress impact the heart, and what actions you can take to mitigate their effects.

Resources:

American Heart Association
www.americanheart.org
Cleveland Clinic Heart and Vascular Institute
www.clevelandclinic.org/heartcenter