

Laugh and the Work World Laughs With You

Today's work environments are rife with moody bosses and co-workers, repetitive tasks and unpredictable market pressures. Stress abounds. Managers often tell me they can't afford the time or cost for humor workshops; how can they afford not to address workplace stress? We know clinically that laughter and play have medicinal qualities, offering physical, psychological and physiological benefits as well. In the workplace, humor and fun can increase productivity, encourage creativity, enhance team building, and thus improve esprit de corps. While we may not be able to control everything that happens to us in our jobs and work environments, we do have control over how we choose to react. I coach others how to create an environment which is safe and friendly, and use humor to help maintain a healthy balance between the pressure and seriousness which comes from high stakes jobs and a competitive marketplace. Remember that humor starts from within. Being able to laugh at your own foibles goes a long way toward creating a healthy work climate in which to flourish. The following are activities and strategies for you as individuals, workgroups and managers. Be creative and use these ideas to stimulate your own remedies to workplace stress.

- Adorn your work area with cartoons, headlines or funny photos which bring a smile to your face and visiting co-workers'. Whether you're surrounded by your favorite Pez dispensers childhood, or wry cartoons that speak to your tastes, let your work area comfort and humor you while taking some of the edge off the standard office decor.
- Tap a co-worker to be your humor-partner. Bring a daily joke to share. Commiserate about funny workplace events. Keep each other buoyed with good cheer. When the chips are down your humor partner can chip away at your depression, and vice versa.
- Don't think cubicles limit your humor options. I've seen shower curtains, umbrellas and other devices used effectively to set a light or semi-serious tone. For some, creativity flourishes behind their cubicle's shower curtain. People tampering with your work area? Don't get angry...protect it with yellow "Crime Scene" tape!
- Subscribe to a humor website to be e-mailed a free daily or weekly humorous story, joke and anecdote.

Are You Laughin' At Me? One manager, known for his moodiness, acknowledged it with a "Mood-O-Meter" outside his door. Both he and his employees took turns forecasting his mood: from fire-breathing to variable clouds to periodic eruptions...proceed at your own risk. Don't underestimate the power of self-effacing humor for making yourself more accessible and liked.

Room for Laughter. Some companies designate a room, work area or corner of their office as a romper room, where frolicking and silliness is allowed. Whether yours has a punching bag, games, a dartboard or foosball, it's a room for letting off steam and taking a break from the grind.

Whine Not. Everyone loathes whiners yet we all need to blow off steam periodically. One group of creative trainers and their manager decreed Thursdays to be effective whining days. They self-policed themselves the rest of the week, making sure not to whine. Yet even their Thursday gripes had a departmental sanction and somehow seemed healthier. After all, they belly ached together. A ripple effect actually improved the morale of departments adjacent to theirs!

Meting Out Humor. Many professionals approach meetings with trepidation. A dash of humor can make a difference. For regular meetings earmark one or two minutes each meeting for a humorous interlude. In one workgroup a "humor hand" rotates from meeting to meeting. Employees take turns setting a lighter tone to the meeting, insuring everybody is engaged. An anecdote, verbal or physical activity focuses the group on the task at hand and brings colleagues together in a spirit of fun.

When not to use Humor. Not all humor is good humor. Humor that hurts, ostracizes or is cruel will have a detrimental effect on others and you. Strive for humor that is inclusive, creative and captures our human essence. By now you know that sexist, racist, ageist jokes and crude humor are not only inappropriate, but can lead to sanctions, termination or even lawsuits. Be sensitive when telling jokes involving terminations, RIFs and personal tragedies. Their hurt can linger long after the fact. . When in doubt...leave it out! Appropriate humor can make hard tasks easier, collaborations fun and certainly make workdays go faster. Laugh, and the work world laughs with you!

About the Author

Since the age of 11 when he went door-to-door selling Used Jokes, motivational humorist Craig Harrison has been connecting with strangers through laughter. As a professional speaker who founded [Expressions of Excellence!™](http://www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com), Craig helps clients, prospects, and other professionals utilize humor to sell and serve better. Visit www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com for more resources, call (510) 547-0664 or e-mail humor@craigspeaks.com to book your next humor program.

Source: <http://www.suggestarticle.com>