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HUMOUR IN MANAGING VOLUNTEERS

L'HUMOUR DANS LA GESTION  
DES BENEVOLES

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## EDITORIAL

It has long been said that laughter is the best medicine. In fact, studies have shown that laughter has a positive effect on our bodies by releasing endorphins that help create a feeling of well being. In choosing a topic for the summer issue of the journal, we decided upon something light, yet of great import - the use of humour in our daily work as managers of volunteers. We hope that it will bring a smile to your face.

In our feature article, Mireille Roy shows us how we can meet the constant changes and challenges of the workplace by using humour as a tool to reduce stress, encourage problem solving, prevent burnout and promote good health. In 'Big Hearts Gentle Clowning' Judy Carscadden explains the role of care clowns while Catherine Fenwick tells us why we should love and laugh, at home and at work.

Making presentations can be a daunting experience and Judy Suke shares her ideas on using humour for positive effects when preparing and making presentations.

Imagine feeling good most of the time! Dianne Marston, in her persona of Loonie the Toonie Clown, gives workshops on how to feel good about oneself. Her article, Feeling Good Workshops, explores this topic more fully. Erin Williams gives us an interesting profile of Insight Theatre in Ottawa that highlights the theatre troupe's ability to use humour with young people when exploring difficult or hurtful situations.

Peer expert, Barb Tiffin shares her ideas on how humor can reduce workplace stress while our book reviewer, Kathryn Andrews-Clay profiles the book "Healing with Humour- A Laughter First Aid Kit".

We hope that, in addition to the odd chuckle or smile, the articles in this issue provide you with some insight and practical ideas on lightening up your workplace.

Sheila Jenkins  
Editorial Member

## PLEASURE AND WORK - NOT AN EASY TASK

by Mireille Roy

The only constant is change. How we react to change is not easy and as professionals managing volunteer resources we face changes every single day. Administrators of volunteer programs face many challenges in running their programs given the limited amount of time to devote to this function. When we begin to look at future challenges it is easy to be overwhelmed and a bit stressed. The first step towards change is to be aware of our thoughts and the second is to accept responsibility for the desired change.

I am a strong believer that we can meet these changes and challenges with the help of humour and by being ourselves, bringing our own personality to the job so that we can create a climate of fun and enthusiasm. This will allow us to know what people think and why and thus allow us to motivate them. Humour can be used as a tool to reduce stress, encourage problem solving, prevent burnout and promote good health. Dedication, determination and a certain amount of faith will allow us to enjoy the ride.

According to a recent Gallup poll, more than a million Canadians trudge off to jobs that they rate as totally uninteresting. About 40 percent of us consider our work fairly interesting. Of the 1,000 employees queried in the survey only 51 % would call their livelihood very interesting. These same people retire seeking meaningful activities, such as volunteering.

During recruitment, promote volunteering as FUN. Follow a comprehensive approach to involving people in your volunteer programs thereby fostering them to be more productive and healthy in a creative environment. You therefore take on the responsibility to change things and use this approach as a recruitment tool. If you seek a different route, you may find that change is nothing to fear. Humour can create an environment that causes volunteers to look forward to volunteering. They can still be productive and have FUN. Portray through your image, advertising, customer service, style of communication and your treatment of staff and volunteers that you are having FUN at your job.

Leaders set the tone for an entire company through their actions and attitude. As the leader managing the volunteer resources, encouraging good humor, creativity and sometimes laughing at yourself encourages volunteers and staff to have fun doing what they do. Permit them to admit mistakes without fear of recrimination. Look for opportunities to blend fun and humour into every activity. Do not treat humour as something you turn on or off. The more integrated the humour becomes, the more successful you will be at achieving a productive balance between work and play.

*A leader without a sense of humor is like a lawn mower at the cemetery - they have lots of people under them, but nobody is paying them any attention - Bob Ross (taken from the book 'You Can't Be Serious').*

Humour is one of the best 'on the spot' stress releases. It is virtually impossible to laugh and feel bad at the same time.

What is humour? Think of the last time that you found something funny. Where humour happens (or does not) is in the body. There is nothing intellectual about a good laugh.

Humour is the missing link in the chain of command and it must be applied consistently. To put humour into our workplaces means that we have to put it back into our personal lives.

Humour gives us control over our emotions, elevates us above a crisis, restores the oxygen in a tense situation and changes our perspective.

The wonderful thing about adding humour to life is that gestures will generate enormous payoffs. Humour is contagious. It is easy to set a domino effect with a simple touch of humour here or a sprinkle of laughter there.

Music comedian Victor Borge noted that a smile is the shortest distance between two people.

Look for simple ways to add humour. Be sincere, be yourself.

Take a humour break because play is essential for life. If you find it difficult to relax or take a humour break for fear that you will fall behind in your work or simply cannot afford the time, remind yourself the opposite is true. The reality is that at those times when you are busiest and most stressed out, you can not afford not to take a break. Do not feel you have to manage your stress alone. Talking and laughing with someone else is an extremely effective de-stressor.

"Humourize" your office environment.

- ♦ Create a humour bulletin, display funny notes, play fun music in the office, add colour and encourage laughter.
- ♦ Be creative in recruiting volunteers by sending a message that volunteering is enjoyable, provides an opportunity to make new friends, learn new skills and have fun doing so.
- ♦ Orientation to your organization should be fun. Use motivational or inspirational videos that talk about values and attitudes.
- ♦ Write a humorous newsletter to introduce the new activities, changes, new staff and new volunteers. Use cartoons and poems.
- ♦ Use funny cards for recognition, to say thank you to staff and volunteers. Discover your FUNNY BONE and use it.

Communicating information is the perfect opportunity to add heavy doses of humour so that volunteers are motivated to get involved.

Be aware if you are too tired to laugh, too perfect to laugh or find that your laughing embarrasses you. Are you too old to have fun, too professional to laugh, maybe too cool to laugh, or even worse have no time to laugh? Then, and only then, should you seek professional help.

People react in different ways. Make sure that humour is appropriate. Pay attention to making humour safe. Racist, sexist, ethnic, political and any discriminatory jokes are off limits. Be aware of cultural diversity. What a person finds funny says a lot about that person, their individual beliefs, background, perceptions and life. When a person does not laugh it is just as revealing.

Learn to let go. Take your job seriously and yourself lightly. You will adapt to change, embrace change and enjoy it. Change can lead to something better in your present environment.

Employees and volunteers are becoming much better educated and informed. Our old ways of doing business are falling away and being replaced by recognition that the contribution itself is what matters. You can contribute and have fun at the same time. We are learning that we do not need to do serious things seriously. Work can be playful and play can be extremely productive. If you look for humour, it will find you.

Your challenge is to create a lifestyle that does not put off until tomorrow what can be improved today. Use humour and praise. Celebrate!

"When you find yourself at the end of your rope - tie a knot in it, hang on and swing". Leo Buscaglia.

Works Consulted:

Spencer Johnson, MD, *Who Moved My Cheese*. Putnam Publishers  
Marie Julie Gagnon, *'Le Rire, un excellent sport'*, Psycho Vitalité, Québec Mai 2003

Stephen Lally, *"Stress"*, The Washington Post, August 28, 1991

Partners in Renewal Inc. .com/humor.htm

Jeannine Ouellette. *Health begins in the Mind. Change your thoughts, change your health.* < <http://www.eksento.com/Publications/Health>>

*Mireille Roy is the Corporate Manager-Gestionnaire corporative Ressources bénévoles/Volunteer Resources at Service de santé SCO Health Service in Ottawa. She teaches at the French local college, leads workshops in the Management of Volunteer Resources and especially enjoys doing humour workshops. Mireille has been very active in CAVR for many years.*

## BIG HEARTS GENTLE CLOWNING

by Judy Carscadden

Big shoes, big red noses and big hearts! Of course not all clowns have big shoes or big red noses but they do all have big hearts, especially if they are care clowns.

Clowns have been around forever, recorded as early as 2270 B.C. There have probably been care clowns since then. A definition of a care clown is "a clown who meets the needs of individuals with specific physiological, psychological, spiritual or social needs"<sup>1</sup>. More recently, the 20th century circus clowns visited local children's hospitals whenever the circus came to town. The Shrine clowns of the Masonic Order have been visiting children's hospitals for over a century. However, it was not until the early 1980's that there were actual in-house clown programs. These consist of therapeutic clowns (paid and working with the medical staff) and care clowns (unpaid and usually working under the Volunteer or Recreation Department).

Anywhere there is stress can benefit from a care clown's presence. There are many other places besides hospitals where you will find care clowns: nursing homes; shelters; prisons; rehabilitation and hospice centres. Anywhere there is stress can use a care clown's presence. Pain, worries, regrets and boredom are just a few of the resident's daily companions. The clown's job is to get people out of their heads and into their hearts, offering the experience of the moment. Play is one of the things that make us fully present and totally absorbed. The play of the care clown is soft and inviting, giving permission to play by connecting to the child that still resides in all of us. The clown's wardrobe and face may be funny but it is their sense of play that makes them fun.

The base of all clowning is spontaneity. This is essential in care clowning, as there is no way of predicting what the clown will encounter. The care clown's setting is one big improv stage where there is spontaneous interacting and adjustment of routines to meet the circumstances in that particular room. The clown is vulnerable and is open to all people and all possibilities. By listening and acting according to the environment and the audience, the focus is on the person to person connection which can be funny, sweet, gentle, kind, patient or whatever is needed at that moment. The care clown is like a living teddy bear - never asking for anything and giving unconditional love. The clown shares strength by merely directing attention to the person. It is not a show. It is having a relationship, even for a few moments together. Since the clown is an anonymous being (not part of the staff, family or social network) the audience experiences a freedom to say or do what might otherwise be unthinkable in

certain circumstances or to other people. A care clown is magic that can lighten very heavy situations, bringing humour into the hurts of the world and putting their situation into perspective.

If an organization is considering having care clowning as part of their program, it will want to make sure that the clown(s) receives proper training. Clowning is an art form. It is not just putting on makeup, mismatched clothes and acting silly. There are numerous places that offer clown courses. Contacting a clown alley, visiting a clown organization's web site or contacting a university can direct one to courses. Many of the existing clown programs offer their own courses for care clowns. In addition to teaching about care clowning, courses should include the need to know and respect the facility's protocols. There are numerous books and special workshops that pertain to this gentle art and [www.caringclowns.org](http://www.caringclowns.org) is a website that is dedicated to care clowning.

Not everyone is cut out to be a clown and not all clowns can be care clowns. It takes a special kind of person. The care clown needs a well-developed clown character as well as personal characteristics of kindness, sensitivity, gentleness, compassion, respect and courage. Knowing clown skills helps but it is also knowing yourself and having the courage to open your heart and be vulnerable that makes one a genuine care clown.

1 An adaptation of the definition given by Richard Snowberg "*The Caring Clowns: How Humor, Smiles and Laughter Overcome Pain, Suffering and Loneliness*" 1992

*Judy Carscadden is a care clown who lives in London, Ontario, where she has developed two care clown troupes. She is currently developing a curriculum for teaching care clowning. She is president of the Clown Alley of London and clowns for many community charities. She worked 28 years in mental health as a Head Nurse before retiring in 1991 and that is when she discovered clowning!*

### ***Split your sides and heal yourself?***

Conclusive studies on the therapeutic qualities of laughter have led to the creation of laughter rooms in hospitals, where patients can watch comedies. Though it cannot replace a cure, laughter therapy actually helps patients recover.

## **LOVE AND LAUGHTER ... AT HOME AND AT WORK**

by Catherine Fenwick

A healthy satisfying life includes meaningful purposeful work, being surrounded by loving caring people and remaining open to the possibility of joy and laughter. Most of our time is spent interacting with other people, colleagues at work, friends and family. It is important that we have joy in our lives and find ways to enjoy being together.

Joy and enthusiasm are symptoms of mental, emotional, spiritual and organizational well being. Healthy humour helps to reduce stress, create support networks, increase creative energy, build morale and produce healing chemicals in our body. A joyful attitude helps us strengthen our inner resources and cope more effectively with things we cannot change. Life does not cease to be serious when we are laughing, indeed, it is during our most trying times that laughter can be most beneficial.

A healthy sense of humour has long been recognized as an indicator of mental health and maturity. Joy and laughter build bridges of trust and help us to maintain a sense of hopefulness. This helps to create positive connections with others, alleviate fear and protect us against personal vulnerability. The physical benefits include relaxation, better blood circulation and oxygenation and production of beneficial body chemicals such as endorphins.

Healthy laughter helps us to feel better and get along with others. When we enjoy being together, our communications are more likely to have positive outcomes. When we enjoy each other we become more attentive listeners, increase cooperative interaction and build trusting relationships. We should not confuse professionalism with seriousness. A sense of humour is a valuable component of self-care and care of each other. We can maintain professional behaviour and still find lots of opportunities to share joy and laughter.

Humour skills, like any other skills, can be learned and improved. As with everything else we learn, our humour skills become better with practice. Most of us would benefit from laughing more than we do. People under great strain often find things to laugh about. Love and laughter were significant components of my recovery and healing after a cancer diagnosis in 1990. During that time I started a Laughter First Aid Kit, which I now share with people when I think they need a lift. This kit includes humorous videos, tapes, books, cartoons and scrapbooks. The scrapbooks are a collection of joyous pictures, stories, cards, jokes and cartoons. Creating these scrapbooks is therapeutic and they make wonderful gifts.

Humour that heals is compassionate; it brings people closer together and is mutually supportive. For me healthy humour is more about sharing personal stories than it is about telling jokes. In order to share joy, we first need to experience joy. When we focus on the positive things that are around us, we notice beauty, experience joy, become receptive to the possibility of laughter and feel energized. The best humour is both spontaneous and meaningful in the moment.

The ability to laugh, play and enjoy life are good indicators of a healthy sense of humour. Children are naturals at this but most adults have lost much of their ability to play. What happens to us in the process of growing up? Where does our laughter go? As we grow older we are expected to act our age, whatever that means. We take on responsibilities, go to school, get a job and get sick - not necessarily in that order. We suffer losses, big and small. There are many reasons why we lose our laughter.

To bring more joy into your life start by making a list of the things that make you laugh. Who are your favourite comedians, clowns or funny people? If you have not laughed in a long time, think about the things that brought you joy in the past, then go out and do more of those things. Your home life probably offers an endless supply of humorous material. Writers such as Irma Bombeck, Bill Cosby and Dave Barry are astute observers of the funny side of life. Television, movies, books and songs provide an abundance of laughable material. Check out the comedy section of your local video store or library.

Write a laughter contract with yourself, "I will do one thing each day to bring more joy and laughter into my life. Today I will \_\_\_\_\_." Take ten to fifteen minutes, particularly during the most stressful parts of your day, to read the funnies, play a game or share something wonderful with someone.

Be a clown, liberate your funny bone and release your playful inner child. Become more childlike (not childish - there is a difference). Spend time with children and let them teach you about healthy laughter and play. We will be healthier and happier if we hang on to our sense of humour and have some fun every day. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (Proverbs 17:22).

I believe that meaningful work, caring people, beauty, joy and laughter are among the most important things in life. They help us to keep things in perspective and to face each day with renewed hope. Look for balance in life, strive for excellence (not perfection), take time to stop and smell the roses and make time for family and friends. Concentrate on taking care of yourself and taking care of each other. Give yourself rewards for small successes, pay attention to all the wonderful things you do and try not to worry so much about what cannot be done. Tap into your humour attitude, build healthy relationships, focus on the things that really matter, be the best that you can be

and fill your life with beauty and joy. All of these things help us to keep love and laughter alive... at home and at work.

*Catherine Fenwick, educator and author (Love and laughter: A Healing Journey), develops and presents workshops on how to get more healthy humour into your life and your work. [www.healingwithhumour.com](http://www.healingwithhumour.com)*

## FEELING GOOD WORKSHOPS

by Dianne Marston

"There is something beautiful to be found in every day, all you have to do is look".

Can you imagine what your life would be like if you felt good most of the time? Believe it or not, it is possible!

The purpose of this unique two-hour workshop is to have fun while we learn how to feel good about ourselves. With the presenter, Dianne Marston, donned in clown character, as 'Loonie Toon The Clown', the audience is guaranteed to be entertained. In this relaxed and safe environment valuable tools are imparted, with a flare of humour, which could positively change the way we look at those around us and at ourselves.

The workshop is divided into seven segments that when pieced together form a puzzle called a Love Circle.

The first puzzle piece, Acknowledging and Accepting Oneself, introduces a variety of entertaining exercises where the audience has the opportunity to look at and learn more about others and ourselves. The focus is on learning and accepting the many innate gifts we have. It is not enough to like ourselves; we need to learn to unconditionally love ourselves for who we are. Acceptance comes from within, not from others.

Once we have established a solid base for who we are and 'feel good' about ourselves the only way we can keep on 'feeling good' is to nurture ourselves. In this second piece of the puzzle, Nurturing, we explore many nurturing techniques available to us and are treated to a wonderful experience.

The third puzzle piece is about establishing Boundaries.

Loonie believes that there are three types of boundaries that we need to be concerned with. The first one is Safety. First and foremost we must always feel safe and learn not to put ourselves at risk. The second boundary is Space. The most important factor for this boundary is understanding that we have the right to invite whomever we wish to enter our space. It is acceptable to say,

"no", when we need to. The last boundary is Who Am I? We need to visit our values and morals so that when we are confronted with decision-making we will be in a position to make safe and healthy choices.

Balance is the fourth puzzle piece. Loonie illustrates how life is like a juggling act. In this section we deal with healthy and unhealthy emotions and behaviours. It is demonstrated how balance is critical to one's health and happiness.

The last three segments focus on roadblocks such as: expectations and assumptions; negative thoughts and expectations and fear. A number of humorous exercises are used and Loonie has a very unique definition for that four-lettered word Fear.

These seven puzzle pieces are solidly connected and held firmly in place with a special foundation. The success of this process is in its simplicity and the speed with which it works.

At the conclusion of the workshop, each participant receives a template of the tools to use as a guide along their journey toward self-fulfilment.

*Dianne Marston a.k.a. Loonie Toon, is a clown that loves what she does. She is an entertainer, a volunteer and a Director with Calgary's Caring Clowns. She co-ordinates Calgary's Caring Clowns senior programs, and leads workshops on Humour and Laughter and Self-esteem. Dianne is at: loonietoon@shaw.ca*

## ***Laughter amid cubicles***

There's nothing like a good daily  
dose of humour to liven  
up the workday. Whether you're a clown,  
a dry wit or the perpetual life-of-the-party,  
discover which type of humour  
is most appropriate at the office.

## **ADD HUMOUR - OF COURSE YOU CAN! The Importance of Humour in Presentations**

by Judy Suke

Over the last twenty-five years, as a professional speaker and presentation skills coach, I have learned that to be successful as a speaker you must be able to inform and entertain.

Humour not only amuses people, it wakes them up and makes your message memorable. Long after boring information has been delivered, people will recall a well-chosen story, joke or anecdote. When things are too serious or technical, it can lighten the mood, change the tone and add punch to your presentations. Most people like to be entertained, not preached at. When you take the time to add humour to your presentations, your audience's laughter and enjoyment will make the experience much more rewarding for all concerned.

The easiest way to add humour is through the use of pictures, cartoons, comics, anecdotes and quotes. You should start now to collect everything you see that might be useful in the future. You can find them in magazines, newspapers, joke books, e-mail, Internet, events that you attend, speeches and radio broadcasts. The source I use most frequently is Reader's Digest.

You do not need to be a stand-up comedian or even a funny person in your everyday life; you simply must follow a few rules.

### **Rule Number 1**

Do not say things that will offend your audience.

- ♦ In this day and age of political correctness, you must be careful about what you say and even more so when you are trying to be funny. Stay away from jokes or anecdotes regarding sex, religion, race, fat or thin people, tall or short people, blind or deaf people, cruelty to animals or children. The only way you can tell jokes mentioning any of these topics is talking about yourself.
- ♦ Do not make fun of others. Use your own personal, most embarrassing moments - they endear you to the audience.
- ♦ Be extremely careful of your language. If there is a joke that you think is ok but contains a swear word - substitute another word - people will know what the word was and if you pause just before you say it, they will appreciate the fact that you changed it.

### **Rule Number 2**

Choose your humorous material carefully. According to an article in the Toastmaster Magazine, "The biggest mistake made in public speaking today is the use of irrelevant humour". Material needs to be relevant to the topic and to

the audience.

### Rule Number 3

Make the anecdote, joke or quote part of your message by setting it up.  
Set-up Line: To handle the stress in our lives we need to have more fun.

**Acknowledge:** Here is a quote from, Life Is Not A Stress Rehearsal by Loretta LaRoche, "Your inner child is probably miserable because your outer adult isn't having any fun".

**Tag Line:** So have some fun. Start today to bring fun into the office, your life and your presentations.

*Judy Suke is a trainer, professional speaker, coach and author. Her company, Triangle Seminars & Consulting: Bringing humour and hope to the world, is located in Waterdown, Ontario. [www.triangleseminars.com](http://www.triangleseminars.com) or [jsuke@cogeco.ca](mailto:jsuke@cogeco.ca)*

## INSIGHT THEATRE

by Erin Williams

Insight Theatre is a unique public education theatre program created by, for and about youth. For 22 years Insight has captured the attention of Ottawa youth to portray sexual and reproductive health information. Running as one of several community education programs through Planned Parenthood Ottawa (PPO), Insight Theatre uses drama, humour and improvisation to reach and educate youth about difficult issues.

Insight Theatre follows the Ontario Ministry of Education guidelines for Health and Physical Education, Grades 7 to 9. We perform our show to senior elementary and high school students and at various community events. This past year, we were invited to the Best Start Annual Conference in Toronto, an organization that addresses pregnancy, birth and parenting in Ontario. During an average season, Insight will perform to over 40 audiences and will reach approximately 10,000 students, teachers, parents, youth workers, community members and health-care professionals.

The new 2004-2005 season, which has already begun with our yearly auditions and comprehensive summer training program, has a brand new twist! The first ever double troupe will be formed to meet the incredible demand from the Ottawa community. Instead of one touring troupe of peer educators, Insight Theatre will have two groups performing the same educational show, extending our reach!

Our entire presentation is conceived, written and performed by youth

themselves and is aimed directly at their peers. After auditions, the youth go through a training program where they learn about sexual and reproductive health and other relevant issues. From there, a two-month rehearsal period is scheduled before our premiere at the end of October.

During each Insight show, a wide variety of youth topics are covered. From safer sex to abstinence, sexual orientation to contraception, sexually transmitted infections to unintended pregnancy options and drug and alcohol use to suicide and depression - Insight addresses it all and does it with lots of humour and fun!

Our main goal is to empower youth to make positive, healthy and informed decisions based on their own value systems. Our series of short scenes employ humour, comedy and popular culture to address a variety of pressures facing today's youth. A mandatory question and answer period follows each show. At that point, questions on all the issues raised can be posed and valuable interaction with the audience begins. No issue is out of bounds!

Engaging peer education has to be the most effective tool to reach an audience of young adults. We receive constant positive feedback from our evaluation forms, in which youth admit that the funny scenes and creative metaphors are just perfect for introducing these difficult issues. The lights are on during our show and the performers are able to capture and work with the energy from their peer viewers.

As youth educators, we are aware of the importance that our program has on not only the youth who see our show, but also friends who are inspired through their experience. It is easier to learn through a creative medium and from informed friends, than it is to learn and confide in a teacher who they see everyday. The fear of judgement and embarrassment are also concepts that we need to keep in mind. Hence our message of individuality, diverse values and positive decisions.

Insight uses popular culture examples from TV, movies and music to draw on images that youth can already relate to. For example, our 2003-2004 scene on condom etiquette, entitled "Safer Sex Airlines," teaches passengers how to properly use a condom via the demonstrations from flight attendants. Even the Spice Girls teach the audience about sexually transmitted infections through a musical medley of popular songs. A ship of HIV pirates makes plans for infection using the hit 2003 summer movie "Pirates of the Caribbean" for inspiration. The story of Rapunzel and even the well-known board game "Clue" make up some of our show.

The youth performers in Insight Theatre are given a large responsibility to be creative, energetic and exciting in order to achieve our goals and portray our message. Over the course of the last season the youth performers contributed over 225 hours each of volunteer service as peer educators.



All the youth involved come a very long way in their development and are able to pass on their knowledge to other teens. It is important to realise that although our program is able to reach a vast majority of young people, sexual and reproductive health issues are extremely important and must be addressed by all people in the community. Teachers, parents, family members and religious leaders are needed to expand upon our idea that sexual health is an important topic to talk about.

Insight is not the magic answer to educate all youth on sexual health, even though drama and humour are a great compliment and supplement to classroom learning. All youth are different and some learn better in the classroom while some do not. Insight Theatre captures the attention in a unique way of those youth who might not be getting enough out of traditional education.

A little humour and a little laughter can go a long way, sometimes even further than we imagine. Smiles are infectious, especially when they are created by youth performers on-stage acting, singing, and dancing about sexual health!

*Erin Williams is the Insight Theatre Coordinator at Planned Parenthood Ottawa. She can be reached at [insight@ppottawa.ca](mailto:insight@ppottawa.ca)*

## PEER EXPERT

### Scenario:

*Stress has invaded my workplace! With an increase in the number of sites, programs and volunteers that I manage, the fun has gone out of my job. Any ideas on how I can get it back?*

### Response:

Much attention has been given in the past few years to creating positive and happy work environments. But for many of us working with increased demands, constant change, limited resources and new challenges, our stress levels rise and we find it increasingly difficult to enjoy our workplaces and the work we do. We often forget to take care of ourselves, let alone the very important volunteer resources many of us manage.

As children we laughed about 400 times a day and as adults we only laugh 15 times per day. As we grew up, somehow we lost that ability to laugh so easily. By learning to smile and laugh again, we can have a profound and positive effect on our health and the health of others. Studies have concluded that laughter and optimism are necessary for good physical health and well being, and coupled with the proven fact that volunteering is good for your health, we have created the best prescription for success. Perhaps we should change our titles to Doctors of Volunteer Resources.

Much research has been developed around the physiology of laughter. We know that there are two types of stress - good and bad. Bad stress suppresses our immune system and ability to maintain good health while laughter is a form of good stress releasing necessary endorphins that can reverse some of the negative effects.

Working in a positive and happy work environment has made us better communicators and team players. We are often more productive, more trusting, more efficient and less likely to be absent from work when humour exists in our organizations. However, it is still thought that humour and laughter at work are unproductive, unprofessional and inappropriate.

Humour that succeeds in the workplace has to do with attitude. It means taking time to look for the lighter side of things in everyday situations. It means taking everything and everyone not quite so seriously. It means having the confidence to laugh at ourselves.

We lead by being human. We do not lead by being corporate, professional or institutional. We lead by engaging others in an environment that is inclusive, respects creativity and strengthens relationships.

I am not speaking about telling jokes at coffee break or forwarding funny emails (although I won't say no to that). I am speaking about having a sense of perspective and using that ability to find the humour in situations in order to manage stress and creatively problem solve.

How can we develop our sense of humour and share it with others in our workplaces?

- ◆ Consider what type of humour is acceptable in your workplace. If humour is not encouraged or well received in your organization, a 'silly hat day' won't likely happen. Tell a joke on yourself to inject some humour and find a way to even laugh alone when something is amusing.
- ◆ Get into the habit of looking for humour in everyday situations. Share this with others.
- ◆ Keep a library of humorous quotes, quips or jokes and insert when appropriate.
- ◆ Post humorous cartoons, photos, anecdotes or amusing advertisements on employee bulletin boards or in newsletters.
- ◆ Insert humour (when/where appropriate) at the start of meetings. It will break the ice and perhaps make communication more comfortable.
- ◆ Know your group - be ready when work situations are difficult and stressful with a well placed remark that will diffuse tensions and change the atmosphere.
- ◆ Give your volunteers or co-workers funny cards or gag gifts when least

All the youth involved come a very long way in their development and are able to pass on their knowledge to other teens. It is important to realise that although our program is able to reach a vast majority of young people, sexual and reproductive health issues are extremely important and must be addressed by all people in the community. Teachers, parents, family members and religious leaders are needed to expand upon our idea that sexual health is an important topic to talk about.

Insight is not the magic answer to educate all youth on sexual health, even though drama and humour are a great compliment and supplement to classroom learning. All youth are different and some learn better in the classroom while some do not. Insight Theatre captures the attention in a unique way of those youth who might not be getting enough out of traditional education.

A little humour and a little laughter can go a long way, sometimes even further than we imagine. Smiles are infectious, especially when they are created by youth performers on-stage acting, singing, and dancing about sexual health!

*Erin Williams is the Insight Theatre Coordinator at Planned Parenthood Ottawa. She can be reached at [insight@ppottawa.ca](mailto:insight@ppottawa.ca)*

## PEER EXPERT

### Scenario:

*Stress has invaded my workplace! With an increase in the number of sites, programs and volunteers that I manage, the fun has gone out of my job. Any ideas on how I can get it back?*

### Response:

Much attention has been given in the past few years to creating positive and happy work environments. But for many of us working with increased demands, constant change, limited resources and new challenges, our stress levels rise and we find it increasingly difficult to enjoy our workplaces and the work we do. We often forget to take care of ourselves, let alone the very important volunteer resources many of us manage.

As children we laughed about 400 times a day and as adults we only laugh 15 times per day. As we grew up, somehow we lost that ability to laugh so easily. By learning to smile and laugh again, we can have a profound and positive effect on our health and the health of others. Studies have concluded that laughter and optimism are necessary for good physical health and well being, and coupled with the proven fact that volunteering is good for your health, we have created the best prescription for success. Perhaps we should change our titles to Doctors of Volunteer Resources.

Much research has been developed around the physiology of laughter. We know that there are two types of stress - good and bad. Bad stress suppresses our immune system and ability to maintain good health while laughter is a form of good stress releasing necessary endorphins that can reverse some of the negative effects.

Working in a positive and happy work environment has made us better communicators and team players. We are often more productive, more trusting, more efficient and less likely to be absent from work when humour exists in our organizations. However, it is still thought that humour and laughter at work are unproductive, unprofessional and inappropriate.

Humour that succeeds in the workplace has to do with attitude. It means taking time to look for the lighter side of things in everyday situations. It means taking everything and everyone not quite so seriously. It means having the confidence to laugh at ourselves.

We lead by being human. We do not lead by being corporate, professional or institutional. We lead by engaging others in an environment that is inclusive, respects creativity and strengthens relationships.

I am not speaking about telling jokes at coffee break or forwarding funny emails (although I won't say no to that). I am speaking about having a sense of perspective and using that ability to find the humour in situations in order to manage stress and creatively problem solve.

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# JOURNAL OF VOLUNTEER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

## Editorial Process and Guidelines for Authors

### Objective

The Journal of Volunteer Resources Management is intended:

1. to serve as a credible source of information on the management of volunteers in Canada;
2. to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and to encourage networking among managers of volunteers;
3. to provide a professional development tool for managers of volunteers;
4. to recognize and encourage Canadian talent in the field of management of volunteers;
5. to include in each issue at least two articles that will consider different views on a specific and predetermined theme.

### Target Audience

The Journal's intended audience includes managers of volunteers, educators, media and funders of not-for-profit organizations across the country.

### Submissions

All manuscripts will be accepted on diskette or via e-mail in either Microsoft Word or Word Perfect. Submissions should be written according to "Canadian Style - A Guide to Writing and Editing" - Secretary of State, Dundurn Press. External reviewers may be engaged to review content if deemed advisable by the committee.

The revised draft is edited for clarity and consistency by the Editorial Team.

The edited version is returned to the author for acceptance along with an approval form for signature.

The signed form is to be returned to the Editorial Team within a week along with any suggestions for final revisions.

### Format and Style

Authors are asked to respect the following word counts:

	Words	Pages
<b>Lead Article</b>	2000	5-6
<b>Secondary Article</b>	700-800	2-3
<b>Book Review</b>	150	1

The lead article will look at the topic in some depth and will normally require the author to conduct research into current trends and perspectives on the subject.

The secondary article will adopt a more practical approach, including personal experiences and opinions.

### Advertising

Limited advertising space will be allowed in the Journal, for materials of direct relevance to managers of volunteer service, and as long as it conforms to the guidelines set out by the Editorial Team.

### Guidelines:

1. Only ¼ page and ½ page ads will be accepted.
2. Ad must be camera-ready.
3. A maximum of one page of ads will be permitted per issue.
4. Job ads are not recommended.
5. Cost is to be determined by the Editorial Team.

## LOOKING AHEAD

October 20-23, 2004

**Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA) Conference**

Portland, Oregon

info@AVaintl.org

Click on the following websites if you want either more information or to become a member of: PAVR-O [www.pavro.on.ca](http://www.pavro.on.ca) or CAVR [www.cavr.org](http://www.cavr.org)

## DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS & THEMES

	Issue	Deadline	Theme
	Fall '04	articles due on the 24th of August	Outcome Measurement
	Winter '05	articles due on the 24th of October	Volunteers in Leadership Roles
	Spring '05	articles due on the 24th of February	Managing Difficult Volunteers
	Summer'04	articles due on the 24th of May	Future Trends