EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE

Have a laugh. Sometimes we take our work — and ourselves — just too darn seriously. Have a laugh. You will see how good that can make you feel even, and perhaps especially, if you are in a stressful situation.

For example, a colleague of mine had to accompany her spouse to a hospital to see his oncologist. Testing, results, consultation, treatment are all stressful on a good day. While walking from one end of the hospital to the other, her spouse mis-heard something my colleague said. It resulted in one of those juvenile giggle sessions that cannot be controlled. As they leaned helplessly on the corridor walls, basically in a heap of giggles, those who passed them could not help but smile — having no idea what even brought on the merriment. One can assume that pretty much anyone who finds themselves in a hospital is under some amount of stress. Several people likely benefited from this silliness. Certainly my colleague and her husband, who are still laughing about it, felt much more cheerful than they might have.

It is true that laughter is good medicine. "Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease. Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain." helpguide.org-laughter-is-the-best-medicine.

One of the best ways to laugh more is to simply start smiling. That is right: let your "game face" be a smile. Soon you will find that people smile at you more often. Try it for a week. Look at people, smile, say hello, and maybe giggle. Someone I am coaching told me that this is part of her "volunteer work" — sharing as many smiles as she can with others, hopefully elevating their spirits, thus helping them see some kindness in their day and maybe feel some empathy from another human.

As silly as it sounds, having playful toys and trinkets in your office or on your desk can be entertaining and diffuse stress (yours and your visitors).

And last but not least (somewhat tongue in cheek), "Laughter burns calories. OK, so it's no replacement for going to the gym, but one study found that laughing for 10 to 15 minutes a day can burn about 40 calories—which could be enough to lose three or four pounds over the course of a year" (ibid.)

Try it for a week.

Can you think of an instance where a burden has been lifted by laughter? Do more laughing!