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## **A Sense of Humour**

### **a laugh and a joke can relieve stress**

You know the sayings: laugh and the world laughs with you; and laughter is the best medicine. Even animals seem to have a sense of humour, so one would think it is an essential inbred quality for creatures in general. As you know, A Season of Happiness is about discovering those aspects of living which are enjoyable and lift the spirit. Especially when tough times are being experienced, the ability to find something that raises a smile can be a tonic. Continually looking on the black side does no-one any good, and the sooner thoughts are directed to the brighter side of life, the easier it is to cope with everyday hassles.

Remember those who were caught up in the strife of wartime. Soldiers in the trenches had little to smile about, yet they often managed a laugh and a joke; and, judging by stories while struggling with rationing, those on the home front relished the funny side of bad times, despite waiting for bombs to drop and knowing their loved ones might never return from the fighting. They weren't being flippant or disrespectful: humour truly was a human necessity.

In the main, the trials and tribulations that most people have to suffer these days are less physically dramatic than they are psychological. Better living conditions and labour-saving devices give everyone more time to enjoy the simple pleasures. Unfortunately, those spare minutes available as a consequence are frequently filled in by new chores or projects that wouldn't otherwise be possible. Each day becomes frenetic, skipping from one responsibility to the next. The pace of modern life takes its toll, loading on added pressure and stress. So, what's to laugh about? That in itself, I like to think, plus many small amusing interludes which can be found by pausing for a moment to identify them. Anyone can do it, if they try; if they really want to.

There are those, however, who are apparently content to spend their days grumbling, seemingly taking delight in being miserable while conducting some kind of obscure campaign to make others subscribe to their dismal perspective. Maybe this is because they believe that if everyone thinks and behaves like them, they will no longer be the odd ones out. The sensible course would probably be to avoid these sad-sacks like the plague; but I believe there is a better way – trying to convert them and feeling good doing it. A pleasant greeting costs nothing, and just being friendly is quite likely something they don't expect because everyone else usually returns their sour mood in kind. The original reason for their attitude may well be justified, even forgotten; but it has developed into a habit that they are apparently reluctant to break. Surely someone is charitable enough to help cheer them up, if only a little?

It is sometimes hard to find anything amusing in a day that has been a shocker from start to finish. Yet there are people who manage to be cheerful, despite bad and painful memories. In our area, there is a growing community of families originally from the Philippines. Having been brought up in a country ruled in the past by a cruel dictator, you'd think they would find it easier to frown than smile; yet they defy the odds. Happiness would seem to be their daily bread, and they enjoy sharing it around. We would do well to follow their shining example.

From a personal point of view, when times are hard I try to borrow a technique from cartoonists and comedy writers who take a worsening situation and turn it into a complete disaster of ludicrous proportions. I imagine a single incident of the day that caused a groan, then picture how it could have become a real banana-peel event that would have had onlookers in fits. I'm glad it didn't get that bad, and have a good chuckle over what might have been.

If you think it's a stupid idea, simply do your best not to labour on the worries of life, especially not at night. Avoid lying in bed thinking sad or troubling things. There is always light somewhere in the darkest of days. You just have to open your eyes to let it in.

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