



## Humor

Greenville UU Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina  
Covenant Group Session Plan  
Revised by Pam Stevenson

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**Welcome, Chalice Lighting:** Let our sharing together provide a place where memories are rooted, where mysteries are pondered, where dreams are nourished, where love is freely given, where failures are owned and accepted, where sorrows are transformed, where our lives are deepened, challenged and uplifted and where we can share the gift of laughter. Let this be such a time and place.

*~Adapted from Rev. David E. Bumbaugh*

**Check In:** Share something from your life since we last met and how you are feeling now.

### Opening Reading:

Good humor is a tonic for mind and body. It is the best antidote for anxiety and depression. It is a business asset. It attracts and keeps friends. It lightens human burdens. It is the direct route to serenity and contentment.

*~Grenville Kleiser*

From there to here, and here to there, funny things are everywhere.

*~Dr. Seuss*

### Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. Describe what makes you laugh -- specific movies, TV shows, comedians, videos, etc.
2. Describe a person you remember from your past because they had a great sense of humor.
3. Describe an experience you've had when humor improved a difficult situation.
4. Share a time when you laughed with someone, or laughed at yourself in a way that was refreshing and healing.

**Readings** – see below

### Sitting in Silence

**Sharing:** This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no one interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting one another straight. Please share one or more responses to the session questions or readings.

**Open Discussion:** During this time, everyone shares freely, enlarging on and reacting to others' ideas. However, be careful not to interrupt or finish people's sentences.

**Check out:** As we close today, how are you feeling now?

### Closing reading:

Draw a crazy picture / Write a nutty poem / Sing a mumble-gumble song / Whistle through your comb.

Do a loony-goony dance 'Cross the kitchen floor / Put something silly in the world

That ain't been there before.

*~Shel Silverstein*

### Announcements/Plans

### Extinguish the Chalice

*We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.*

## Readings

It's your outlook on life that counts. If you take yourself lightly and don't take yourself too seriously, pretty soon you can find the humor in our everyday lives. And sometimes it can be a lifesaver.

~Betty White

I love people who make me laugh. I honestly think it's the thing I like most, to laugh. It cures a multitude of ills. It's probably the most important thing in a person.

~Audrey Hepburn

A person without a sense of humor is like a wagon without springs. It's jolted by every pebble on the road.

~Henry Ward Beecher

If I had no sense of humor, I would long ago have committed suicide.

~Mahatma Gandhi

I think the next best thing to solving a problem is finding some humor in it.

~Frank A. Clark

Really, laughing is such a strange reaction to something. The idea of it is so bizarre, so instinctual, and kind of magical.

~Jessica Williams

Try to find someone with a sense of humor. That's an important thing to have because when you get into an argument; one of the best ways to diffuse it is to be funny. You don't want to hide away from a point because some points are serious, but you'd rather have a discussion that was a discussion, rather than an argument.

~Ed Sheeran

Humor is something that thrives between man's aspirations and his limitations. There is more logic in humor than in anything else. Because, you see, humor is truth.

~Victor Borge

Humor is the affectionate communication of insight.

~Leo Rosten

Housework can't kill you, but why take a chance?

~Phyllis Diller

The Senility Prayer: God grant me the senility to forget the people I never liked anyway, the good fortune to run into the ones I do, and the eyesight to know the difference.

~Anonymous

A good laugh overcomes more difficulties and dissipates more dark clouds than any other one thing.

~Laura Ingalls Wilder

Humor can be one of our best survival tools. ~Allen Klein

He who laughs, lasts. ~Mary Pettibone Poole

There is nothing like a gleam of humor to reassure you that a fellow human being is ticking inside a strange face.

~Eva Hoffman

## ***Additional or Pre-Reading:***

### **Humor and Healing**

Can laughter really help us heal? Anecdotal evidence and some studies seem to point in that direction. Scientists aren't sure, but why wait for them to figure it out? Just yuck it up. It certainly can't hurt.

Scientists know that laughing increases the rate at which the heart beats and the muscles contract. Laughter stimulates the cardiovascular, circulatory, and endocrine systems. Some studies have even shown that laughter bolsters the immune system, reduces stress hormones, and increases our tolerance to pain.

In his book *Anatomy of an Illness*, Norman Cousins likened laughter to "internal jogging." Suffering from a painful degenerative illness, Cousins found that 20 minutes of hearty laughter gave him 2 hours of pain-free sleep. Interest in the topic of laughter and healing was piqued again when the movie "Patch Adams" was released. Medical schools are beginning to incorporate humor training into their curricula while all over the country, seminar leaders teach medical personnel how humor can relieve job stress and enhance their interactions with patients.

**Laughing It Off:** While the scientific community seeks to understand and prove the beneficial physiologic effects of laughter, there are some undisputed benefits.

"There are three ways humor and laughter help us when life gets bumpy," says Steve Sultanoff, Ph.D., a licensed psychologist and President of The American Association for Therapeutic Humor. "The first is that humor gives us perspective and changes the way we see the world, allowing us to positively change our attitudes when the going gets rough. Secondly, humor changes our cognitive state, which is directly related to our physical well-being. You can't experience humor and be distressed at the same time," Sultanoff says. "Finally, humor triggers laughter, which gives us that internal workout that Cousins spoke about. The bottom line," Sultanoff says, "is that after we laugh, we feel good."

**Humor and Aging:** As we grow older, we begin experiencing things that are definitely not funny, including aches and pains, illnesses, losses, diminished abilities, etc. "Serious illness is not funny. Death and dying are not funny, but funny things happen in those situations," says Allen Klein, author of *The Healing Power of Humor*. "The key," he says, "is to focus on those small things that make you laugh because they can give you a new perspective and help you cope." Klein has found that people who can laugh seem to be more resilient. "Poke a little fun at yourself," he suggests. "I do. At my age, my back goes out more than I do," he jokes. "Humor is all around. You just have to look for it"

**Attitude Is Everything:** Katherine Russell Rich, author of *The Red Devil: To Hell With Cancer and Back*, had been told she had a year to live when she saw a tv program claiming that people who were happy coped better with illness.

"I put myself under medical orders to be happy," she says. "It wasn't easy. I made gratitude lists, read Norman Cousins, fell totally and unexpectedly in love with a good friend. He's got a wicked sense of humor and so do I. I've never laughed so hard in my life." That was several years ago.

"When you're told you have a year to live and that you'll die an extremely painful death, you have two choices: you can either prepare to die, or you can say, "Oh, hell, might as well have the best time I can with what I have left. For me, laughter tipped the balance," says Rich. "I truly believe a positive attitude helped save my life."

Humor also distracts us from our aches and pains. Pain sensation, Sultanoff says, doesn't come from just the physiologic sensation, but also from your attitude regarding that sensation. Your attitude can increase or decrease the pain you feel.

**Humor Buddies:** The ability to cultivate friendships -- in which humor plays an important part -- is particularly important to aging people because friendships are so important in maintaining independence and good health, says Virginia Cornell, author of *The Latest Wrinkle and Other Signs of Aging*. Plus it's hard to laugh alone. Klein suggests we find ourselves humor buddies to laugh with.

Looking for "good and funny stuff" about growing older can boost your attitude. Cornell says that for one thing, growing old means no longer having to cough up the kids' lunch money every morning.

"As you get older," she says, "you must give up the constant fussing about things you can do nothing about, so you learn to see the small funny things about them."

**Timing Is Everything:** Everyone likes a good joke, but few of us are very good at telling them. Fortunately, there are at least 57 varieties of humor out there, says Joel Goodman, Ed.D, Founder and Director of The Humor Project and author of *Laughirmations: 1,001 Ways to Add Humor to Your Life and Work*.

Here Are Some Of His Favorites:

- Ask yourself how your favorite comedian or cartoon character would portray your situation.
- Exaggerate a situation until it takes on absurd proportions to lighten a stressful moment.
- Keep a file of cartoons or jokes that make you laugh and share them.
- Look for the humor around you. Road signs, for instance, can be very funny. Sultanoff cites one he's found along a California freeway that reads "Cruise Ships Use Airport Exit."

**When Things Get Serious:** If you find yourself facing a frightening medical diagnosis, prepare a "Mirth Kit," suggests Goodman. Fill it with things that make you laugh--videos, audiotapes, photographs, books, funny props, etc. "Give yourself a shot in the arm with whatever tickles your funny bone," he says. "Humor and laughter aren't substitutes for medical care, but they can be adjuncts. Humor can be a tremendously liberating source for coping with tough times.

When using humor to help someone through a difficult time, Goodman points out that having a good sense of humor means having a good sensitivity to humor. Gauge how receptive the person might be before you jump in feet first and end up with those feet in your mouth. If the time seems right, plan to share fond, funny memories or photos. Let your knowledge of what makes them laugh or brings them joy dictate your approach.

What about dark humor? It helps some people cope with adversity. Rich once said to her mother, "Mom, you know, according to statistics, I'm supposed to be dead in a month." Her mother responded, "Well, I guess you better hold your breath if you're going to make that deadline."

Don't feel put off, ashamed, or guilty when dark humor is used to ease tense situations. "It's cathartic," says Rich. "I think maybe dark humor is a form of bravado, and also a release for the buildup of painful emotions."

**We should take humor seriously, Goodman says. "It can add life to your years and possibly years to your life." And you won't have to fight your HMO to pay for it.**

Prof.Lakshman, Senior Member, Kolonnawa Sri Lanka

From <http://www.citehr.com/14152-value-laughter-positive-attitude.html>