

## **LIGHTENing Bolts**

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### STANDARD WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to LIGHTENing Bolts, a bi-monthly, semi-annual, irregular email newsletter to help you lighten up through the power of humor. Each edition includes articles and resources that will enhance your humor potential without sacrificing the integrity of your life or work. I hope you enjoy this edition and that you will never lose your sense of humor.

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### **HUMOR AT WORK – HUMBUG OR HA-HA-HOLIDAYS?**

Let's see a show of hands. How many of you look forward to the holidays? How many of you would rather have your wisdom teeth removed than to worry about 175 meals, in-laws who stay too long, family conflicts that never get resolved, buying gifts for people just in case they give you a gift, cleaning the house, decorating the house, taking down the decorations, cleaning the house again and making sure everybody is happy along the way? I think we can agree that the holidays are stressful even though there are many moments of joy, love and fellowship.

I suggest that you consider a few ways to make your holidays more FUN and at the very least, less stressful. Here's an example.

Every year, my in-laws take the entire family (8 adults and 7 kids) to the beach for a week of fun in the sun. It's a great time and we thoroughly enjoy it. At the same time, being under the same roof with a lot of people who are not usually under my roof can be stressful for me. As I assess the situation (clinical term), I found that the worst part of the week was when the group made decisions. I'm getting a hive just thinking about it.

Group decision making is nothing short of group dynamics gone bad. It starts with an idea which is analyzed, criticized and re-suggested numerous times. Once it is agreed that the group wants to pursue this particular idea, the implementation of said idea becomes the next hurdle. When, how and where are hotly debated. And someone always gets hurt. (Not really but I felt compelled to utter that classic parental declaration.) With group decision making, the problem is

that there is no way to please everyone. Someone will be disappointed. Someone will feel short changed. And in the worst case scenario, someone will sulk for an hour or two.

Knowing that I worry about pleasing everyone and that this decision-making process is stressful for me, I decided to assert my control over the only part of this situation in which I had control. At the start of our vacation, I proudly announced that for the duration of the week, I would not make any decisions. In other words, I would go along with the decisions made by the rest of the family. The effect of this pre-decision, no-decision decision was instantaneous and for the entire week, I experienced very little stress.

You have more control over your holidays than you may realize. Consider how you can exert this control and create more FUN and humor during the next month. Here are a few suggestions.

1. Make FUN a priority over the traditional stressors such as food preparation, gift buying and cleaning. Every time you must take on an unpleasant task, ask yourself, “How can this be more FUN (i.e. less stressful).” For example, “How can I make scrubbing the toilet more FUN?” OK, bad example. But as horrific as this job is, it can be more FUN – you could reward yourself with a shopping trip, a Krispy Kreme donut or some other FUN treat when the task is completed.
2. Carve out time every day to do something really fun like playing games, watching a movie (see below), reading a novel or participating in a fun outing. By being purposeful, you make it a priority.
3. Enlist the help of the FUN experts in your family or network of friends. Every group has someone who is very good at having FUN. Ask them how you might create more FUN for yourself.
4. Don’t be afraid to break old traditions to create new ones. If there are stressful things you have always done, consider replacing them with new ones.
5. Plan something FUN after the holidays to look forward to. This will give you an “upper” when the “downer” time comes. Schedule a weekend away, a movie night with friends or a day of pampering to give you something to anticipate.

Don’t set yourself up to be a Humbug during special occasions. Make a point to put the Ha-Ha back in your holidays. You and your loved ones will be glad you did.

## **HUMOR RESOURCES**

Here are some classic videos to add more FUN to your holidays:

A Christmas Story (Video, 1983) – A hilarious movie about a boy’s dream to own a Red Rider BB gun.

It’s a Wonderful Life (Video, 1947) – The traditional holiday movie about George Bailey and the colorful characters in Bedford Falls – including the origin of Bert & Ernie!

National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (Video, 1989) – Another outstanding chapter in the Griswalds' life.

Nightmare Before Christmas (Video, 1993) – A bizarre but fun animated film based on characters created by Tim Burton.

The Santa Clause (Video, 1994) – A very funny film about an unsuspecting new Santa.

## **HUMOR IN REAL LIFE**

### It's News

The December 2003 edition of Fast Company magazine features Jeff Comment, CEO and Chairman of Helzberg Diamonds. Comment spends two weeks every year, dressed as Santa, visiting 2,000 children in a number of children's hospitals. Comment says, "I have four absolutely gorgeous Santa suits and six sets of wigs and beards. With the extra padding and hair, the outfit is incredibly hot. I lose 7-10 pounds (each year)!" Clearly it's worth it.

### It Really Happened

I recently received these two advertisements that were particularly funny:

NICOLE THOMAS & ASSOCIATES IS A FULL SERVICE COLLECTION AGENCY  
We know all about Fair Debt Collection Practices. We just don't care. Let us break some legs for you.

(At the bottom of the fax it said this: "This ad is intended as humor. We really are a great collection firm.")

### TALKING TOILET PAPER ROLL HOLDER

Easy to record and re-record your own messages

Pull the Paper and They Hear Your Message – It's like having bathroom voicemail

(For instance, "Only 8 squares of toilet paper per person please!")

## **JUST HUMOR**

Things you hear during the holidays:

1. Christmas decorations already? It's only July 5<sup>th</sup>.
2. When do we eat...AGAIN?
3. Oh, it's just what I wanted! What is it?

4. In order to avoid being politically incorrect, our yearly company party in December will be referred to as a meeting.
5. If I eat turkey with warm milk, will I sleep through the traffic delay at the mall?
6. So, Dad, explain to me again how Santa can be at every mall, street corner and parade at the same time?
7. Isn't it ironic that the opposite of In-laws is not Out-laws?
8. If it is better to give than to receive, why does the government keep our taxes?
9. On the twelfth day of Christmas, our "freshly cut tree" was dropping needles faster than Martha Stewart dumps stocks.
10. Thank God for all our many blessings!

## **HOLIDAY GIFT SUGGESTIONS**

The gift of humor is a wonderful way to share some FUN with colleagues, family and friends this holiday season. Visit our product page for these items:

Audio CD's and tapes

Books

Videos

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Ronald P. Culberson, MSW, CSP, Director of Everything! at FUNsulting, etc., works with organizations that want their people to lighten up by using humor as a way to manage stress and become more effective. He is a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), the highest earned award from the National Speakers Association, and is one of less than 450 individuals worldwide who have received this designation. He is a humor expert and has provided entertaining and informative programs to over 50,000 people in more than 500 associations, government agencies, non-profit organizations and Fortune 500 companies. To find out more about programs, services and products visit our website at [www.funsulting.com](http://www.funsulting.com) or call (703) 742-8812.

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