

LIGHTENing Bolts

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HUMOR AT WORK – All for FUN and FUN for All

My wife and I attended a parenting class last fall. We weren't mandated or anything – we just like personal growth stuff. Larry Kennedy, the therapist who taught the class, suggested that we hold weekly family meetings as a way to involve our kids in family decisions. His philosophy is that the kids may not always get their way but they should get their say.

We started these weekly family meetings a few months ago. They've gone well. As part of the regular agenda, we give compliments to each other, we discuss finances, we bring up concerns and we plan out our week. We even have a secretary for each meeting who keeps the minutes. Of course, the minutes are to keep mom and dad from forgetting previous decisions!

Last month our kids decided they wanted to have “family nights” each month. On family night, we don't cook but instead go to a restaurant, order pizza or have take-out Chinese food. After dinner, we play family games, go to the movies, go bowling or enjoy some other FUN group activity.

I am 43 years old. My wife is 42 (for another six months, she'll proudly point out). And it was our nine and twelve year-old children that suggested we have more FUN as a family. Smart kids or slow parents? You be the judge.

Children continually remind us of the need to have FUN because it is such an important part of their lives. Adults continually remind children to quit acting silly because seriousness is such an important part of their lives! It's a shame we have to re-learn having FUN.

As part of my 2004 Goals, I have decided to plan something FUN every day. Since my company name is FUNsulting, etc., you can see how this would be a good business plan. It is also a good life plan. So far, I have played basketball (this counts as exercise too so I got double bonus points!), watched a Jerry Seinfeld comedy video, watched Fear Factor with my kids (a family tradition) and started reading the Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown. Each morning, I get excited about planning my FUN activity for the day.

As you set goals for the New Year, don't forget to incorporate FUN in your plan. Remember the “all work and no play” philosophy. You will burn out if you don't give yourself breaks from the hectic-ness of your schedule. But, if you balance the stress with some good old fashioned fun, you can burn your candle at both ends much longer.

HUMOR RESOURCES

Just in case your FUN muscle has atrophied, here are some FUN things you can add to your New Year's Resolutions:

*READ a fun book like "The Da Vinci Code" by Dan Brown, "Traveling Mercies" by Ann Lamott or "Humor Me" by Ron Culberson and other authors.

*Watch a great MOVIE like "The Lord of the Rings", "Pirates of the Caribbean" or "Star Wars"

*Pursue a favorite HOBBY like scrap booking, museum hopping or fishing (when warmer weather comes!).

*Play a SPORT like golf, basketball or bowling.

*Spend time with FRIENDS over a meal or a cup of coffee.

*Watch (live or on videotape) your favorite TV show.

*Play a GAME with your family OR enjoy your favorite computer/video game by yourself.

HUMOR IN REAL LIFE

It's News

In the December 29, 2003 edition of USA Today, Theresa Howard's article "Most likable ads of '03 had a bit of laughter" reported that the most likeable advertisements on television are usually funny. Humor was at "the top of the charts for likeability." Anheuser-Busch's vice president for brand management and global creative chief said, "Humor always works and unexpected humor works particularly well."

Brad Jakeman, Citibank's director of global advertising said, "We used humor to break through and have consumers pay attention to the advertising."

If corporate America bases million-dollar decisions on the power of humor, think about the power that humor can have on your life!

It Really Happened

For the past six years, my associate pastor and I have regularly visited JoAnn, a woman in our congregation who is physically unable to attend church. On our most recent visit, JoAnn told us

that her computer was giving her trouble. It just so happens that my associate pastor is also in charge of technology at our church so he offered to take a look at her computer. While we were trying to figure out the problem, the phone rang. JoAnn answered the phone and we heard her say, "I can't talk right now. My pastor and my Deacon are here and they're working on my computer."

I'm sure the caller was thinking, "What a great church. They have technical and spiritual support staff that makes house calls!"

JUST HUMOR

The typical course of a New Year's Resolution:

January 1 – I will exercise every day and lose 25 pounds.

February 1 – I will exercise every other day and lose the original 25 pounds plus the 5 I gained in January eating the leftover holiday cookies.

March 1 – Due to the pulled muscle, I will not exercise this month. And if I don't exercise, I obviously can't lose the weight.

April 1 – I will exercise 3 days a week except when I have to work late. I will try to lose the extra weight I gained in March.

May 1 – I read that too much exercise may be bad for your cholesterol. So I will only exercise 2 days per week and will try the Atkins diet to lose the 25 pounds.

June 1 – I'm so weak from the diet, I can't exercise. I would kill for a spoonful of carbohydrates. I think I'll try Weight Watchers.

July 1 – I miscalculated my Weight Watcher points and gained two pounds. I'm not good at dieting. I'll try to exercise a few times a month instead.

August 1 – Vacation. All bets are off.

September 1 – To start the school year off right, I bought a membership at the local gym. I will have to exercise regularly since I've already paid. I'll eat lunch at the gym's smoothie bar as part of my new diet.

October 1 – I cancelled my gym membership since I only used it twice. I'd rather run outside anyway since it's so nice and cool.

November 1 – It's too cold to run outside. Maybe I'll buy one of those indoor rowing machines. I can't really diet this month with Thanksgiving coming.

December 1 – I cut my hand on the rowing machine. The doctor told me to rest it for several weeks. Once January gets here, I'll be healthy again and can start my New Year's resolution to lose 15 pounds!

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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.funulting.com or call (703) 742-8812.

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