

LIGHTENing Bolts
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STANDARD WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to LIGHTENing Bolts, somewhat regular 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.

Ronald P. Culberson, MSW, CSP
Director of Everything!
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HUMOR AT WORK ñ INTERVIEW WITH JOEL GOODMAN OF THE HUMOR PROJECT

In honor of National Humor Month, we kick off a new feature in LIGHTENing Bolts. Periodically, we will interview other humor experts and practitioners about how they are sharing humor and laughter with others. We hope you enjoy this new item.

Today's Guest Interview
Joel Goodman, PhD., Founder and Executive Director
The HUMOR Project, Inc.
Saratoga Springs, NY
Founded in 1977

RON: WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE HUMOR PROJECT?

Joel: To focus full time (or fool-time) on the positive power of humor. To make a difference and to touch the lives of individuals, organizations, and nations so that they get more smileage out of life.

RON: WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO TAKE ON THIS HUMOR PROJECT?

Joel: Two years before Norman Cousins wrote his landmark book *Anatomy of an Illness* in which he highlighted the healing power of humor, I had flown to Texas to be with my dad who was having surgery. He had an aneurysm on his aorta and it was a very stressful and uptight time. My mom and I were taken to the hospital in a van driven by a man named Alvin. I saw Alvin as a magician in that he figuratively transformed us during our short time with him. He had a kind, gentle, childlike spontaneous sense of humor and we marveled at the effect on us. I got home and realized what a profound impact Alvin had on us and decided to pursue humor out of my own personal curiosity. I never realized the HUMOR Project would be a career path and that twenty-seven years later it would still be growing and glowing.

RON: WHAT BACKGROUND DO YOU HAVE THAT PREPARED YOU FOR THIS LINE OF WORK?

Joel: When I started the Humor Project, no one else was doing this as a full-time organization. *Humor consultant* or *humor educator* was not part of the occupational handbook. At the same time, my graduate work provided a FUNderful foundation for what was to emerge in my serendipitous career path. I have a master's degree and a doctorate in education. I studied at the University of Massachusetts Humanistic Center in Amherst, which focused on putting the person back in education. I learned about creativity, teamwork, organizational development, decision making, self-esteem and communication there. When I got my doctorate, I had already been a trainer, speaker and author. I was able to transfer my skills in those areas into the Land of Humor.

RON: HOW DOES THE HUMOR PROJECT FULFILL ITS MISSION?

Joel: We accomplish this several ways.

First, we have sponsored an international humor conference for the past 19 years. Over 17,000 people have attended from 50 states and 6 continents. It is the largest conference with a humor focus.

Second, we have a HUMOResources mail-order and online catalog through which we sell humor-related books, videos, FUN props and other resources to over 40,000 people throughout the U.S. and abroad.

Third, we will have our 28th Annual International HUMOResilience Workshop on October 29-31. This is the longest-running humor program on the planet.

Fourth, we have a Speakers Bureau that has reached more than two million people through presentations in corporations, hospitals, schools, associations, conventions, etc.

Fifth, we have been featured in over 3500 television and radio shows, newspapers and magazines in 150+ countries. We find that people are fascinated by humor and its benefits. We have loved serving as the go-to resource to the media to help spread the word on the positive power of humor. Our humor information clearing house also happens through our www.HumorProject.com website which has had 3 million plus hits in recent months.

Finally, we offer grants to nonprofit organizations to assist them in developing humor programs. This year we are donating \$20,000 to the Alzheimer's Association. In the past year, we have contributed \$10,000 to Peter Yarrow's Operation Respect (to create bully-free zones in schools) and \$12,500 to the Center for the Family (to support their good work in preventing and responding to child abuse). We have provided grants to 350+ organizations to help create hospital humor rooms, i geri-anticsi programs, humor hotlines for the homebound elderly, humor-and-self-esteem programs for youth at risk, etc. This fits with our organizational credo to ido well and do goodi at the same time.

RON: WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE GRANTS?

Joel: Anyone who attends our annual conference is eligible to apply for a grant?

RON: WHAT IS AN EXAMPLE OF A SUCCESS STORY THAT HAS RESULTED FROM YOUR WORK?

Joel: Leslie Gibson attended our conference and then applied for a grant for a Comedy Cart in her hospital. The Cart was filled with humorous materials that can be shared with patients and family members to give them a humor shot-in-the-arm. It included humorous books, videos, audiotapes, magazines, FUN props, etc. The cart was so successful; they now have a total of 16 carts along with a volunteer caring clown troupe in that same hospital. It was amazing to see the ripple effect of her actions.

RON: AS PERHAPS THE LEADING EXPERT ON HUMOR, WHAT TIPS COULD YOU GIVE OUR READERS?

Joel:

1. Believe in and realize the importance of humor in your life.
2. Develop a comic vision. See the humor in the world. For instance, imagine how an 8 year old would see your stress or ask yourself how a comedian might see the situation.
3. Realize the difference between positive and negative humor between

laughing with others and laughing at others.

4. Put humor in your environment. By surrounding yourself with humor, it will seep into your comic consciousness.

5. Laugh at yourself. Take your job seriously but yourself lightly.

Thanks to Joel Goodman for talking with us about his FUNtastic organization. If you are interested in knowing more about the HUMOR Project, click the link below. Also, here is information about their upcoming conference:

2004 Humor Project Conference

Join Ron Culberson, David Hyde Pierce and 50 practical and inspiring sessions at the HUMOR Project's 19th Annual International Conference "The Positive Power of Humor, Hope and Healing." The conference will be held April 16-18, 2004 in Saratoga Springs, NY. For more information or to register ASAP, call 518-587-8770 or visit www.HumorProject.com.

[Click here](#) for more information on the Humor Project.

HUMOR RESOURCES

Here are a few resources from the HUMOR Project's catalog:

Books:

"Affirmations: 1001 Ways to Add Humor to Your Life and Work" (by Joel Goodman)

"100 Funniest Moments of the 20th Century from Reader's Digest"

Video:

"What Made America Laugh" Some of the funniest humor from stage, screen and television.

FUN Props:

Smile on a Stick and red Clown noses.

[Click here](http://www.humorproject.com/bookstore/2004.php) for the HUMOR Project's online catalog (<http://www.humorproject.com/bookstore/2004.php>)

HUMOR IN REAL LIFE ñ OBITUARY & COMEDY CURES

IT REALLY HAPPENED

At a recent presentation to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, I read an obituary of a woman with a great sense of humor. Her obituary read, "She will be remembered for her graciousness and great sense of humor. Toward the end, her respiration assisted but breathing with difficulty, she said, "Is there any oxygen loose in the room that I'm not getting?"! The audience laughed heartily.

After the presentation, a participant in the program came up to me and with a very intense expression on her face. She said, "I am so touched. That obituary you read was for my grandmother."

I was floored. I couldn't believe it. This had never happened to me. I wasn't sure what to say. "Really," I managed. "So, your grandmother lived in the DC area?"

"Yes."

Still in disbelief, I said, "What was her name?"

"Got ya!" said the participant as she and her companion began to double over with laughter. "Since you're the big humor expert, we had to get one on YOU!"

Now that's a great sense of humor!

IT'S NEWS

In a recent newsletter from The World Laughter Tour (www.WorldLaughterTour.com), Steve Wilson discussed a new group that brings interactive therapeutic comedy shows to hospitals, senior centers, camps, community organizations and schools. The ComedyCures Foundation was founded by Saranne Rothberg and her daughter Lauriel while Saranne was receiving chemotherapy in 1999. They pledged to laugh together 100 times per day. Today, Saranne has no visible signs of cancer. The ComedyCures Laughline (1-888-Ha-Ha-Ha-Ha) has been called by almost 20,000 people and the ComedyCures Wellness Joke Book Workshop has traveled worldwide. In 2003 ComedyCures did 54 live events during which they offered workshops on the value of humor.

Click here for the ComedyCures website. (www.comedycures.org)

JUST HUMOR - POLITICS

Since the government is on our minds this time of year because of taxes, the upcoming elections and other bureaucratic shenanigans, we thought we'd assure you that your taxes are dollars well spent. The following are bits of wisdom from our beloved politicians. (Excerpted from Richard Lederer's book *Fractured English*)

"If Lincoln were alive today, he'd roll over in his grave." - President Gerald Ford

"I haven't committed a crime. What I did was fail to comply with the law." - NY City Mayor David Dinkins

"I can't believe that we are going to let a majority of the people decide what's best for this state." - Unnamed Louisiana state representative

"Outside of the killings, we have one of the lowest crime rates in the nation." - Washington, DC Mayor Marion Barry

Click here for other humor-related sites (<http://www.funsulting.com/links.html>)

A CONTEST FROM FUNSULTING, ETC

How would you like to win a free audio CD of Ron Culberson's presentation *"The FUNdamentals of Humor"*?

All you have to do is email us the best practical joke you have ever seen. You can be the recipient or the instigator. The only rule is that IT MUST BE TRUE. Email your practical joke to Ron@FUNsulting.com.

The first 10 contributors will receive a free audio CD.

By contributing a practical joke, you give Ron permission to share your story with audiences through his presentations and written materials.

Click here to see a description of this CD and other products. (<http://www.funsulting.com/products.html>)

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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 or call (703) 742-8812.

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