

Welcome to FUNsultations

FUNsultations is a somewhat regular newsletter from FUNsulting, etc. whose mission is to redefine excellence in healthcare through humor. Each edition includes fun, funny and practical articles and resources which will enhance the humor potential in healthcare without sacrificing the integrity of the care that is delivered. Remember, a laugh a day gathers no moss (or something like that). Enjoy!

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(Speaker, Humorist,
Author, Nice Guy)

Director of Everything!
FUNsulting, etc.

Note from the Administrator

What Happened to HUMORoids?

Due to a trademark faux pas, *HUMORoids* is now *FUNsultations*! Initially, I had searched for uses of the word "HUMORoids" before choosing it as the title of my newsletter. However, I failed to do a trademark search and a few months ago discovered that someone had already trademarked the word Humoroid[®]. My use of the word was in violation of that trademark. Once it was brought to my attention, I promptly stopped using it and renamed the newsletter *FUNsultations*. So while the title is not the same, the content, humor, and pleasant colors are.



From the Administrator It's All About the Life in Your Days

Abraham Lincoln said, "It's not about the days in your life but the life in your days." My hospice colleagues and I routinely used that phrase because hospice was in the business of quality, not quantity. The value of the life in the day far outweighed the number of days that anyone had left. I've come to learn that this phrase actually applies at *any* point during our lives—not just at the end.

A few weeks ago, I had a motorcycle accident. I was riding on a four-lane divided highway when a pickup truck, making a left turn, crossed from the other side of the highway right in front of me. My only option to avoid hitting the truck was to go off the road.

My motorcycle safety training kicked in as I engaged both brakes and slid in a straight line down a strip of grass and gravel on the shoulder of the highway. Everything was going well, relatively of course, until my front wheel hit a patch of gravel and I lost control of the steering. The motorcycle went one way and I went another, sailing headfirst into the gravel.

My injuries included ten stitches in my chin, several bruises on my shoulder and knees, and a nasty case of road rash on my face. I didn't look so good but I was lucky to be alive. In the moments after the accident, I was acutely aware of the value of the life in my days, as well as the value of my leather jacket!

In those moments, trivial stress and conflict evaporated. Annoying people and loud noises were irrelevant. The fact that the toilet paper was put on the dispenser the wrong way was meaningless. All that mattered was the life that was still in my day.

This *life* is not just about being alive. It's more than that. It's the richness, the meaning, and the joy that we experience in our lives. And sometimes, it takes sliding face first in gravel to appreciate it. But if we wait for one of those life altering experiences, we may inadvertently let life slip by.

When the ER physician came into my room, he said, "How are you?"

My first thought was, "I'm great. That's why it seems so odd that I'm in an ER."

But instead, I said, "Well, I finally realize how wise my father was when he repeatedly told me to keep my chin up."

The doctor smiled as if I had complimented the whiteness of his lab coat. I realized that patient humor in an ER must be pretty rare. And ER doctor humor is even rarer still. That is, unless the humor involves using defibrillator paddles on an insurance company rep.

Later, when the nurse was cleaning up my chin with what appeared to be saline and sandpaper, I said, "After my facial, could I get the aromatic cucumber wrap and a pedicure?"

She laughed out loud. Then she smiled more, talked more, and I even caught her admiring my Mickey Mouse tattoo. I must admit that there are few things better than an attractive nurse admiring your tattoo.

In the few hours after dumping my bike, humor helped me avoid ruminating on the fact that I could have died. But you know what? Any of us could die at any moment. And if we really understood that, I think we would live differently.

Indeed, we'd be much more concerned with the life in our days.

Story-for-a-Book
Question:

What's the funniest
thing that ever happened in
your healthcare career?

Send your story to
newsletter@FUNsulting.com
and receive a complimentary,
autographed copy of Ron's book,
*Is Your Glass Laugh Full?
Some Thoughts on Seeing the
Humor in Life*. Please put
"Story for a Book" in
the subject line.

The Best Medicine—Funny Lines

Marta Alton, Director of Medical Records for Hospice and Palliative Care of Western Colorado, shared this patient admission note:

When talking to patient, speak very loudly. Patient is legally blind.

A clear case of disability dyslexia!



Friend and speaker Steve Cohn sent me this great example of using humor:

I was out with friends at a local pub that was made to look like a large hunting cabin (appropriately called "the cabin"). On the wall, I saw a bear head, a moose head, a jaguar head, an air conditioner, another bear head, and another moose head. I turned to my friends at our long table and said, "So, what I want to know is, who shot the air conditioner?"

You have to maintain your composure to shoot a bear, but you'd have to be a really cool customer to shoot an air conditioner!

Positive Results—Facing the Nasty Truth

Six days after my motorcycle accident, I had a speaking engagement in Texas and another in Illinois. However, I needed to change my flight to Texas so I could have my stitches removed. At this point my face was an oozing, scabby mess. I called my travel agent, Jan Ernst, who informed me that the airline would charge me \$1,000 to change the departure time of my flight. That hurt worse than my accident!

Jan, who is a good friend, said, "I have an idea. Go to the airport ticket counter and let them see your face. They'll never charge you \$1,000!"

So I did. I walked up to the United ticket counter, pointed to my oozing, scabby face and said, "I got this injury from turbulence on my last flight. I'd like to request a refund."

The ticket agent was stunned and speechless. Then I said, "Not really. I had a motorcycle accident and need to change a flight. I just didn't want to pay \$1,000."

The agent said, "I can help you with that."

A few minutes later, I proudly left the airport knowing that my ugly mug had saved me \$925!

Thanks Jan.

HumorReferrals

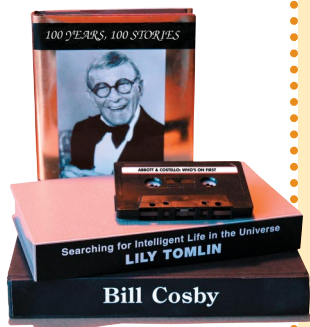
🎤 Making Presentations Funnier

Ron Culberson and David Glickman have founded **Funnier Speeches**, a humor writing service for speakers, executives and others who want to make their presentations funnier. As their tagline says: They "**Put (funny) Words in Your Mouth.**" Check them out on www.FunnierSpeeches.com

🎤 Humor and Healthcare Resources

Here are some of my funny *clinical* friends. Check out their websites for a healthy dose of humor.

- Karyn Buxman, RN, MS, CSP, CPAE: www.KarynBuxman.com
www.JournalOfNursingJocularity.com
- Kathy Passanisi, PT, CSP, CPAE: www.KathleenPassanisi.com
- Cliff Kuhn, MD: www.DrCliffordKuhn.com
- Greg Risberg, MSW, CSP: www.GregRisberg.com



Discharge Plans

Is Laughter the Best Medicine?

By guest columnist Brad Neider, MD, *The Healthy Humorist*

Perhaps laughter really is *harmful* to one's health. Some people claim to have laughed so hard, they've been "in stitches." Others state they have been "weak in the knees" with laughter. Some folks even say they have "bust a gut" laughing. None of these is a desirable condition. That last one would require an emergency laparotomy!

The truth is we've known about the benefits of laughter for a long time. In fact, way back in the 17th century, physician Thomas Sydenham wrote, "The arrival of a good clown exercises more beneficial influence upon the health of a town than 20 asses laden with drugs." Times have changed a little bit, because these days you can't call the pharmaceutical reps "asses." Not if you want to keep receiving free pens!

People today still realize the healthy benefits of laughter. After one of my recent speaking engagements, a woman came up to me, her hand trembling from the effects of Parkinson's disease. She said, "You see my hand, doctor? See how it shakes? Well, it stopped shaking when I was laughing at your jokes. Thank you for treating me!" Wow! Powerful stuff!

Laughter has been shown to:

- Boost the immune system
- Reduce levels of stress hormones, such as cortisol
- Raise pain thresholds
- Provide an aerobic workout for the heart, lungs, abdomen, diaphragm and facial muscles

The healthcare setting can be a difficult environment to find humor, so here are my prescriptions for adding laughter into your life:

Look and listen for the humor around you.

Children laugh hundreds of times a day, but, on average, adults laugh only 10 times a day. Maybe

children are laughing more because they're more in tune with the humor around them. Mel Brooks said, "Life literally abounds in comedy if you just look around." Just look at the humor in healthcare. For instance, we talk funny—"We have a GSW with LOC. And B.O. I mean P-U! Start an IV. Get an EKG. Draw a CBC with a PTT. Get a UA and an ABG and call the ICU ASAP. Apply some KY. Give some TLC. Then take a TO and SUV on over to the ATM, get a BLT and some MP3s via DSL."

Learn to laugh at yourself. Many of the mistakes we make in healthcare can lead to serious, sometimes fatal results. But most of the mistakes we make in life are little blunders. When appropriate, we should learn to laugh at our errors. When we do, we learn not to be so hard on ourselves and we display self-respect and confidence to those around us.

Inject humor whenever you can. Healthcare can be such a sterile setting—literally and metaphorically. Try to brighten the atmosphere around you as much as possible. Start a humor first aid kit where you and your staff can contribute funny quotes, cartoons, books, headlines, e-mails, etc. Then, you have a resource for times when you need a good laugh. Also, when appropriate, try using humor with your patients. Voltaire wrote, "The art of medicine consists of amusing the patient while nature cures the disease." When you use humor with your patients, you show your human side, which may make them feel more comfortable in an unfamiliar environment.

By carrying out these simple tips for adding humor to your hectic life, you may improve the morale, productivity and creativity at your organization.

SHIRTTAIL: The Healthy Humorist®—Brad Nieder, M.D. —is a funny doctor, keynote speaker and clean comedian who entertains, inspires and enlightens audiences across the country with his unique blend of healthcare humor and wellness advice. Learn more at www.healthylumorist.com

“ The New England Journal of Medicine reports that 9 out of 10 doctors agree that 1 out of 10 doctors is an idiot. ”

—Jay Leno

Check out our *Humor Injections* blog at www.FUNsulting.com/wordpress for humor, comments and links related to humor in healthcare. New posts every week!

Your new issue of
FUNsultations!

—Abraham Lincoln

“It’s not the days in your life
but the life in your days.”

Collectable Quotes from
FUNsulting, etc

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Credentials

Ronald P. (Ron) Culberson, MSW, CSP is a former hospice social worker, middle manager and senior manager whose mission is to help healthcare staff and leaders use **Humor as a Path to Excellence**. As a speaker, humorist and author of *Is Your Glass Laugh Full?*, Ron can offer your organization the following:

- Hilarious **PRESENTATIONS** and workshops
- **EMCEE**ing for special events
- Presentation skills **COACHING**
- **Humor WRITING** for written and verbal communications

To find out more, visit www.FUNsulting.com or call (703) 742-8812. To change your address, email us at newsletter@FUNsulting.com

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