

## **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 – DIFFERENT JOKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS**

“But I’m not funny.”

You’ve heard it and you may have said it. Many people go through life believing that they do not have the ability to make others laugh...intentionally. It saddens me when I think of all of the laughter opportunities they’re missing. Everyone has the capacity for creating humor but everyone does not have the same aptitude for a particular type of humor. In this edition of LIGHTENing Bolts, I will describe different ways you can share humor. I’ll give you a funny-back guarantee that even the most humor-impaired individuals can find a laugh with one of these.

**VERBAL JOKES.** Jokes are probably the most common form of humor but one of the more challenging to master. A joke requires the proper build up, punch line and timing in order to work. A friend of mine loved jokes but could never remember them. So, he carried a stack of index cards with him and every time he heard a funny joke, he wrote it down. Then, when with a friend or colleague, he would flip through the cards and share his favorite joke!

There are many good joke books and the internet is full of joke sites (see “Humor Resources” below). If you enjoy sharing jokes, try these resources to collect a few new ones to add to your repertoire.

**CARTOONS, QUOTES & WRITTEN JOKES.** The easiest way to share humor is by using humor that someone else created. By showing someone a written cartoon, quote or joke, you are producing laughter without having to develop the humor. One of my favorite Far Side cartoons shows a man hiding behind a tree in his front yard. The sign in the yard says, "Beware of Doug".

Collect the quotes and cartoons you find in magazines, books and newspapers. Share them with others for an easy way to share the gift of humor.

**STORIES.** Storytelling is an art form that is popular in many cultures and particularly popular in the South (by the way, I'm a Virginian by birth but a Southerner by the grace of God!). True storytelling requires a carefully developed structure that is difficult to master. In fact, professional storytellers spend their whole lives perfecting their craft. Yet, many of us regularly tell stories to our friends about the funny things that happen in our lives and this is a wonderful way to spread a bit of humor.

One of our friends from college told us that she hired someone to clean her house. This was no surprise to us since many of our friends have a cleaning person. The funny thing about this friend's situation is that she is so disorganized; she had to hire someone else to come in and straighten up her house before the cleaner could clean!

Think about ways you could share your experiences with people as a way to make them laugh. Practice them and retell them to discover what makes them funny.

**A HUMOR ENVIRONMENT.** Some people have a gift for creating fun activities in which laughter abounds. Theme parties, movie nights, and creative dinners are all ways to encourage humor without having to make it happen. A fun environment leads to fun interactions which inevitably lead to humor and laughter.

Can you orchestrate an activity which will inspire laughter in others?

Verbal, visual or experiential humor is possible for anyone. It takes getting to know which works for you. Spend time figuring this out so that you can increase your humor opportunities.

## **HUMOR RESOURCES**

Check out one of the biggest websites for humor on the internet: [www.humorlinks.com](http://www.humorlinks.com).

"Writing Humor: Creativity and the Comic Mind" by Mary Ann Rishel (Wayne State University Press)

"Don't Let the Funny Stuff Get Away" by Jeanne Robertson (Rich Publishing Company)

“301 Ways to Have Fun at Work” by Dave Hemsath and Leslie Yerkes (Berrett-Koehler Publishing)

“The Big Book of Humorous Training Games” by Doni Tamblyn and Sharyn Weiss (McGraw-Hill)

## **HUMOR IN REAL LIFE**

On July 21, my wife had abdominal surgery. Although there was a risk of something serious, she came through the surgery quite well and is recuperating nicely. Most importantly, she now has a clean bill of health.

After abdominal surgery, the doctors have one primary goal before a patient can go home. The patient must pass gas (aka pass wind, cut the cheese, f\*\*t). It doesn't matter what you call it, you just have to do it. So, as soon as my wife was able to achieve this honorable goal, she could go home.

My wife's family of origin has always referred to gas passing as “dooting”. So, my kids have adopted that term as well. When we explained to them that as soon as mom dooted, she could go home, my nine-year-old son Ryan said, “Who listens for it?”

I envisioned a nurse whose only job was to patrol the post surgery unit listening for doots. She would, of course, be the Dootician.

## **JUST HUMOR**

Here are three different ways to share humor through a quote, joke and story:

Quote (In keeping with my wife's surgery story): “Harley Davidson is trying to copyright the sound that their motorcycles make. I hope Taco Bell doesn't try that.” - Jay Leno

Story: My friend and fellow speaker Lou Heckler told me that at Kennywood Amusement Park near Pittsburgh, there is a gift shop next to the exit for the roller coaster that sells “Clean Underwear”.

Joke: A single woman said her old aunts would repeatedly come up to her at weddings and say, “You're next.” She said they wouldn't stop until she started saying the same thing to them at funerals.

## **HUMOR IN THE NEWS**

In the June issue of Fast Company, the magazine lists the “10 make-or-break questions” to evaluate a company’s performance. Number three on the list is “Are you a fun place to work – and a fun organization to do business with?” Clearly, Fast Company recognizes the power of humor and fun for business success.

In the December 9, 2003 edition of USA Today, Marilyn Elias did a story called “What Makes People Happy?” Although, there are many contributing factors to being happy, one study showed that “life satisfaction occurs most often when people are engaged in absorbing activities that cause them to forget themselves, lose track of time and stop worrying.” Since humor is known to be a powerful distracter, it is one tool you can use in your quest for happiness.

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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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