

# Advantages of Being Cheerful

Steve Goodier, author, United Methodist minister and founder of *Your Life Support System*, a widely read newsletter, tells the following story:

A doctor gave a 92-year-old man a physical examination. A few days later, he happened to notice the man walking down the street with his arm around a gorgeous young woman and grinning from ear to ear.

The next time he encountered the man, the doctor said, “You are really doing great, aren’t you?”

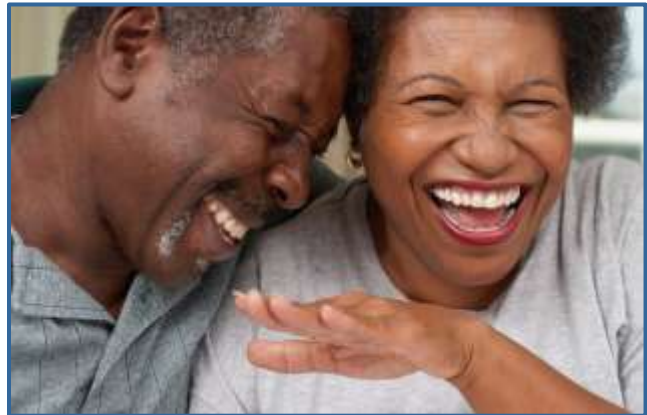
“Just doing what you said, Doc,” the man agreed. “You said, ‘Get a hot mama and be cheerful.’”

“I didn’t say that,” replied the doctor. “I said you got a heart murmur. And be careful.”

Of that story, Goodier said: “I wonder if the advice to be cheerful may actually do him more good than to be careful. There is no shortage of self-help books and articles about taking care of yourself physically – from watching your diet to getting proper exercise. In other words, be careful. But just as necessary is learning how to care for your mind and spirit. And cultivating a cheerful attitude can be an important part of the treatment.”

I agree wholeheartedly with Goodier. As we all know, the work we do in Life Care and Century Park is hard and demanding. It requires an intense focus because we are dealing with people and their well-being. But we understand full well the value of a sense of humor, and especially laughter. Researchers know that ...

- Laughter reduces stress hormone levels, so we are less stressed.
- It enhances our immunity by improving our mood. Our immune system is stronger on those “up” days, and we are less prone to upper respiratory infections.
- Laughter causes us to breathe more fully, bringing in more oxygen and releasing toxins.
- After a good laugh, our blood pressure drops, heart rate and breathing slow down, and muscle tension decreases.
- Even in stressful times, humor and good cheer help us to find joy, and joy and stress just don’t mix.



(more)

- Laughter can increase productivity and creativity.
- It helps muscles to relax. This natural relaxation effect not only reduces stress, but it also has been shown to alleviate headaches, chronic anxiety and other stress-related problems.
- Laughter reduces pain in the chronically ill. Norman Cousins, in his book *Head First: The Biology of Hope*, noticed that 10 minutes of belly laughter often gave him two hours of pain-free sleep.
- It is said that a good belly laugh is so good for the heart that some people liken it to internal jogging.

So, after all this, ponder these questions: Do you tend to focus on what is wrong with your life, or what is right? Are you known as an angry person, or are you known for being upbeat and positive? Are you finding enough laughter and humor every day?

Sometimes I think the best sense we can make of life is a sense of humor.

*A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones* (Proverbs 17:22 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter