



How Cheerfulness Can Help With Healing

About 3000 years ago, Solomon stated: “A merry heart does good to the body; but a broken spirit dries the bones”. A cheerful heart makes good medicine, it is good medicine itself; it raises the spirits, invigorates the body, and motivates it for better service and business.

By Elisabetta Franzoso

Why is it that a cheerful heart is so important? Although it is still often overlooked, emotional health is absolutely essential to our physical health and healing – no matter how devoted we are to the proper diet and lifestyle, we will not achieve our body’s ideal healing and preventative powers if emotional barriers stand in our way.

Nothing has a bigger tendency to ruin our health such as grief, anxiety, fretfulness, bad temper, etc. All these actually spell death. A spirit broken with sorrow weakens the nerves, it dries

up the marrow in the bones, emaciates the body, and reduces it to a skeleton. It sucks life out of us.

In short, the joy and grief in the mind, and our passions have great influence over our bodies, for good or for bad. Therefore, in accordance with my work as a well-being and communication coach and trainer, we have to keep a handle on our emotions.

Are you aware that many things happen to us, physiologically, whenever we laugh and smile? You’ll be surprised to find out that research has shown that one

(continued on pg 30)





experiences the same physiological benefits even when they force themselves to keep a smile on their faces.

Joy in your body brings health; something which sadness, despair, and depression do not. It can be hard to stay cheerful when you feel ill, but the paradox is that the more you focus on gladness, the more you create an internal environment for healing.

Happiness, The Best Form Of Cure

This concept was popularized by Dr. Norman Cousins who, for a number of years, was part of the medical staff at the UCLA School of Medicine. In the mid-1960s, Dr. Cousins was diagnosed with a strange, rare disease that destroyed the connective tissue of the body. Even though he was in constant pain and he felt like crying all the time, he chose to embark on experiments with the use of laughter to stimulate his healing. He searched for movies, jokes, and stories that were funny, and kept going through them. Over time, he realized that the more he laughed, the less pain he felt. He used joy to boost his immune system and endocrine system into proper functioning.

Over time, Dr Cousins had developed a cheerful heart which he found, was helping his health improve gradually. Hours of laughter each day contributed to more and more healing in his body, which was confirmed by consistent laboratory tests. Intervals of 10-minute laughers resulted in two hours of sleep without pain. He discovered, as he did this, that he began to get better. The day came when he went back to the doctors and they said, *"We don't know what happened, because this was an incurable disease; but as far as we know, you are completely cured."* He lived about another 20 years in which he wrote a book called 'Anatomy of an Illness'. It spoke of a person's mental attitude, cheerfulness or lack thereof that has a great deal to do with health. He also told about how laughter and joy could get one well.

His decision of submerging himself in joy, and allowing

his soul, mind, emotions and body to unite in harmony reminds us once more that a merry heart causes healing, just what Solomon told us 3000 years ago. All this also suggests that there is a relationship between the condition of the heart and our body. There is a relationship between physical and spiritual health.



"A man's spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?"

We all know of people who struggle with sickness and weakness, yet when you meet them, they cheer you up – they make you feel better because they are strong and happy, even when they are wasting away physically. On the other hand, we also know people who are sick and crushed. When you visit them, you feel worse when you leave because they have sucked all the life out of you as well.

There is a relationship between your mental attitude and your physical well-being. How you feel, and what is in your heart, have direct bearings on your physical health. What is on the inside eventually manifests itself physically on the outside.

Would you like a cheerful heart and attitude?

Here below some suggestions as to how we can cultivate a cheerful heart:

Go 'Gratitude'

An attitude of appreciation for everything around you, even the bad, does not cost money or time. Just a minute after you get out of bed, or just before bedtime will provide a good kick off for your day and bring a smile to your face! If it helps, create a list and read it to yourself everyday.

Cultivate A Forgiving Spirit And Find A 'Gift' In Everything That Happens To You

Be kind and gentle towards yourself and others. There are people who are suffering physically because they are angry, bitter and refuse to understand and move on from their past unhappy experiences. Practice the attitude of forgiving past or recent hurts. Let them go!

Dwell On Seen And Unseen Realities

Think of the times you achieved and succeeded in something. Anchor on those moments to maintain your cheerfulness and peace of heart.

Associate With Cheerful People

Some of us are messed up because we are hanging around messed-up people. Some of us are angry because we are hanging around angry people. We are bitter because we are hanging around bitter people. So hang out with the cheerful to stay cheerful.

(continued on pg 32)



Be a Load Lifter, Not A Burden Maker

Do not be one of those who make life hard for others. Instead, be a load lifter. Be the one who lightens moods.

Listen to good music

Music and lyrics have the power of lifting sad or preoccupied minds.

Live A Life Of Active Love

I came across this sentence once: a selfish man can never be cheerful. He can be happy, but never cheerful. Only a giver can be cheerful. Only a lover, somebody who invests in the lives of other people, can really be cheerful and positive about life. Get involved in the lives of other people and you will have a cheerful attitude.

Nurture a Childlike Attitude

Being childlike is not being childish. A childish behaviour is irresponsible but a childlike one is not. What are the qualities of a child? He is open and curious, eager to learn and enrich himself. He is eager to take risk and is not fearful of the unknown. He has no time to be depressed, not even few minutes! Cultivating an open mind and the willingness to learn will contribute to an enriching life of fun, and motivation. You will develop endurance and a positive tenacity in the midst of adversities.

Laugh More!

How much do you laugh during the day? Do you take life, an illness or injury so seriously that there is no room for joy in your life? Make a list of the things that make you laugh from deep down, the roll-on-the-floor belly laugh, the type of laughter and

leaves you in tears. That is the laughter of healing.

Create your own "Laugh for Health" collection. Ask your friends and family members to send you clippings or jokes - anything to add to your collection and to give you fresh material. Make a commitment to spend time every day immersed in humour and laughter.

Learn to Coach Yourself

Some time ago I found myself asking that age-old question: are you an optimist or a pessimist? When you see a glass of water, is it half full or half empty? When you personally go through one of those weeks that we all go through eventually (and some of us go through regularly), do you remain positive and cheerful at the end, or are you negative? And what are the differences being positive or negative? Ask yourself these questions when you feel out of balance, and feel the need to re-establish the discipline of a cheerful attitude because it is important. Someone has said it before: between the optimist and the pessimist, the difference is droll; the optimist sees the doughnut, the pessimist sees the hole. It has been well said that the optimist is the person who invented the airplane and the pessimist the person who invented the parachute. You need them both. You need the positive aspect of life as well as that aspect of life that looks at the problem and says, "Well, life isn't just a bowl of cherries. There are pits in there, too." Healthy realism is the key.

Websites: www.stellasmum.com / www.insideoutyou.com



Suggested readings if you want to know more about this topic are:

- Loving, Leaving, Learning - Leonardo Buscaglia (Self- Help)**
- The Road Less Travelled - Dr. Scotts Peck (Self-Actualization)**
- The Secret Gratitude Book - Rhonda Byrne (Self-Help)**
- How Full Is Your Bucket - Tom Rath (Positive Psychology)**

Elisabetta Franzoso Author of *Stella's Mum Gets Her Groove Back - A True Story* Managing Director of InsideOutYou Coaching & Training www.OutsideOutYou.com, www.StellasMum.com,