



Humor: The Lighter Path to Resilience and Health

PhD Paul McGhee

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We've all heard the phrase, "Laughter is the best medicine". Readers Digest has been telling us this for years, but until recently there was no real evidence to back up the claim. This book discusses the exciting findings scientists have obtained over the past 25 years for how your sense of humor supports good physical and mental health. A separate chapter discusses humor and the brain. The first studies of humor and health demonstrated humor's ability to strengthen the immune system, reduce pain and reduce levels of stress hormones circulating in the body. These general health-promoting benefits led researchers to study the impact of humor and laughter on specific diseases. This exciting new work has now shown health benefits of humor in connection with coronary heart disease, asthma, COPD, arthritis, certain allergies and diabetes. The two cerebral hemispheres of the brain are shown to play different roles in our understanding and enjoyment of humor. Also, specific dopamine-based pleasure centers in the brain have now been identified which account for the good feeling that results from humor and a good belly laugh. The key to understanding humor's contribution to health and wellness is its ability to both build more positive emotion into your life and reduce feelings of anger, anxiety and depression. Humor helps provide the emotional resilience needed to meet the challenges presented by steadily increasing stress in our personal and work lives. It is a powerful tool for coping with any form of life stress, and a means of sustaining a positive, optimistic attitude toward life. Similarly, humor plays a key role in generating a happy marriage and greater happiness and life satisfaction in general. And it's never too late to improve your sense of humor. You can learn to use humor to cope and get these benefits into your own life.

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