

How Humor Can Heal You Through the Tough Times

By Peter J. Fogel

It was 1990 and I was back in NYC from LA dealing with my terminally ill mother in Cedar Sinai Hospital. Three years earlier she was diagnosed with colon cancer. As you might have experienced yourself, back in those days the dreaded chemo was really the only treatment available. She put up the good fight, but by this juncture it had spread to the liver and lymph nodes. Mom was losing the battle and she was in and out of a coma.

Ever so often she would moan, "Enough!"

I had dealt with the inevitable and knew her time would come soon and that Mom would finally have her peace. It's always difficult to deal with the impending death of a parent (or any loved one) especially when you've only had them for thirty-two years.

Take Two Aspirin & Laugggggggggh!

I would spend eight hour days at the hospital by my mom's bedside and at night I'd go to a comedy club down the block and do a spot. How you're probably asking could I do that? How could I just go and make people laugh like that?

And my reply would be how I could not? Humor heals and I knew it would be the only thing that could get me through this stressful time. For thirty minutes, while on stage, time literally stood still for me as I blocked out what was happening to my mother only blocks away. If you were to talk to me that night in the club you wouldn't even know what I was going through earlier in the evening.

Making people laugh, seeing the joy on their faces, was the best prescription for me. I didn't need valium or alcohol to kill my pain. Just laughter. Getting off stage I felt a real release. And you can do the same thing. If you're going through a difficult time--- then you should humor as a way to "give yourself a much needed break."

The mourning you have to go through, the self-flagellation you might be putting yourself through, and the problems that are mounting will be still be there for you when you get back... but using humor affectively will give you a mini-vacation.

Rent a hysterical movie.... Listen to your favorite comedian's cd... read a humorous book... (Dave Barry?) go to a comedy club and see a show that night. Turn on the TV and watch a rerun of "Seinfeld" (which seems to be on 24/7 these days.)

If you're dealing with a terminally ill loved one... close your eyes and envision a happy and hysterically funny time you both spent together. And remember what the late, great Victor Borge would always say, "Laughter is the closest distance between two people."

Hopefully, for just a few moments, you'll get some distance from your pain and laugh... and once you do--- you'll release the endorphins in your brain, get that "natural high" and give yourself the much needed respite that you truly deserve.

They say love conquers all. (Now, I don't know who 'they is'—but 'they' always seem to have all the answers) Well, I believe humor heals all. Try it... it really works!

Copyright 2004 Feel free to pass this article onto anyone who you feel can benefit from it, or publish it in your own e-zine. All that I ask is that you don't change the content and keep the byline. Thanks!

Peter J. Fogel is a humorist/speaker and author of the soon to be released book, "**If Not Now... Then When?**" *Stories and Strategies of People Over 40 Who Have Successfully Reinvented Themselves*" Sign up for his e-zine: "**Humor This!**" at www.fortune500comedy.com and receive the FR-EE e-book, "Effective Humor To Use In The Workplace That'll Bring Your Company A Strong ROI"