

ALL IN GOOD FUN

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Welcome Readers! This month's SAFE Aging newsletter is about fun. Dr. Deborah Gavin Dreschnack, other wise known as the "Fun Queen", leads with a story called Humor, Health and Happiness. Dr. Vanessa M. Dazio talks about the benefits of fun, smiling and laughter. She also provides lists of fun ideas, and tells a few personal stories about goofy friends and lemon trees. This issue is all in good fun.

A Laugh A Day Can Keep The Doctor Away

There are many reasons why laughter should become a vital part of your day. Laughter :

1. Fosters Healing
2. Improves Breathing
3. Improves Circulation
4. Can stimulate the immune system
5. Unleashes natural pain killers (endorphins)
6. Eases pain
7. Changes your focus



Safety, Health, Injury Prevention



“Laughter research has shown that humor helps us to resist disease and to cope with stress and worry.”

Humor, Health, and Happiness

by Dr. Deborah Gavin Dreschnack (Alias the "Fun Queen")



My best friend recently asked me how I would define “happiness”. I pondered that question, reflecting on things like family, friends, health, meaningful work, and other various types of fulfillment. After a few moments, I replied “peace of mind”. I truly believe that all my elements of happiness can be summed up in that one phrase. My family, my friends, my faith, and my work all contribute to my peace of mind. Over the years, I have learned to pause and reflect on all that is good and appreciate those moments. Even during difficult times, it helps to remember the things that are going well to help cope with the things that are not!

As a researcher, I know that good humor not only reduces stress and pain, but it actually promotes good health. Negative emotions have direct and immediate effects on the body by releasing stress hormones that increase blood pressure and blood-glucose levels. Researchers are currently studying the effects of inflammation, and are finding that hostile and depressed people respond to life situations in a chemically different way.

A recently identified condition known as stress cardiomyopathy, or “broken heart syndrome” can mimic heart attack in people who have experienced tragic or shocking events. These people often have no actual coronary defects or blockage, and recover within 72 hours. Conversely, laughter and optimism contribute to positive effects on the body.

Laughter research has shown that humor helps us to resist disease and to cope with stress and worry. In a recent study, scientists found that watching a funny movie for just 15 minutes relaxed people’s peripheral arteries and increased blood flow for up to 45 minutes, comparable to the effect of aerobic exercise. Psychologists assert that a sense of humor is an important ingredient in a full and productive life. Humor helps us feel in control and gives us a sense of confidence and belonging. Laughter rejuvenates us, keeps us smiling, and helps us gain a better perspective on life. The ability to laugh during crises and challenges is an important tool and coping mechanism. Humor empowers us, bonds us with those we love, and is a great way to show and share affection.

So, the next time you decide to embark on a new exercise regimen, try laughter- it’s fun, it’s free, it feels good, and it will contribute to good health!

Wishing you all a happy and healthy holiday season,

Dr. Deborah Gavin Dreschnack

Dr. Deborah Gavin Dreschnack is a fun loving Gerontologist who works in research at the James A Haley Veterans Administration Patient Safety Center in Tampa, FL.

Fun is What You Make It

by Dr. Vanessa and Dr. Debbi

Fun is what you make it. Money is not required to have fun. In fact, you can have lots of fun without spending a dime. In this picture, Dr Debbi and I had great fun trying on wigs. It didn't cost a thing, but paid off in the memory of that day.



A baby has fun by learning how to talk and walk. They are fascinated with simple things like playing with wooden spoons or empty boxes. Babies find great joy and pleasure by watching and then participating in life. They learn and have fun by doing, watching and listening.

To have fun, go back to the basics. Watch and participate in life. Do something new everyday. Learn something new everyday. Help someone else to participate in life in some way. Let yourself relax, and enjoy your interactions with people and your surroundings. Build a foundation to develop a habit of having fun every day for the rest of your life. Fill your life with fun. It is good for your health!

The Benefits of Fun

Everyone needs fun in their life. There are a number of research articles that prove the health benefits of having fun. There are lots of theories about having fun. But, even without the scholars, we still know fun makes you feel

1. good
2. happy
3. calm
4. relaxed
5. interested
6. excited
7. involved
8. refreshed

Brighten Your Day, SMILE

It takes 43 muscles to frown and only 17 to smile. Therefore, it is 2.5 times easier to smile than frown. Smiling is infectious and makes everybody feel good. Do something nice for humanity, and make it easier for yourself,...SMILE!





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Fun Ideas

Outside Ideas

1. Have a picnic lunch with your best friends, neighbors, a frail senior, or all of the above!
2. Take a hike! Smell the fresh air. I mean really smell it. Appreciate the moment.
3. Go for a walk, and look for creatures big and small. Study their habits.
4. Start a leaf collection. Research the type of leaf you found. Keep a record.
5. Bird watch. Draw the bird you see. Start a book of your drawings. Aspire to become an expert, or not! Challenge yourself to observe a different bird everyday.
6. Visit the beach, or the mountains or the desert. Drink in the beauty of your surroundings.
7. Explore your home town.
8. Go fishing!
9. Sit on a park bench and talk to everyone who sits next to you.
10. Take a cruise, plan mini vacations. Explore the world around you.



Inside Stuff You Can Do For Fun

1. Do a crossword puzzle everyday. It is good for the mind.
2. Learn to play a musical instrument. This develops new pathways in the brain.
3. Learn a new language. How abouta Italiano?
4. Tutor a child just for the fun of it, or because you can help a young life.
5. Volunteer at the local nursing home. Read stories or hold hands or just visit.
6. Go to the library. Read a new book every week. (Develop more brain pathways!)
7. Join a card party. Play games such as pinochle, poker, rummy, hearts, etc. as often as possible
8. Find a "cheap seats" movie theater and treat yourself every week!
9. Go dancing. Is there anyone out there that can dance the polka or cha cha and not have fun?
10. Take pictures of the grandbaby, see below. (Isn't Connor adorable?)



My Goofy Friends and Their New Deer

by Dr. Vanessa M. Dazio

My friends are goofy. They recently purchased a deer head that hangs on the wall. My friends immediately knew just how much fun that deer head could be. This deer head wasn't a real deer. It was a mechanized deer that talks, sings, whines and complains. It says anything you can think of, because you control it. Even more shocking, it moves its head and mouth. It looks so real. It has a beautiful antler rack, and when you look at it, you'd swear it was Bambi's handsome boyfriend.

My friends know a good thing when they see it. They immediately knew there was great potential for a lot of laughs and fun. They simply could not resist. They bought it, hooked it up, and waited for the first big sucker to show up. That would be me!

The friends called to tell me about something I had to see at their house. In reality, it was an ambush! When I saw "the deer" for the first time, it shockingly moved and I darn near fell on my butt! Then, if that wasn't enough of a shock, it sang to me! We ended in a gale of laughter.

Now, a party is in the works, because there are lots of people who just have to experience the singing, whining, moving deer head! There will be lots of laughs and fun with my goofy friends and their new deer. I'm not missing that party!

Make Lemons Out of a Lemon

By Dr. Vanessa M. Dazio

My husband planted a lemon tree 2 years ago when we moved into our new home in the country. The first year, the deer stripped the little lemon tree naked, so it barely survived. Little Lemon Tree managed to grow some new leaves, but could only produce one lemon. My husband was thrilled to harvest that lemon.

In the meantime, six months later, we gave our friends a lemon tree for a housewarming gift. They promptly planted it, and for the most part, let it alone to grow in the glorious Florida sunshine. Today, they have 82 lemons (count 'em) on their lemon tree. The branches can barely support the weight of all those lemons. In the meantime, my husband's Little Lemon Tree, doubled in size this year, but halved its production to ZERO lemons.

This was just too much for my husband to bear. So, one day, my friend and I **taped** lemons on Little Lemon Tree,...Husband had a disbelieving moment when he saw all those glorious lemons on the Little Lemon Tree branches. It was then we learned we had new descriptive names. **Now that was fun!!!!**



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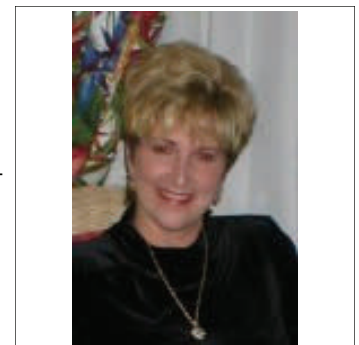


*We wish a healthy, happy and fun filled holiday season to all
from Dr. Vanessa and the SAFE AGING staff!*

Ask Dr. Vanessa

Question: What sort of fun holiday things can I do with my aging mother who is residing in a nursing home?

Answer: This is a difficult question to answer without knowing more about your mom. But it is easy to find fun holiday things to do, with or without money. Fun doesn't have to be complicated, or costly. To have fun with Mom, go back to the basics. Ultimately, what you really want is to demonstrate to your Mom that you love her. Your Mom will appreciate your time together, just because it is you. Whatever you do together, remember to savor your time. If you can, avoid rushing. Make this special excursion a memory to last a lifetime.



Dr. Vanessa M. Dazio, OTD

[Read here for a few fun holiday ideas you can do with an aging mother.](#)

If you have a question for Dr. Vanessa, feel free to email her at vmd@safeking.com.