When Laughing is All That You Have Left

Using Humor to Get Through the Worst of Times
A little about me...

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- 20+ years in fitness and wellness
- Public speaking
  - Wellness strategy
  - Health coaching
  - Coping and loss
  - Suicide prevention and suicide survivor communities
Why do we need to cope?

Effects of stress

- Psychological
- Physical
- Social
What happens when we don’t successfully cope?

We adopt ineffective coping mechanisms.

coping mechanism

**noun**
an adaptation to environmental **stress** that is based on conscious or unconscious choice and that enhances **control** over behavior or gives psychological comfort.
Ineffective Coping Techniques

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Why Humor?

- It’s free.
- It’s easy.
- It’s fun.
- It’s scientifically proven to help us cope with challenging situations.
How does humor help us cope?

- Scientific rationale
Keys to Coping

- Positive reframing
- Acceptance
- Humor
Positive Psychology Research
Resiliency Study
Humor Styles Model

- Self-enhancing humor
- Affiliative humor
- Aggressive humor
- Self-defeating humor
Stress-Buffering Effect
Endorphin Release
What situations does humor help?

- Dealing with loss
- Dealing with change
- Workplace dynamics
- Communication challenges
How to know if humor is not appropriate?

- Know your audience
- Conservative approach
- Your comfort level with humor
- If you ask yourself if it’s too soon
What types of humor are not appropriate?

- Mean-spirited/
- Passive-aggressive
- Consistent
- Singling out

- Discriminatory
  - Race
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Appearance
  - Disability
  - Sexual content
  - Stereotypes
  - Religion
  - Politics
Humor should:

- Make people feel included
- Make people feel lifted up
- Humanize the speaker
- Build trust
- Boost morale
- Increase productivity
- Allow your group to stand out
Humor should not:

- Make people feel singled out
- Make people feel put down
- Used as an excuse to say inappropriate comments
- Prevent you from dealing with underlying issues
Successful Coping Requires an Active Approach

- Listen to funny audiobooks
- Watch funny shows and movies
- Read funny books
- Visit funny websites
- Befriend funny people
How to incorporate humor

- Be observant
- Find themes
- Be self-effacing
- Take risks
- Practice