

## Finding Laughter During Difficult Times

© Lynn Shaw

"The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter."  
- Mark Twain

Dare we laugh during difficult times? As our nation engages in war and terror alerts go up and down like an emotional roller coaster, I reflect upon my own *laughter meter* in recent weeks, I realized that I have had several moments of weeping and many moments of laughing. This reminded me that laughing and crying are on the same continuum - both designed to offer release and relief.

During tough times we may think that laughter is inappropriate or an indication that we're not as serious as we "should" be. My belief is that it is in tough times that laughter is especially helpful to move us from intense introspection to connection with others, perhaps through service and outreach. Laughter is about connection, and I can't think of a better time to connect outside of self than during difficult times. So go ahead and laugh - and weep - simply because you can. And, if you need a jumpstart, here are some ideas to help get you laughing:

**Laugh with a friend** - Call the one person you know will absolutely laugh - no preliminary conversations needed; just laugh.

**Look for laughter in each day** - a funny incident, a thought, a billboard, a commercial, whatever helps you smile.

**Listen to other people laughing and then join in** - this is great in parking lots, grocery stores, wherever people gather.

**Try a laughter exercise** - simulate laughter to stimulate laughter. Example: Smile 5 times in 5 seconds; next do this while watching yourself in a mirror.

**Walk and laugh** - Granted, this may draw some interesting looks from observers. As you are walking at a leisurely pace, simply repeat a laughing word like "ha" with each step. Change the pace of your walk and the pace of the laughing word. You can do this audibly or silently - you'll be smiling either way!

**Invite friends over and begin storytelling** - you'll learn new things about each other and share some laughter plus the connection will be priceless.

**Now is a good time to re-connect with levity and lightheartedness** - fly a kite, play ball, paint, sing silly songs, take a child for a walk, visit a senior and get them talking about the "good old days", laugh out loud simply because you can.

Connect with each other and connect with the "spirit of laughter" so that you experience all that laughter can be for you. The spirit of laughter is part of your spiritual health and is wonderfully infectious, contagious, universal, fun, free and uplifting - ideal for difficult times.