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### Humor/Happiness

“Comedy is simply a funny way of being serious” (Ustinov). This essay will speak about a virtue that is not spoken about or lauded as much as other virtues, as for example patience. Humor, or cheerfulness is in my belief an asset, as well as a virtue. Firstly, people who are cheerful, are more pleasant to be around. Secondly, humor and having a positive approach to life is healthier than a negative attitude. Lastly, laughter is a coping skill. People simply need to learn to use it more often.

Happy go-lucky people are nice to be around. They make themselves and other people feel good. The Babylonian Talmud Recounts a story of Rav Beroka Hoza'ah meeting Elijah the Prophet and asks him who gets to go to heaven. Elijah points to two comedians who are guaranteed a place in the world to come. Many ask the question why the comedians? The answer that the Rabbis give is that comedians make people feel better. A comedian uplifts people's moods, and takes away a person's depression (Talmud). When I was in elementary school, I remember the class clown, Hannah got to skip our grade and go to the next grade. Not surprisingly, all the students were sad to see her go. Of all the girls in my class, I still remember her name, even though more than a decade has passed.

At work, I have coworker, Esther\* who always passes around encouragement and good cheer. Everyone always to flocks her. Her motto is “moving forward, what's the solution?”. Instead of looking about for a problem, she would rather search for resolution. In contrast to

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\* Name changed to protect identity

Esther, I have another coworker who is the exact opposite of Esther. Nicholas<sup>†</sup> always complains about everything. The boss, his paycheck, the other employees, too much work, lazy coworkers, the list goes on and on. As expected, people avoid Nicholas's office.

In *Ethics of the Fathers*, there is a quote that asks, "who is rich, he who is happy with his lot" (Ben Zoma, Marcus, 49). The idea is not that money makes a person happy or does not make a person happy, the main theme of this quote is that contentment brings money (Marcus). All my life I have people say that money brings happiness or the counter idea that wealth does not bring happiness. It is the other way around. Happiness brings money. I see this in the workplace. Esther is happy and as a result does her job exceptionally well. She recently received a bonus, while Nicholas got demoted, not because of his negative attitude, but because of the effect it had on his work.

A *New York Times* article "Scientists Hint at Why Laughter Feels So Good" expounds on how laughter is good for people. An experiment conducted by Dr. Dunbar a psychologist at Oxford University, shows the correlation between laughing and feeling good. When people laughed, endorphins (the hormone that makes people feel good) increased, decreasing stress and pain. Furthermore, laughter helped people bond together (Gorman).

"We rushed our four-year-old son, Ben, to the emergency room with a terrible cough, high fever, and vomiting. The doctor did an exam, [and] then asked Ben what bothered him the most. After thinking it over, Ben said hoarsely, "I would have to say my little sister.'" (Schmid *Laughter Really Is The Best Medicine*, 93). Reading this joke released some of the tension that I was a couple of months ago. Last spring, my life turned upside down. My maternal grandmother

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<sup>†</sup> Name changed to protect identity

was released from the hospital and moved in to our house. My grandmother is wheelchair bound, diabetic, has high blood pressure, and suffers from Alzheimer's and depression. Seeing as my room was located on the first floor, my grandmother moved to my room while I had to move all the way up to the attic where my other two sisters shared a room. Additionally, at work two people had left our company and I had to take over their jobs. I had to juggle extra responsibilities at work and also come home to someone who was very ill. This resulted in my work life being very busy and my personal life also being very hectic. As a coping tool I went to Amazon and bought almost all the humor books I could possibly buy. To name a few really good books that gave me good laughs, *Laughter: The Best Medicine*, *Laughter Really Is the Best Medicine*, *Laughter Still Is the Best Medicine*. A particularly good joke I read involved elderly people. "Because they had no reservations at a busy restaurant, my elderly neighbor and his wife, were told there would be a 45 minute wait. "Young man, we're both 90 years old," he told the maitre d'. "We may not have 45 minutes." They were seated immediately." (Kalish, *Laughter: The Best Medicine*, 131).

This virtue of happiness and cheerfulness is one that I wish to practice and spread to other people. As a practice, I try to look for the humorous aspects in life and ignore or rather minimize the harder facets of life. Richard Carlson a psychotherapist wrote in his book *You Can Feel Good Again: Common-Sense Strategies for Releasing Unhappiness and Changing Your Life*, that remembering a bad thing that happened, going over it again and again is a useless endeavor. Firstly, it happened in the past. It is not currently occurring in the present. Secondly going over in your mind negative events or mishaps that you did is like writing yourself a nasty letter, or in modern day terms a hate e-mail (Carson).

I hope to one day spread more humor and cheer to the people in my life. My goal is to start a small support group for women called *Funny Females* that will basically use comedy to make people laugh. This will help us as women bond, but more importantly, will allow people to release stress using humor. What inspired me to start this group were two things. Firstly, as I read all the good jokes that were in the joke books, I realized that I had a lot of anecdotes that I wanted to share with people. As much as I enjoy laughing, I also enjoy seeing people laugh. As soon as they laugh, I also laugh and this creates a cycle of happiness. I hope to create and continue this cycle of happiness. My second inspiration was The Israeli-Palestinian Comedy Tour, which is a quartet of comedians that spread humor about the Israeli Palestinian conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian Comedy Tour performs for Arab Palestinians and Israelis, and have received tremendous applause from all over. Their hope is to bring peace to the Middle East, where politicians and the UN have failed. Watching some of their comedy gave me more hope for peace, than listening to Secretary of State John Kerry speak about a peace settlement.

I would like to end off by stating what a great asset humor is. I looked up the meaning of “virtue” in the Merriam-Webster dictionary online, and it is defined as “a quality that gives something special worth”, with relating words being “advantage, edge, plus, [and] superiority” (Merriam-Webster). I firmly believe that humor is one of the greatest features that a can have. To quote an anonymous person, “Every survival kit should include a sense of humor” (The Quote Garden).

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