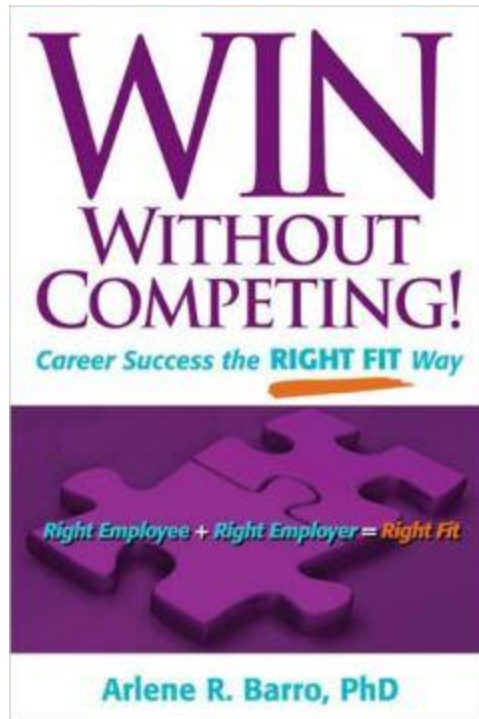


Conquering Stress! With Dr. Arlene—Not Laughing Causes Stress



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By Dr. Arlene Barro

Why do some people refuse to laugh? Others just smile. And then there are those who show no emotion. Loosen up! Laughing is a stress-buster. Try it!

Setting the Stage for Laughter

I love to laugh. At the Geffen Playhouse, I recently sat through a memorable performance of *Significant Other*. The playwright, Joshua Harmon, used exquisite dialogue to capture the deeply personal relationships of four friends: three women and a man, Jordan, who is their girlfriend. They shared everything until all three women found husbands. Jordan, desperate to be in the same situation, could not find the right man. He tries to persuade the third bride, who is his best friend, to become one of her bridesmaids. She refuses. He was devastated.

Throughout the play pain and humor were intertwined. I think that many in the audience were befuddled. The depth of emotion, coupled with pain and humor, required fast audience response. I was surprised that

lots of laughter was noticeably absent. They missed an opportunity to relieve stress, by not responding to clever humor.

Taking Laughter Seriously

The Mayo Clinic says, “when it comes to relieving stress, more giggles and guffaws are just what the doctor ordered.” They indicate that there is mounting evidence about the positive effect of laughter on your body.

Can laughter induce physical changes in your body? Yes. Laughter can: stimulate many organs and cause the brain to release endorphins, ignite and cool down your stress response resulting in a calm feeling, and soothe tension by stimulating circulation and aiding muscle relaxation to reduce physical stress symptoms. Start laughing to enjoy the health benefits I just described.

And there is more. Over the long-term laughter can improve your immune system, relieve pain, increase personal satisfaction, and improve your mood.

Mastering Comedy at Harvard

Recently, *60 Minutes* aired a delightful segment about *The Harvard Lampoon*, founded in 1876. Housed in a castle on campus, this is a training ground for those aspiring to a career in comedy. Capturing a position on this newspaper requires completing a variety of tasks to prove that you are worthy of the opportunity. Notable “Lampooners” include: Conan O’Brien, John Belushi, Chevy Chase, Larry David and John Updike.

Humorous articles are not enough for the aspiring comics. They love to engage in stunts. During the 2016 Presidential Election, they contacted Trump and told him that *The Harvard Lampoon* wanted to endorse him for President. He invited them to Trump Tower. They dragged a beautiful chair, fit for a king, through the lobby and presented it to Trump. Curious about what happened next? See the *60 Minutes* segment on *The Harvard Lampoon* which aired on April 8, 2018. This is a great opportunity for rollicking laughter, a wonderful stress reliever.

Questions? Email drbarro@barroglobal.com. Responses could appear in her next column.

Dr. Arlene Barro, the creator of the Right Fit Method, is a UCLA-trained behavioral educational psychologist and professional speaker. She is the author of WIN Without Competing!, a business, career, and personal strategist and founder/CEO of barro global search, inc. in Westwood. Episodes of her radio show are available at www.winwithoutcompeting.com.