



**Use Humor in a Kind Way:  
7 Golden Rules for Keeping Humor Powerful & Positive**

By Steve Wilson  
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**HUMOR IS THE  
SHOCK ABSORBER OF  
LIFE; IT HELPS US  
TAKE THE BLOWS**

Laughter is the best medicine. It is an ambassador for all the positive emotions. Humor can alter any situation and help us cope at the very instant we are laughing, but when it is mis-used it can backfire, upset communications, and hurt peoples' feelings.

**“To the extent laughter or any of the positive emotions, can block panic, depression, despair, we have a therapeutic ally.” -Norman Cousins**

I teach employees and managers, teachers and students, doctors, nurses and patients facing serious and difficult medical situations that humor is a valuable tool for well-being.

Bringing the power of humor to the workplace is a way of keeping employees healthy and on the job, improving health, productivity, morale, teamwork, and customer service. It has been said that a fifteen percent increase in morale can account for a forty percent increase in productivity.

There is now a large body of scientific and anecdotal evidence for the power of humor, laughter, and all the positive, pleasant emotions to contribute to healing and well-being. A sense of humor is the ability to see the less serious element in a situation. Laughter and humor reduce stress hormones and psychologically discharge emotional tension. Anyone who has had their spirits lifted by humor knows it.

However, as much as humor can lift people up, it can slam them down. If you have been the butt of a joke or are part of a group that has been made fun of, you know that humor can be a weapon that destroys self-esteem, self-confidence, and personal relationships.

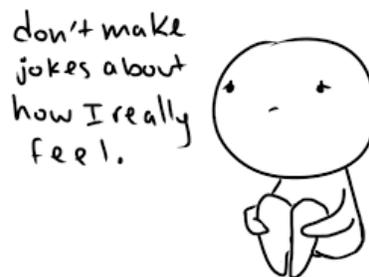
**"Find your source and live from it. Keep your heart open and laugh generously. These are the maxims of the peaceful teacher, the tools of the gentle healer."**

**-Alan Cohen**

### **Humor Can Help Or It Can Hurt**

I coined the term 'humor abuse' to describe situations when joking is used derisively to tease or ridicule. Some people report being emotionally scarred by it for life. Adults are just as susceptible as children to the pain of unkind and insensitive humor. In fact, it has been estimated that many sexual harassment complaints in the United States originate from inappropriate joking.

Racial jokes, ethnic jokes, sexist jokes, put-downs, zingers, embarrassment, sarcasm and ridicule have no place in the workplace or any other place where human happiness is important.



### **Golden Rules for Keeping Humor Powerfully Positive**

*1. When in doubt, leave it out.* Be aware of your audience and your position. Using humor that is incongruent with your position will be confusing and may reduce your credibility. The humor that works well with your close friends may not be acceptable to your customers; the "inside" jokes from your workplace may not go over well with your family. When you are about to lay some humor on someone ask yourself whether, from their perspective, the humor might be inappropriate or distasteful.

**African proverb: The axe forgets, but the tree remembers.**

**2. Timing is everything.** Humor may not always be welcome to lighten up a situation...at least not right away. It might be 'too soon'.

If you try to be funny or joke with someone too soon after their difficulty, it will backfire. An example of bad timing is when my son was recuperating from his emergency appendectomy and my joking brought tears to his eyes. Unfortunately, it was because belly laughter pulled on his fresh stitches and caused more physical pain than mental relief.

*"Do you mean to tell me that the dreadful events of the day are a fit subject for humorous comment? The answer is "Maybe not now, but soon."*

**"Tragedy plus time equals comedy." -Steve Allen**

**3. Eliminate sarcasm and ridicule.** Sarcasm is the form of communication which is most easily misinterpreted because you say exactly the opposite of what you not mean. Sarcasm is a frequently a mask for anger, too. Ridicule is unacceptable for obvious reasons, therefore, just don't belittle anyone for anything.

**The richest laugh is at no one's expense.**

**4. Erase taboo language.** Words mean different things to different people, and their acceptability varies from person to person and from group to group. If you offend people by using taboo language (according to their terms) you not only risk harming their self-esteem but you turn them off to the rest of your message. Once that happens, you can't sell them anything or teach them anything or persuade them of anything.

**5. Be careful when making humorous comments about serious subjects,** especially around children. Humor and joking are useful defense mechanisms and may even be useful for helping us cope with horrendous situations. The grisliest tragedies in the today's news may well become the subject of tomorrow's jokes, but taken in the wrong context, it gives a mixed message and may be taken the wrong way.

**Humor should be laughter made from pain, not pain inflicted by laughter.**

**6. *The Five-Minute Rule:*** We are all stuck with some permanent characteristics that we aren't thrilled about. It may be our height or weight, freckles or hair color & texture, ears, nose or toes. To be kind with your humor, leave those parts alone.



**Don't poke fun at anything that a person could not change in the next five minutes.**

**7. *Make fun of situations not people.*** We can all subject to misunderstandings, frustrations, and accidents. *Situational humor* has way of drawing us together, whereas wise-cracks about personal short-comings make us uneasy targets and can be divisive. If the situation allows, take the joke on yourself, but do it in a way that demonstrates comfortable self-acceptance.

Use humor. Use it often. But use it wisely. It is just as important for you to develop your sensitivity to humor as it for you to develop your sense of humor.

**"A kind word often goes unspoken, but never goes unheard."**

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Steve Wilson is a psychologist, author, speaker, workshop leader and consultant who helps people and organizations get the absolute most out of themselves while they love every minute of it. An internationally recognized authority on the positive uses of humor and laughter, he is the Founder of World Laughter Tour, Inc., which has trained more than 7,000 'laughter therapists.' For more information visit [www.worldlaughtertour.com](http://www.worldlaughtertour.com), [www.laughwill.com](http://www.laughwill.com), or phone 1-800-669-5233.



## Good-Hearted Living®

By Steve Wilson



### Follow These Six Daily Practices to Prevent Hardening of the Attitudes And Add More Laughter to Your Life

This is easy and fun. Begin with *mindfulness*. Your actions will become habits and then *the natural way you live your life*. Each day remember what the special practice is for that day. Whenever you see an opportunity, take some action to fulfill the practice for that day. Soon you will be amazed to find that you laugh more and are more cheerful and optimistic.

Whenever you are mindful of any of the practices and the pleasant feelings they bring, you can tell yourself, *"Isn't it great that I feel happy now! Right now, this is being stored in my brain, where it joins my other moments of serenity. The larger the library and storehouse of serenity in my brain, the easier it will be for me to access it at will."*

**Mondays are for Compliments:** This overcomes our tendency to criticize and be judgmental of others, which robs us of laughter. Look for the good in others, tell them about it, and you might just end up laughing together. Monday thought: "A kind word often goes unspoken, but never goes unheard."

**Tuesdays are for Flexibility:** There is no laughter in being stubborn. We all get set in our ways and yet it is a good thing to be open to new ideas. It can be more fun than being in a rut. An open mind lets the laughter in. Tuesday thought: "The tree that bends in the wind does not break."

**Wednesdays are for Gratitude:** A good way to feel miserable is to always think you need something more to make you happy. An attitude of gratitude brings serenity and laughter. Wednesday thought: "As you go through life, let this always be your goal: Keep your eye upon the donut and not upon the hole!"

**Thursdays are for Kindness:** Think of ways to help make the other person's life a little easier. Simple kindness may be the most vital key to the riddle of how human beings can live with each other in peace, and care properly for this planet we all share. Thursday thought: "The practice of kindness creates healthy relationships and community connections and inspires people to pass kindness on to others."

**Fridays are for Forgiveness:** Forgiveness means letting go of anger. Find a way to see those who have hurt you in the new light of compassion. Releasing anger makes you healthier and opens up room in your heart for more laughter. Friday thought: "I never hold a grudge because while I am being angry the other guy is out dancing!" (Buddy Hackett)

**Weekends are for Chocolate:** Remember to eat some chocolate or any other favorite food. Remember to take time for leisure, pleasure and relaxation. Weekend thought: "A bad day fishing beats a good day working."

To order "Good-Hearted Living", Steve's book and journal, with a different Good-Hearted idea for every day, call 1-800-NOW-LAFF(669-5233)

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Siga éstas prácticas diarias para prevenir el endurecimiento de las actitudes y agregar más risa a su vida.

Esto es fácil y divertido. Comience con *atención*.. Diariamente recuerde cual es la práctica especial para ese día. En cuanto vea una oportunidad, *realice las acciones necesarias para cumplir la práctica de ese día*. Sus acciones se convertirán en hábitos y los hábitos se convertirán en un modo de vida natural y positivo para usted.

Pronto, se sorprenderá al darse cuenta que se ríe más y que es más alegre y optimista.

Siempre que se haga consciente de las prácticas así como de los sentimientos placenteros que provocan, dígame a sí mismo: "Que feliz me siento ahora! En este momento, esto se esta guardando en mi mente junto con mis momentos de serenidad. Mientras más serenidad almacene en mi mente, será más fácil para mí poder acceder este estado a voluntad."

Los Lunes son para los Cumplidos: esto nos ayuda a superar nuestra tendencia a criticar y juzgar a otros, lo cual nos roba la risa. Encuentra lo bueno en otros, díselos y terminarán riendo juntos. Pensamiento para el lunes: "Una palabra amable podrá quedar sin ser dicha, pero jamás quedará sin ser escuchada".

Los Martes son para la Flexibilidad: ser obstinado no provoca risa. Todos tenemos nuestra propia forma de ser, sin embargo es bueno estar abierto a nuevas ideas. Puede ser más divertido que ser rutinario. Una mente abierta permite que entre la risa. Pensamiento para el martes: "El árbol que se dobla con el viento no se quiebra".

Los Miércoles son para la Gratitud: una buena manera de sentirse miserable es pensar siempre que necesitas algo más para ser feliz. Una actitud de gratitud trae serenidad y risa. Pensamiento para el miércoles: "Mientras viajas por la vida, permite que este sea tu objetivo: concéntrate en mirar la rosa en vez de mirar la espina".

Los Jueves son para la Amabilidad: piensa en diversas formas para ayudar a hacer más fácil la vida de otras personas. La simple práctica de la amabilidad puede ser la clave fundamental para resolver el enigma de cómo los seres humanos podemos convivir en paz y cuidar adecuadamente este planeta que compartimos. Pensamiento para el jueves: "La práctica de la amabilidad crea relaciones saludables y solidaridad e inspira a las personas a ser amables con otros".

Los Viernes son para el Perdón: perdonar significa liberarse del enojo. Encuentra una forma de ver a quienes te hayan lastimado bajo la luz de la compasión. Liberar el enojo te hace más saludable y deja espacio en tu corazón para reír más. Pensamiento del Viernes: "Es propio de inteligentes y de sabios, perdonar injurias y olvidar agravios".

Los fines de semana son para Chocolate: Recuerda comer algo de chocolate o cualquier otro alimento que sea tu favorito. Recuerda tomar tiempo para el descanso, el placer y la relajación. Pensamiento para el fin de semana: "Un mal día pescando es mejor que un buen día trabajando".



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