



The Smile Side of Life Laughter & Happiness Club

Noreen Braman

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2024 Well-Being Presentations

I. 5 Simple Habits That Build Resilience & Enhance Well-Being

- **Mindfulness** – Are you mindful, or, is your mind full?
- **Gratitude** – Your brain on being thankful
- **Purpose** – Your personal “mission in life”
- **Happiness** – What is it, and why is everyone talking about it
- **Laughter** – a human survival skill since before humans had language

News reports, online articles, and best-selling books are full of advice about achieving well-being, and the list of recommendations can be long and intimidating. In this fun and information presentation, rediscover five habits to have in your well-being “toolkit” to build resilience for times when stress can be overwhelming.

The first habit **Mindfulness**, starting with a definition of what it means to be mindful, and how to incorporate that into daily living. Interactive exercises include “in the moment” mindfulness as well as mindfulness meditation.

Habit 2 addresses **Gratitude**. Recent studies using functional MRIs have shown exciting changes to the brain that coordinate with enhanced happiness as a result of purposeful gratitude activities. Learn about gratitude journals, gratitude letters and 5 simple gratitude gestures.

A sense of **Purpose** is the focus of habit 3. Having a “reason for getting up in the morning,” is arguably one of the most important and powerful factors in happiness, health and longevity, even if your career work is not exactly aligned. This session takes an intense look at personal mission and vision with self-discovery activities and writing exercises that help reveal ways that one’s sense of purpose can be aligned with other aspects of life.

Anthropologists now believe that **Laughter**, the subject of habit 4, is a survival mechanism existing in humans even before language, or even a sense of humor developed. Laughter is so powerful it can both lift up the oppressed when used for healing or take down oppressors when used as a weapon. This session explores that two-edged sword description of laughter as well as introduces the concept of laughter as a well-being exercise that does not rely on jokes or humor.

In habit 5, **Happiness** is explored, both as a state of being and as a much maligned “pursuit.” What is happiness and why is global society so focused on it that some countries are using it instead of a GDP? How the other habits covered in this course contribute to Happiness, and why enhancing your happiness is vital to coping when life becomes difficult.

II. Take a Laughter Break for the health of it!

Laughter existed before humans had language, or a sense of humor. Yet, the primitive brain prioritized it for social bonding and cooperation. Today, many consider laughter fun, but not mandatory. However, it is an important component of resilience, well-being, and team success. No matter what your profession, there will always be levels of stress.

Learn about the history of laughter, its use for both good and evil, and why baby laughter is diabolical. Recent studies have shown that teams that laugh together succeed together – as long as they understand the ways to share laughter appropriately. Learn *why* teams that laugh together succeed together.

This fun, interactive program teaches:

- 1. The relationship of humor and laughter to mental and physical wellness**
- 2. The role of laughter in human development**
- 3. When and what kind humor is appropriate**
- 4. The concept of Laughing for the health of it with takeaway exercises to share**

Basic Outline (may vary slightly depending on audience) :

- Orientation in space and time “meditation”
- Personal story of why babies laugh and how I came to know this
- Learning about laughter and humor and how they are important for managing stress and compassion fatigue
- Activities you can do with your clients
- Your brain on smiling, laughter, and simulated laughter
- The story behind laughter as an exercise
- Introduction to laughing for “no reason,” without comedy or jokes
- The use of Pranayama, Yogic breathing, and the parts of the body used in breathing and laughing: Interactive Exercises
 - Where does laughter live in the body exercise
 - Selection of sample laughter exercises
 - Mindful Laughter Meditation
- Q&A
- guided relaxation (if time permits)

References:

Klein, Allen MA, CSP L.A.U.G.H., using Humor and Play to Help Clients Cope with Stress, Anger, Frustration, and More workbook
McGhee, Paul PhD, Humor as Survival Training for a Stressed-Out World
Morreall, John PhD Humor Works
Comic Relief, A Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor
Kataria, Madan, MD Laughter Yoga training manual

III. What Gets You Out of Bed in the Morning?

Creating Your Personal Mission and Vision Statements

Having a personal mission and vision statement helps you discover or rediscover, your “reason for getting up in the morning.” While this can include self-focused things such as self-improvement and self-satisfying activities, the well-being and longevity enhancing benefits of living with a purpose are greatest when you can expand your life work/interests/passions to include benefitting others. Learn why a sense of purpose is important, and how it can change over the course of a lifetime. Attendees will come away from the presentation with a first draft mission and vision statement.

- Learn the importance of a sense of purpose and how it changes through life stages
- Understand the difference between a mission statement and a vision statement
- Participate in interactive discussions
- Create preliminary mission and vision statements
- All attendees will receive a PDF version of “What Gets You Out of Bed in the Morning?” additional information on personal mission and vision statements. Organizations have the option of purchasing printed copies for attendees

Your Presenter: Noreen Braman

A Story of Reinvention, Persistence, and Laughter

The hits came fast - Noreen Braman found herself reeling from a corporate downsizing, dealing with a economic recession of historic proportions, and facing her own self-doubt issues. Reinvention was in the cards, and soon her skills as a strategic communications professional, humorist and performer would send her in a new direction.

Within one year, she became a certified Laughter Yoga Leader, had her mind blown at a conference called "Can Humor Save the World" and studied the Psychology of Laughter at Rutgers University. Shortly after, she added certification in Laughter Wellness, studied the Science of Happiness through UC Berkeley, joined the Association for Applied & Therapeutic Humor (AATH) and is currently a Chief Well-Being Officer candidate through the World Happiness Foundation. What started out as laughter for the health of it through her Smile Side of Life Laughter & Happiness Club presentations has become a joyful journey of laughter sessions, stress management, resilience boosting, and helping others find a mission and purpose like she did for herself. She continues to add to her knowledge base through continuing education and certifications, workshops, conferences and seminars.

Noreen credits Dr. Paul McGhee's book "Humor as Survival Training for a Stressed-Out World" as well as Linda Richman's "I'd Rather Laugh: How to Be Happy Even if Life has Other Plans for You," for planting the seed of helping others understand the importance of humor and laughter to all humans. With the physical and emotional health benefits that come with humor, laughter and mindfulness, Noreen deals with her fibromyalgia and thyroid disease with humor, reminding us all that yesterday's problem can be today's funny story.

In June 2024, Noreen was awarded a scholarship from the World Happiness Foundation to complete certification as a Chief Well-Being Officer.

Noreen is an instructor at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Rutgers University, and has also shared her well-being message organizations such as, The Center for Great Expectations, New Jersey Association of Professional Mediators, Sunnybrook Assisted Living, The Wexford at Wall Township, Hispanic National Bar Association, CFC Loud & Clear Foundation, NJLAP's Networkers Without Borders, Raritan Police Department, NJ Public Defenders, Morristown Hospital Women's Group, Mercer County Bar Association, Burlington County Bar Association, New Jersey Association for Justice, Cerebral Palsy of North Jersey, The Society for Emotional Intelligence, The Arc of Middlesex, East Windsor Township Senior Center, Recovery 360, Paint the Mall Purple Recovery Event, The Arbor Company, and others.

Fee Schedule:

One hour virtual presentation: \$3000

One hour in person presentation: \$5000 plus travel expenses, including mileage or transportation costs, overnight accommodations for conferences more than 100 miles from Jamesburg, New Jersey.

3-hour interactive workshops available, ask about day rate

Technology required: Uses Powerpoint and/or video with sound, workshops require classroom-type set up

Special pricing for senior centers, libraries & other community groups in Middlesex County, NJ