**It’s Okay to Laugh**

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If you’re online, you are no doubt seeing a lot of jokes going around – not about the Covid-19 pandemic itself – but more about what many people are experiencing as a result of physical distancing. For some, homeschooling kids, for others, boredom eating, and the list goes on. It might seem insensitive for anyone to be joking during these times, and it’s easy to judge the jokesters and those laughing along.

But when we judge someone who is laughing, we are making their laughter mean something that it doesn’t.

Laughter does not mean that we’re not taking the situation seriously. It does not mean that we don’t understand the gravity of the situation: the deaths, the suffering, the loneliness or the risk. We can understand and grieve those things, and also laugh out loud. Both are possible, all at once.

For some, laughter is a coping mechanism. Abraham Lincoln once said, “I laugh because I must not cry, that is all, that is all.”

Norman Cousins, author of *Anatomy of an Illness* was diagnosed with a terminal illness but

decided to laugh a lot in spite of it. He did just that, and laughed himself into remission and

another thirty years of life. Decades ago, when this occurred, we had no idea of why it

happened. Now we know that laughter, happiness, or positive attitude … however we want to

label it … turbo-charges our immune system and thereby can lower our risk for many serious

threats to our health such as heart disease, cancer, and even Alzheimer’s Disease. The New

England Centenarian Study, in fact, has found that those who reach ages 100 and over most

often have such positive attitudes, even in the face of significant impairment.

In addition to reducing our risk for chronic disease, laughter also helps us feel better instantly. Humor triggers an endorphin rush, which reduces pain and increases happiness; Laughter stimulates blood flow which is good for the heart; It reduces stress and anxiety; and there are some studies that suggest laughter increases creativity and improves problem-solving skills.

If you’ve ever tried a laughter yoga class, you know that the benefits can be felt right away.

It has been said that laughter is like a windshield wiper, it doesn’t stop the rain but allows us to keep going.

Laughter doesn’t negate these difficult times in any way, but it is a few seconds of lightness – a shock absorber that eases the blows of this life.

So, go ahead and laugh a little. It’s good for us and it’s totally okay.